
COP30: governments join carbon industry in advancing carbon deals

Capitalism is able to take the environmental damage it causes and turn it into a business. In tropical forests, REDD+ carbon market projects (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) are one example of this. Instead of requiring polluting companies to drastically reduce their CO2 emissions, these projects allow companies to continue burning fossil fuels and profit from this practice. Through REDD+, these companies claim they are offsetting their emissions by preventing CO2 emissions elsewhere in the world, by supposedly 'saving' a tropical forest threatened by deforestation.

Almost 20 years of experience with REDD+ has revealed this program's total ineffectiveness in reversing massive deforestation and curbing climate chaos. Furthermore, REDD projects have generated new conflicts for communities and their territories, precisely in the areas where there is the highest density of such projects. (1) Despite this fact, these projects continue to be promoted as a key solution, mainly because some governments, carbon companies, consultants and big conservationist NGOs reap huge profits and massively enrich themselves from the business generated by these projects.

This, in and of itself, would be serious enough. But now, Helder Barbalho – the host of the COP30 in Brazil and governor of the state of Pará, where the event took place – has pulled out all the stops. On November 3, Barbalho enacted a law establishing the "Week of Awareness on the Importance of Carbon Credits". (2) With this measure, he seeks to raise awareness among the population that, through the use of carbon credits, it is possible to promote "decarbonization" of the economy. This is very convenient for a businessman like himself, who governs one of the Brazilian states that promotes REDD+ projects most in the country.

Without a doubt, raising awareness through special days of commemoration or weeks dedicated to important causes is laudable. On November 20, for example, Brazil celebrates National Zumbi and Black Consciousness Day. This day commemorates the death in 1695 of Zumbi dos Palmares, a *quilombola* leader, and one of the greatest figures in the fight against slavery and for the rights of the Brazilian black population. (3)

This day, which is the result of the struggle of the black movement in the country, is important because it raises awareness about this important chapter in Brazilian history. Even more importantly, it seeks to cease and reverse the effects of structural racism, which still exists in the country. Indeed, raising awareness is a fundamental step toward building a just and egalitarian society – hence, the relevance of the day of "awareness."

From this perspective, the week of 'awareness' on carbon credits distorts the meaning and importance of raising awareness. Raising awareness about a mechanism that has proven to be ineffective in halting the climate crisis, and which is colonial, racist and patriarchal, is not only bizarre, but also outrageous. (4) REDD+ has caused internal division and conflicts in indigenous, *quilombola*, and many other communities. It has transformed forests, which are sacred to these peoples, into mere carbon calculations.

The idea of doing business and profiting from climate chaos is increasingly present in climate conferences, which turns them into mere business forums. The Indonesian government, for example, arrived at COP30 with 90 million carbon credits 'in its pocket' (from, forest conservation projects, among other things) to sell to the highest bidder. It hoped to earn almost US1 billion dollars from this. (5) However, this same government, which claims to protect forests and address the climate crisis with its carbon credits, is involved in large-scale destruction of forests. For example, the government of Indonesia is carrying out one of the world's largest deforestation projects – the Merauke National Strategic Project, which will seriously impact the indigenous peoples of Papua while in Borneo, an energy program will flood vast areas of forest. (6) What appears to be a contradiction is not; in reality, it reveals the true logic of the carbon market: destruction continues, along with the false idea of "offsets".

These examples highlight the crucial importance of denouncing and raising awareness about the actions and practices of governments – such as those of Indonesia, Brazil, Japan, Norway, and many others – which promote and profit from carbon market mechanisms while sacrificing territories and the communities who depend on them. In this regard, an important contribution comes from the People's Summit, an event held in Belém that brought together 70,000 people from organizations and social movements from Brazil and other parts of the world (7). The final declaration of the People's Summit warns, for example, that the capitalist mode of production is, in fact, the main cause of the ongoing destruction of life in general, including the life of forests. It warns that supposed 'solutions' like REDD+, and the more recent Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF), only perpetuate forest destruction and exacerbate climate chaos.

[One of the articles](#) in this bulletin focuses precisely on this new mechanism. The article presents the main criticisms of TFFF raised by social movements, organizations and collectives around the world that are joining the growing resistance against this project. Even though this project is promoted in a way that is complex to understand – full of jargon and financial market equations – the article shows that the TFFF has a very simple logic: it is, once again, a mechanism designed in a top-down fashion to enrich the Global North at the expense of the Global South. For those who wish to better understand the reasons to oppose this new mechanism (which is more of the same) we recommend reading this article.

An [article from Thailand](#) captures the testimony of the Nam Sap Kham Pa Lai Conservation Group on how projects that are in the category of false green solutions – and endorsed in global forums such as the COP – threaten their community. It recounts how collective organizing has been crucial in confronting reforestation, mining, and, more recently, wind farm projects that jeopardize both the community's right to their territory and the forest they inhabit.

In [another article](#), a member of the Bribri People in Costa Rica harshly criticizes one of these false mechanisms that claims to combat climate chaos: jurisdictional REDD+. This country is one of the primary examples of this kind of program, but the article warns about what is happening behind the scenes: the government has pressured indigenous communities to accept REDD+, using basic rights like education and health as bargaining chips.

Finally, [the last article](#) presents the claims and demands of rural communities in Mozambique who are affected by eucalyptus plantations – owned by companies like Portucel. The communities are organized to demand the return of their lands which were expropriated by these companies, and they are denouncing the social and environmental impacts of these monoculture plantations – which entrepreneurs in the sector often call 'planted forests.'

Enjoy reading!

References:

- (1) WRM, 2022. [15 years of REDD: A mechanism rotten to the core](#)
- (2) [Law N.º 11260 from 03/11/2025 \(in Portuguese\)](#)
- (3) Quilombola communities are black communities of an ethnic-racial group with its own cultural identity and a specific historical trajectory stemming from its resistance to slavery and oppression.
- (4) WRM, 2016. [The Racist Colonial Roots of Western Forest Conservation: A look into a REDD project in Kenya.](#)
- (5) REDD Monitor, 2025. Indonesia's carbon trading at COP30 slammed by climate justice activists. <https://reddmonitor.substack.com/p/indonesias-carbon-trading-at-cop30>
- (6) WRM. [Indonesia: ¡Paren el Proyecto Estratégico Nacional Merauke!](#)
- (7) [People's Summit, 2025.](#)