



Overarching principles for rights-based forest restoration

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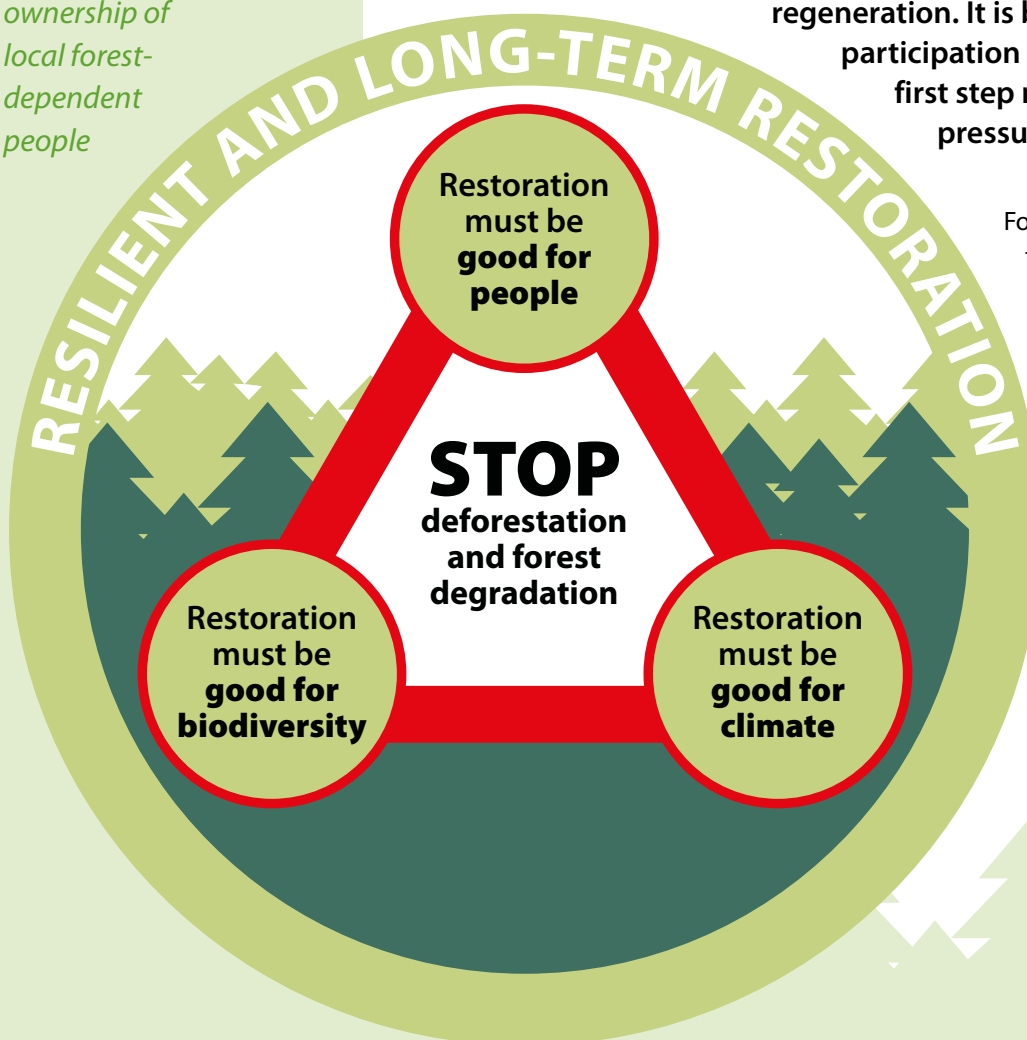
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To avoid catastrophic climate change in line with the Paris Agreement, all sectors of the economy need to radically and rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, we need to sequester more carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere than we are putting in.

We believe the best way to do this is to protect and restore natural forests. Restoration can be achieved by changing land management practices and by allowing natural recovery and regeneration. It is best done with the full participation of local communities. The first step must always be to relieve pressure on forests.

Forests are home to the majority of the world's rapidly diminishing biodiversity and so protecting and restoring them is vital for the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is also essential for the 1.6 billion people who have rights over forest land. Restoration must support their rights and can help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.





When led by local people forest restoration can provide many everyday benefits



Creating larger landscapes supports biodiversity and enhances the resilience of restored areas



Climate action on forests should be additional to emission reductions

To be resilient and long-term, it is important that all restoration activities abide by the following principles:

1. To ensure restoration is good for **PEOPLE** it must

Respect the rights of local and indigenous people. Many of the most promising areas for forest restoration are under the legal or customary ownership of local forest-dependent people. Their right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) about what happens to their land must be respected and promoted.

Respond to local needs. To be resilient and just, restoration strategies must respond to local needs and conditions. When led by local people, forest restoration can provide many everyday benefits like providing food and strengthening local peoples' connection to the forest.

Promote social justice and equality. Women, the poor and marginalised groups are especially dependent on forests. Restoration activities should therefore promote their rights and benefit their everyday lives.

Promote good governance. Forest restoration will only be successful if there is good governance of forests that ensures meaningful participation of local communities in decision-making.

2. To ensure restoration is good for **BIODIVERSITY** it must

Support ecosystem protection. Restoration should foster natural forest features such as having a variety of local and endemic species, rather than cultivating monoculture tree plantations which have low biodiversity value.

Promote environmental co-benefits. Restoration projects should explicitly aim to achieve broader environmental benefits in the local area – such as improved water quality, ecosystem productivity and soil fertility.

Support biodiverse landscapes. Restoration should reconnect fragmented primary and natural forests, increase natural features of secondary forests (such as decaying wood), increase tree cover in agricultural areas via agroforestry, and balance different land uses. Creating larger biodiverse landscapes – rather than targeting individual areas enhances the resilience of restored areas.

3. To ensure restoration is good for **CLIMATE** it must

Promote strong ecosystems. Biodiverse ecosystems (rather than plantations) are more resilient to environmental changes like increased pests, forest fires and disease. This is particularly important as a warming planet will see an increase in such environmental disasters.

Protect existing carbon stocks. Primary forests, natural wetlands and grasslands store large amounts of carbon and they should not be compromised.

Increase overall climate ambition. The remaining carbon budget is so small that increased efforts in all sectors are necessary. There are social and ecological limits to how much climate action can be achieved by forests. Restoration should therefore be additional to emission reductions in other sectors and not used to compensate, or “offset”, lowered ambition.

Of course, none of this works unless we stop deforestation and degradation first. Efforts to restore forests must come alongside work to halt forest destruction.

Additional information on the best practises on ecosystem restoration can be found [here](#).