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To Whom It May Concern:

Carbon forestry, including the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) initiative, claims to provide monetary incentives to indigenous people in the developing world to protect and enhance forest stocks to mitigate the impacts of global climate change. In theory, these programs also seek to ensure the rights of those same people and are advertised as a triple win: a win for the planet for solving the threat of climate change, a win for those in a position of privilege and power to continue the status quo by continuing to emit carbon into the atmosphere, and a win for local peoples in developing countries by providing economic livelihood. However, my research in Africa's largest and most important mangrove forest, the Rufiji Delta of Tanzania, demonstrates that in the quest to commodify forests for carbon credits, it is those who live and find sustenance in carbon forests who are the losers.

In the Rufiji Delta mangrove forests, villagers don't have the option to go to a grocery store to buy their food and don't have electricity or gas lines to cook it. They grow their staples, mainly rice, in the mangrove forest and use fuel wood, cut and gathered from the same forest to cook it. While it is a struggle, they survive, albeit with high rates of malnutrition.

Carbon forestry initiatives threaten these small-scale activities that support the livelihoods of those people living in forestry sites, as documented in my research in the Rufiji Delta (Beymer-Farris and Bassett 2012; Beymer-Farris et al., 2019). In 2011, the Rufiji Delta mangrove forest was slated to be a "REDD-pilot project site" with funding from the Norwegian state and implemented by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). REDD+ projects are supposed to incorporate local livelihoods and human rights in carbon forestry programs. Interestingly, the site of the Rufiji REDD+ project also included plans to evict over 14,000 residents from an area they have lived for centuries. While the Tanzanian state, foreign donors and the WWF claim that the evictions were unrelated to the REDD+ pilot project, it begs the question of why there were plans to evict villagers from the mangrove forest before the start of the carbon forestry project when its intent was to both protect and enhance the mangrove forest **and** provide needed income to lives of those living near and in the forests? During the implementation of the project (which foreign donors and the WWF now claim never existed or occurred) the villagers resisted and were met with state-sanctioned violence and destruction of property. After the attempted evictions, the Tanzanian Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance, a constitutional body for the state that serves the dual role of a human rights commission and an ombudsman for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country, found that the villagers had rights to possess and use those same forestry resources that were previously slated for carbon forestry.

While carbon forestry programs seek to sustain the status quo in the developed world with little sacrifice, except a marginal increase in the cost of consumption, put yourselves in the shoes of a villager in the Rufiji Delta (or any other proposed carbon forestry site in the developing world). These programs restrict use of land and forest resources for sustenance purposes. Will they replace this now off-limits agricultural resource with a market? Will they replace fuelwood with gas or electricity? Will they provide means to purchase food and other necessities? Will they even allow you to live in the place your ancestors built and you have lived your entire life?

While carbon forestry programs seek to solve a problem in ways that benefit multiple stakeholders, there are myriad examples of local peoples being the stakeholder that loses. The Rufiji Delta attempted evictions are one example. Even when evictions are not involved, research shows that the supposed financial benefits that are intended to flow to local persons are diverted to state and non-governmental actors during the administration of the programs (Lund et al., 2016).

While the goal of carbon forestry is noble, the results do not reflect the ideals and thus provide the impetus for my writing this letter.

Sincerely yours,



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