



# Who Really Benefits? Balancing Risks and Rewards in Nature-Based Solutions

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## WELCOME BOOKLET

May 1, 2025

Institute for Development Impact (I4DI) HQ  
1834 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20009



**DC**  
**Climate**  
**Week**

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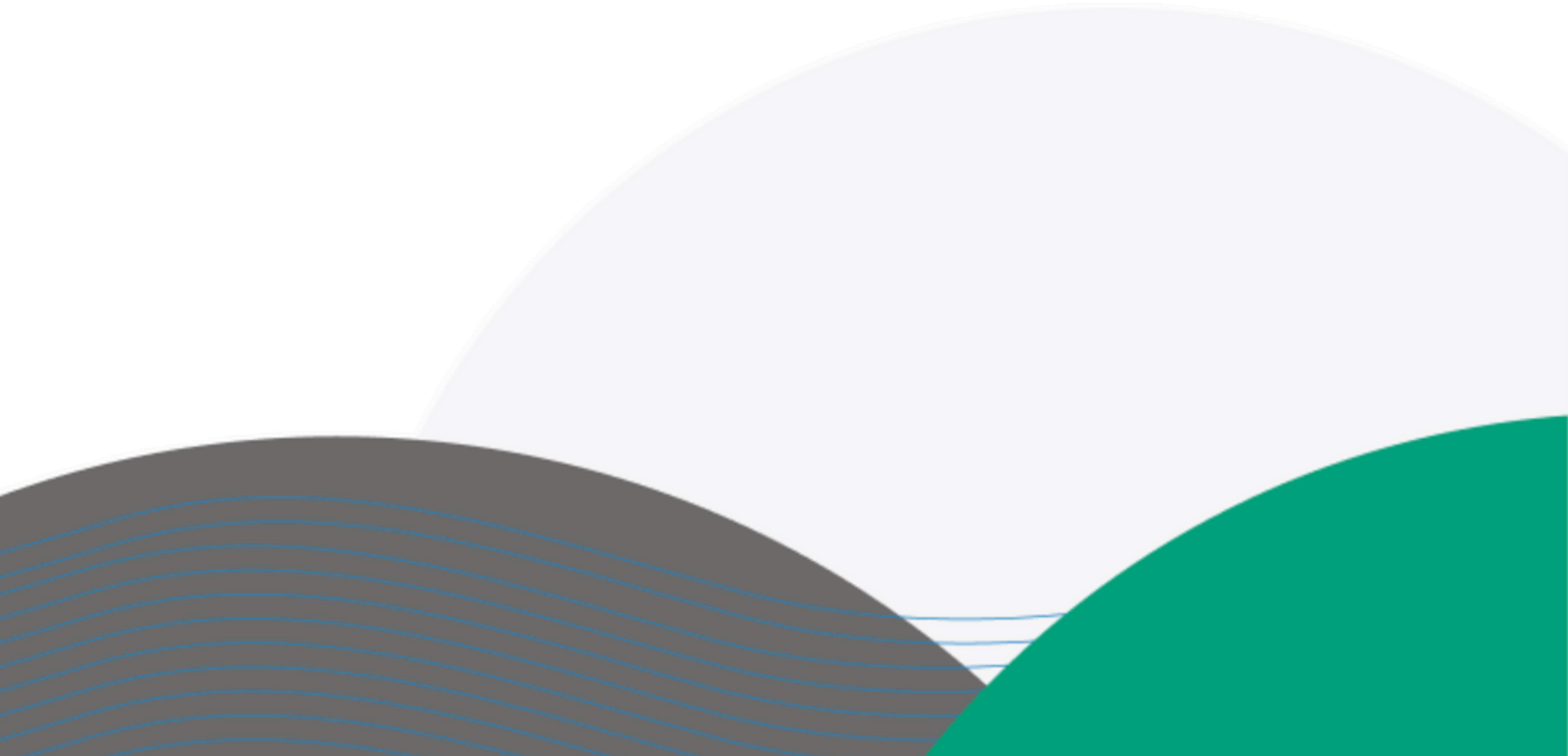
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We are thrilled to welcome you to *Who Really Benefits? Balancing Risks and Rewards in Nature-Based Solutions* hosted by the Institute for Development Impact (I4DI) as part of D.C. Climate Week.

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) are often hailed as a "triple win"—for climate, communities, and companies. Yet beneath this promise lies a more complicated reality: the benefits, risks, and trade-offs of NBS are not always distributed equally. Our goal today is to go beyond the surface, bringing together diverse perspectives to explore how NBS can be more equitable, transparent, and impactful.

Through this afternoon's panel discussion and interactive workshop, we hope to create space for candid conversations about the challenges and opportunities inherent in NBS initiatives. We invite you to engage deeply, question assumptions, and leave with new insights about how different stakeholders—local communities, governments, corporations, and others—shape and are shaped by NBS efforts.

Above all, we hope this experience empowers you to think critically about the systems behind sustainability, and inspires new ideas for building nature-based solutions that truly deliver for people and the planet.

Thank you for being part of this important conversation. We are also deeply grateful to the organizers of D.C. Climate Week for facilitating such a vital platform for dialogue and action.

We're excited to learn with you.

Warmly,

The I4DI Organizing Team

## *Working toward a planet and society where every living thing has an opportunity to thrive.*

The Institute for Development Impact was founded in 2014 by Dr. Azra Kacapor Nurkic and Dr. Emir Nurkic Kacapor as a center for innovation, learning, and excellence in initiatives focused on social, environmental, and economic impact. From its beginnings as a small social enterprise dedicated to empowering mission-driven decision makers with evidence and technology, I4DI has grown its team and operations to reach 48 countries across the world. We work with multinational corporations, grassroots organizations, policy makers, startups, governments, and change makers across the public and private sectors to unlock impact for people and the planet.

As a woman-owned small business based in Washington, D.C., we operate a profit-for-purpose model, reinvesting in research and innovation to push the boundaries of what's possible for people, communities, and our environment. I4DI also invests in its non-profit arm, Alliance Franco Bettoli-Development Institute (AFB), which operates in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina—honoring the roots of I4DI's Co-Founders.

I4DI was created to meaningfully improve development practice and facilitate smarter development investments. We have never been interested in building castles in the sky or perpetuating the development industrial complex. We also understand the significance of our work, recognizing its impact on people's lives, and take the responsibility entrusted to us by our clients and partners seriously. We intentionally select collaborations with decision makers and change agents to unlock humanity-level impact.



**I4DI's Co-Founders,  
Dr. Azra Kacapor Nurkic and Dr. Emir Nurkic Kacapor**

**2:00 PM – 2:25 PM: Attendees Check-in**

**2:30 PM – 2:40 PM: Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Introduction of Panelists**

- Brief welcome & introduction to the topic and importance during D.C. Climate Week
- Moderator briefly introduces each panelist, highlighting their background and expertise

**2:40 PM – 3:20 PM: Panel Discussion – Key Discussion Points**

- Virginia Gorsevski
- Maxwell McGrath-Horn
- Sarah Hertel
- Amy Daniels
- Felipe Casarim

**3:20 PM – 3:40 PM: Open Floor for Q&A**

**3:40 PM – 3:45 PM: Closing Remarks and Transition to Workshop**

**3:45 – 4:00 PM: Coffee Break**

**4:00 – 4:15 Workshop Intro & Setup**

**4:25 – 4:55 Small Group Discussions**

**4:55– 5:15 Large Group Share-out**

**5:20 PM – 7:30 PM: Networking Happy Hour**

The Institute for Development Impact is thrilled to organize a panel discussion as a part of the [D.C. Climate Week](#). Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are often described as triple wins—for climate, communities, and corporations. But behind this optimistic framing are real trade-offs. NBS can bring long-term environmental and economic benefits, but they often come with short-term costs.

Those risks and rewards are not always shared equally. While companies and donors may benefit from improved supply chains, carbon credits, and climate outcomes, farmers may wait years to see returns. Global markets often dictate commodity prices, leaving little room for producers to absorb additional costs or experiment with new practices. For subsistence smallholders, tight financial margins and immediate livelihood needs make it difficult to take on short-term risks with the promise of long-term rewards.

This discussion will explore the realities of current NBS and how they can be designed to better account for trade-offs and create value for all stakeholders.

## Key Discussion Points

- **Distribution of Risks and Benefits:** Explore how the risks and benefits of NBS are distributed among stakeholders, particularly focusing on local communities versus large corporations. Explore what are the mechanisms to ensure smallholders and local communities receive a fair share of the profits and benefits derived from NbS projects. Discuss strategies for developing cross-sectoral frameworks that distribute risks more equitably, protecting those least capable of bearing them.
- **Impact Measurement and Transparency:** Consider the challenges in measuring the socio-economic and environmental impacts of NBS. Delve into how different sectors can contribute to developing robust metrics and ensuring transparency and accountability in NBS projects.
- **Funding Models for NBS:** Discuss the existing financial models supporting NBS and the potential for innovative funding approaches. Evaluate how these models can attract sustainable investments while ensuring that financial gains are distributed fairly among all stakeholders, especially focusing on funding structures that benefit grassroots participants.



**PANELIST**

**Dr. Virginia Gorsevski Ph.D.**

**Managing Director, Nature Based Solutions**

Conservation International

Originally from Colorado, Virginia Gorsevski has spent her entire career working at the intersection of environment and conservation issues and international development – initially with the US Government for USEPA and USAID on energy/climate mitigation, and more recently with the UN Environment Programme for the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility, where she advised the GEF on a range of issues including biodiversity, climate adaptation, and international waters. In her current capacity at Conservation International, she leads the Nature Based Solutions team in the Moore Center for Science and Solutions comprised of experts focusing on freshwater, human health, and climate mitigation, among other things.

Virginia is a geographer and has a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland Department of Geographical Sciences where her research focused on the impacts of conflict on forest cover change in South Sudan and northern Uganda using satellite remote sensing and qualitative data.



**PANELIST**

**Dr. Sarah Hertel, Ph.D.**

**NDC Enhancement Knowledge Specialist**

NDC Partnership Support Unit

Sarah is the NDC Enhancement Knowledge Specialist for the NDC Partnership and is based in Washington, D.C. She leads the development of knowledge products around NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) enhancement, analyzes and communicates lessons learned from the Partnership’s NDC enhancement efforts and advances peer learning opportunities for Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies (LT-LEDS) and NDC Alignment. She also serves as the Thematic Lead on nature-based solutions for the Knowledge & Learning team, providing guidance on climate-nature synergies in NDCs and alignment with other international frameworks.

Prior to joining the Partnership, Sarah served as a subject-matter expert on nature-based solutions to climate change and biodiversity policy at multiple environmental nonprofit organizations. She also spent nearly a decade developing and executing communications strategies on these topics, as well as around initiatives hosted by Indigenous Peoples and local communities around the world. Sarah holds a Ph.D. in environmental science and policy from George Mason University, an M.S. in environmental conservation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a dual B.A. in journalism and history from American University.



**PANELIST**

**Dr. Amy Daniels, Ph.D.**

**Unit Lead for Nature Based Solutions**

Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada  
United States Forest Service

Amy Daniels is the unit leader of Nature Based Solutions for Latin America and the Caribbean with the US Forest Service. She leads a regional team and portfolio of

climate change programs addressing community resilience, support for Jurisdictional REDD+, watershed investment partnerships, and area-based forest conservation incentives.

Previously, Amy worked for USAID's Global Climate Change Office, as well as several NGO, private sector and academic implementing organizations. She was based in Latin America for nine years and Africa for two years. Amy is adjunct graduate-level faculty at the George Washington University, teaching in climate change and sustainable development. Amy holds a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Ecology, specializing in landscape ecology and land use modeling from the University of Florida and a B.A. in Biology from Wesleyan College.



**PANELIST**

**Maxwell McGrath-Horn**

**Principal**

Magnitude Global Finance

Maxwell McGrath-Horn is a Principal at Magnitude Global Finance, where he helps clients find innovative responses to complex climate finance challenges, focusing primarily on nature-based solutions.

As Senior Climate Finance Advisor at Chemonics International, he led the organization's engagement with multilateral climate funds and carbon markets, building a pioneering nature-based carbon project facility to bridge local communities and international investors through technical assistance and flexible financing. He previously served as a Climate Finance Officer at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, where he managed a portfolio of Green Climate Fund activities across fifteen countries in Asia and the Pacific Islands, focusing on forest conservation, sustainable agriculture, and coastal resilience.

Throughout his career, Maxwell has championed the integration of high-integrity nature-based solutions into climate finance mechanisms to get international finance to the ground level. His work has included structuring blended finance arrangements for agroforestry systems in Cambodia, developing carbon finance partnerships for forest enterprises in Fiji, and designing sustainable livestock activities in Guatemala that combine regenerative practices with forest conservation. He regularly writes about climate finance and nature-based solutions, with recent publications in the Hill, Environmental Finance, and Science. Maxwell holds a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University.



## PANELIST

### Felipe Casarim

#### NCS Manager

Centre of Excellence, Supply, Trading & Shipping  
bp

Felipe Casarim is a Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) Manager at bp's Low Carbon Trading group. Mr. Casarim is a mission-driven professional with nearly two decades of experience in Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and Carbon Markets, and he is passionate about the intersection of nature and human wellbeing. Mr. Casarim has strong technical acumen in NCS and is eager to engage with diverse global audiences to drive informed decision-making for a more sustainable world.



## MODERATOR

### Dr. Azra Kacapor Nurkic, Ph.D.

#### Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder

Institute for Development Impact (I4DI)

Azra Kacapor Nurkic is the Co-founder and CEO of the Institute for Development Impact (I4DI), where she brings nearly 25 years of global experience advancing sustainable development, climate adaptation, and inclusive resilience. A social development expert by training, Azra has designed and led initiatives across more than 100 countries focused on biodiversity conservation, climate-smart livelihoods, and nature-based solutions that bridge environmental integrity with community well-being.

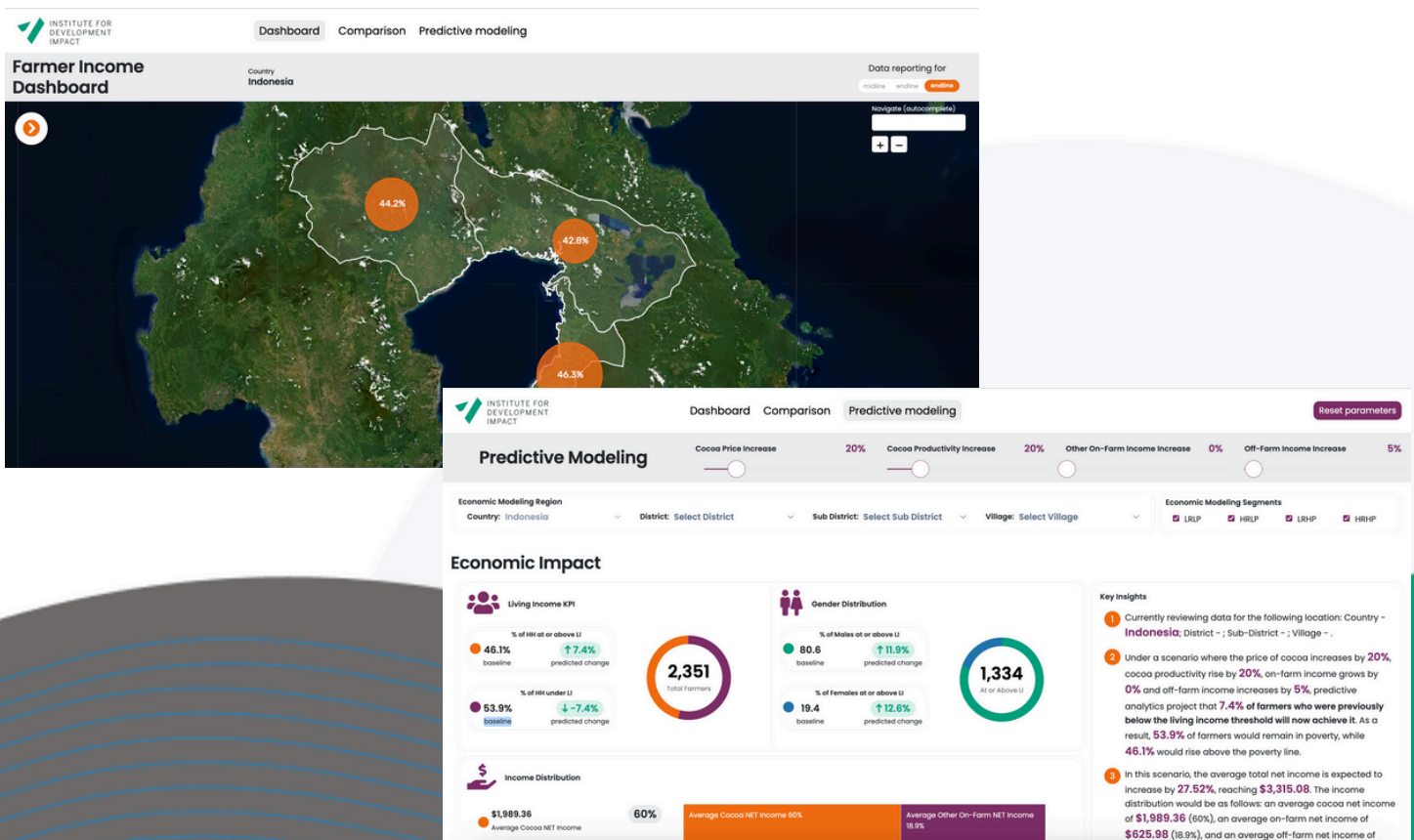
Her technical leadership spans results-based management, impact measurement, and systems thinking, with deep expertise in integrating climate resilience and ecosystem-based approaches into policy, programming, and local delivery systems. She has supported bilateral and multilateral donors, private sector actors, and NGOs in translating evidence into action for climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and environmental sustainability. Before founding I4DI, Azra held senior roles at the World Bank, where she served as a Social Development Scientist, and at the American Council on Education, World Vision, and World Learning. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology of Education, two Bachelor's degrees in education, and a master's in primary education.

I4DI is excited to host an interactive, hands-on workshop that dives into the real-world challenges and trade-offs behind Nature-based Solutions (NbS). In this session, you'll step into the shoes of key players — local communities, government actors, corporate partners, and more — tasked with shaping the future of a cocoa agroforestry project.

Building on themes from the preceding panel discussion and working in small groups, you'll use I4DI's predictive modeling dashboard to simulate how changes in cocoa prices, production, and income streams affect farmer livelihoods. Each stakeholder group will bring distinct goals and nonnegotiables to the table, and navigating these constraints will be key as you negotiate trade-offs between economic, environmental, and social outcomes. The shared goal: co-design a revised five-year strategy that can move farmers above the Living Income Benchmark while addressing climate, equity, and market realities.

No NbS experience? No problem. This workshop is designed to be accessible and engaging for all attendees.

**The workshop will start promptly at 4:00 PM and end at 5:15 PM. Stay after for drinks and discussion at our casual happy hour!**





## Andrea Pozderac

### Analyst

I4DI

Andrea Pozderac serves as an analyst at I4DI, where her duties encompass operational support, project team coordination, marketing involvement, and overarching business development efforts. With seven years of rich experience, Andrea excels in project and knowledge management, event organization and facilitation, and communication responsibilities. Her expertise extends to analyzing foreign policy, energy security, climate and environmental policies, and public diplomacy with a particular focus on European affairs, the Western Balkans, and sustainable development.

In her prior roles, Andrea held various leadership positions in the European Youth Parliament and the Global-In Fellowship. She also demonstrated her subject-matter expertise through internships at the Atlantic Council's Europe Center and the Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development (CIRSD). Andrea earned an M.A. in German and European Studies and a Certificate in Diplomatic Studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She also holds a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations with a minor in International Law and Diplomacy from the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Andrea is an enthusiastic reader and enjoys creative and sports activities, including acting, scuba diving, snowboarding, and aikido.



## Penelope Kogan

### Analyst

I4DI

Penelope Kogan is an Analyst at I4DI, where she leads cross-sectoral project implementation through internal and external stakeholder coordination, financial management, and the development of key deliverables. Since joining I4DI in 2023, she has worked with clients including World Vision, Starbucks, Mars, Save the Children, and USAID to advance initiatives in climate-smart agriculture, food security, and sustainable livelihoods.

Ms. Kogan holds a Masters degree in International Development with a concentration in Refugees, Forced Migration, and Belonging from Clark University. She also obtained a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, with minors in International Development and Genocide Studies. Her interdisciplinary background has fueled her passion for pursuing a career that advocates for a more sustainable and equitable world.



**Paul Hollwedel**

**Senior Program Manager**

I4DI

Paul Hollwedel is a Senior Program Manager at I4DI, where he oversees project management, proposal development, and strategic initiatives across the Institute's portfolio. Paul has extensive experience building and leading high-impact programs that deliver genuine results.

Before joining I4DI, Paul spent nine years building and expanding early-stage business units in rural sub-Saharan Africa, leading operations in agriculture, sustainability, and malaria prevention. He has managed large-scale programs in Kenya and Nigeria, helped grow sustainable specialty food crops in Ethiopia, and directed innovative, technology-driven approaches to malaria control across the continent. Prior to the development space, Paul led teams in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa as a U.S. Marine Corps Infantry officer. He holds a Bachelor of Science in History from the U.S. Naval Academy.

# Stay in Touch!

We'd love to stay connected and continue sharing impact stories, insights, and opportunities with you.



Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for updates on our latest projects, thought leadership, and behind-the-scenes moments from our team.



Visit our [website](#) to explore our work, upcoming events, impact stories, and ways to collaborate.

