



# Offsets and monoculture plantations: growing threats for territories

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## OUR VIEWPOINT

# Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16): Solutions for companies, losses for communities and biodiversity

**The Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is being held from October 21st to November 1st in Colombia. This initiative has failed in its goal of halting the alarming loss of biodiversity. For 30 years, instead of putting an end to extractive companies' destruction, the CBD's proposals have worsened the situation – through actions that have undermined both the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and communities, and their ability to remain in the territories they inhabit and protect.**

The destruction of biodiversity to feed corporate greed is readily apparent through alarming facts and figures: 54 percent of wetlands have disappeared since 1900; land degradation from human activities is causing the extinction of one sixth of all species; and 50 percent of agricultural expansion between 1980 and 2000 occurred on razed areas of tropical forest (1). In Asia, oil palm plantations have been the main driver of forest loss during this period.

32 years ago, during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, more than 170 countries pledged to take measures to halt this destruction. To this end, they signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). However, this initiative has failed spectacularly.

Despite their numerous declarations in support of taking action, and their adoption of goals and targets, governments have shown no real interest in taking the necessary measures to stop the destruction of biological diversity. By way of proof, one only has to review the targets established for the decade between 2010 to 2020, known as the Aichi Targets: none of them has been achieved.

The 16th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD is being held in Cali, Colombia, from October 21st to November 1st, 2024. During this gathering, government negotiators aim to evaluate the countries' progress in achieving the new targets set for the year 2030, which are included in the so-called Global Biodiversity Framework. Yet, over 85% of the countries missed the deadline to submit their new commitments before the start of the COP, revealing their ongoing lack of commitment (2).

To stop devastating biodiversity loss and try to reverse it, it would be necessary to put an end to the destruction in the first place. This destruction is caused by extractive oil companies, mining, agribusiness, plantations, hydroelectric dams, and other industries, as well as by other economic sectors that secondarily benefit from these destructive activities – such as airlines, banking, finance, investors, etc. Yet instead of stopping the destruction, the proposals implemented by the CBD tend to worsen the situation – through actions that undermine both the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and communities, and their ability to remain in the territories they inhabit and protect.

One of the concrete ways in which the CBD causes this kind of conflict is through the target known as “30 x 30,” which was promoted by large conservation NGOs. Its objective is for 30 percent of the

planet – including the world's land, fresh waters and oceans – to be declared as protected areas by 2030. However, this objective does not take into account the suffering and resistance of thousands of communities affected by the imposition of conservation areas in their territories – and the serious violations of their rights this has caused. Far from being a solution, this model of conservation without people actually generates conflict and violence, costing lives in the communities that lose control of the territories they inhabit.

Another major and worrisome threat coming from the Convention on Biological Diversity (and the corporate influence over it) is the inclusion of biodiversity offsets and credits as a legitimate mechanism to "repair" the destruction that companies have caused.

Through offsets, polluting industries assume the right to destroy territories, with the excuse that these damages and losses will be "offset" elsewhere on the planet. However, this is not possible. [In a recent Statement](#), hundreds of civil society organizations warned that "biodiversity offsets can create conflicts over the right to own and use lands, fisheries and forests, and can compete with agroecology and smallholder agriculture, undermining food sovereignty. [These offset projects] will likely drive land grabbing, the displacement of communities, increased inequality in access to land, and human rights violations – just like carbon offsets do."

This Statement warns that biodiversity offsets and credits seek to imitate carbon offsets and credits. But not only are they replicating the faults of carbon offsets and credits; biodiversity credits and offsets intensify negative impacts by including innumerable forms of life in a strategy of financialization. So far, these mechanisms have proven to benefit large corporations that continue to pollute – such as oil, mining and airline companies. They also benefit the associated chain of managers, certifiers, consultants and financiers that implement these mechanisms. Meanwhile, communities are suffering from the deception and impacts of these mechanisms, which have been widely documented by academia, the press, and other sectors.

We invite you to read the full statement, which also presents alternative proposals to another key point on the COP16 agenda: the financing of strategies to stop biodiversity loss.

This bulletin also includes articles about how tree plantations and offset projects are expanding and occupying territories, as well as other articles celebrating the resistance of communities.

One of the articles, from Gabon, documents the power of community resistance to Sequoia's attempts to install 60,000 hectares of eucalyptus plantations in the Bateke Plateau region that would be used to generate carbon credits. Another article from the Republic of Congo describes how oil companies are grabbing land to set up tree plantations for the carbon market, so that they can greenwash their image. A third article reports from two provinces in Mozambique where eucalyptus plantations have obliterated the biological and genetic diversity of the machambas (traditional cultivation areas). In the wake of the pulp industry, major homogenization occurs, and the expression of the genetic diversity of seeds and local varieties disappears.

Another article analyzes the Thai government's strategy to implement an offset-based climate policy, a concept which is inherently contradictory and which expands corporate control over community lands. And now the Thai government wants to extrapolate this idea from the climate

and apply it to biodiversity. These offset projects would be carried out in “green areas” that would cover more than 50 percent of the country.

Finally, we present the third episode of the podcast entitled “Women's Struggles for Land,” which aims to highlight the voices of women and their multiple forms of resistance to the occupation of their territories. This third episode, from Indonesia, was jointly produced with the organization, Solidaritas Perempuan, and it recounts the experiences of women in the Kalimantan region facing plantation projects and REDD projects.

This collection of cases reveals how the kinds of actions proposed at the COPs affect people's sovereignty over the territories they inhabit. Their sovereignty is indispensable in stopping the biodiversity crisis. In light of this situation, many peoples and communities around the world are reclaiming control of their territories and are fighting to defend them. In so doing, they are defending biological diversity and life itself!

- (1) [Estado actual y resultados de la IPBES | Biodiversidad Mexicana](#)
- (2) [COP16: More than 85% of countries miss UN deadline to submit nature pledges - Carbon Brief](#)

# PODCAST - Indonesia: Dayak Women Defend the Forest of Tambun Bungai

This article tells the story of a podcast that is being jointly launched by Solidaritas Perempuan, a feminist organisation from Indonesia, and WRM. This episode is the third in a series that WRM has been producing with organisations from different countries, all with a focus on women's struggles for land. This one tells the story of women's resistance to oil palm plantations, REDD and a large-scale project for food production (Food Estate) in three villages in Central Kalimantan. [This article is available in Indonesian.](#)

Access the podcast [in English here](#) and [in Indonesian here](#).

*“Haga lewun keton, petak danom, ela sampai tempun petak nana sare (Dayak language) – “Take care of your home. Don't allow yourselves to be forced to farm on the forest edge, because you are the owners the land” (1).*

Tambun Bungai is the name of a warrior from the ancient kingdom of the Ngaju Dayak tribe, the Tanjung Pematang Sawang Kingdom. The Dayak People used to call Central Kalimantan Tambun Bungai. Before investors arrived and began to dominate the Land of Tambun Bungai with their heavy machinery, the Dayak People of Central Kalimantan – especially the communities of Mantangai Hulu, Kalumpang and Sei Ahas – were self-sufficient and lived in prosperity. The harvests from their fields and vegetable gardens were abundant – more than enough to ensure their food needs from season to season. This included several types of excellent local rice varieties, such as: Garagai, Siyam, Indu Sangumang, Red Boras, Bariwit, Kawung, Baputi, Manyahi, Jambu Bahandang, Tampurihat, Luwaw kantor, Hamuntai Bahenda and Nampui. Vegetables were also abundant in their forest. There also used to be plenty of fish in the rivers. Rubber, rattan, as well as other forest products added to their prosperity and well-being.

The problems for these Dayak communities began in 1995 with two presidential decisions: one was a regulation related to Indonesia's food security situation, and the other a decree on the development of peatlands for food crop agriculture in Central Kalimantan (Decree No. 82/1995). The latter was initiated by the then Minister for Transmigration issues, Siswono Yudo Husodo. At that time, Indonesia was living under President Suharto's so-called New Order regime. The government's ambition to achieve rice self-sufficiency in the country motivated a transmigration of people to use peatlands for food production. As a result of the Peatland Clearing Project (PLG), no less than 1 million hectares of peatlands and swamps were cleared and opened up to plant rice. To create the conditions for this project, canals were built throughout the peat forests of Central Kalimantan. Nonetheless, the project was a big failure, because peatlands are not suitable for the cultivation of hybrid rice varieties.

The administration of President Jokowi – whose mandate ended on 20 October 2024 - has repeated the same mistake, by launching yet another Food Estate project in the area. This project is one of the Indonesian government's nearly 200 National Strategic Projects (PSN) for the period 2020-2024,

and its aim is to maintain national food security. The government has invested up to Rp 1.5 trillion in this project, but this second attempt has also failed.

The clearing of peatlands by the government opened the door for powerful investors to take control of the Dayak People's forests in Central Kalimantan. These forests are constantly being exploited by both private and state companies. Over the years, and in particular during the rainy season, large-scale plantations have sprung up like mushrooms in the region. According to data from the General Directorate of Plantations, Central Kalimantan has the third largest area of oil palm plantations in Indonesia. By 2022, there were almost 1.9 million hectares of oil palm plantations in Central Kalimantan, with smallholder plantations accounting for 330,000 of these hectares, and national private companies managing the remaining 1.5 million hectares.

Mining companies have also polluted the beautiful and healthy environment of the Dayak communities, and the forest cover that supports their livelihood has been continually decreasing. Due to these companies' activities, the rivers have become polluted with toxic chemicals, threatening fish and other river species with extinction. Furthermore, the Dayak people – especially the women – are finding it difficult to get traditional medicine in the forest. (2)

Large-scale oil palm plantations and mining have not been the only threats. In 2009, a REDD+ project (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) was established, called the Kalimantan Forest Climate Partnership project (KFCP). This project was a collaboration between the governments of Indonesia and Australia, and it was initiated with funding of USD 30 million and a concession area of 120,000 hectares in Mantangai sub-district, Kapuas district, Central Kalimantan. The project created problems and horizontal conflicts within the communities, because it restricted the communities' access to and control over the forest, on which they depend for their livelihood.

Herlina, a woman from Sei Ahas Village, said that the KFCP project was not implemented in a transparent manner. Information about the project was not properly shared with the community; only certain people or groups knew about it – the same people who benefited from it. The community has been victimised. People have lost their rights, access to, and control over the forest. They are no longer able to benefit from the forest, which until the arrival of the KFCP project had sustained them. REDD+ and KFCP have destroyed the forest and their livelihoods, leading to impoverishment that disproportionately affects women.

The deforestation caused by these investment projects has contributed to climate change. The seasons are no longer predictable. During the planting season, the Dayak communities – including the women – can no longer rely on local knowledge based on the constellations: the stars, which they traditionally used to guide them, no longer look the same in the sky. This is because Central Kalimantan's skies have been polluted by the increase in greenhouse gas emissions. This pollution has led to an increase in pests and floods, causing crop failure in the communities. In short, the indigenous peoples of Mantangai Hulu, Kalumpang and Sei Ahas villages have experienced several layers of systemic impoverishment; and women have been most intensely affected.

Because the Dayak women of Mantangai, Kalumpang and Sei Ahas villages did not want to give up hope, they began to build a collective resistance movement, starting with discussions to build understanding, raise awareness and increase their knowledge. They have initiated efforts to



reclaim and defend their forests, realizing that the forest is a source of food for their families, as well as a pharmacy and a culturally significant space. Above all, the forest sustains their lives and that of future generations. They also have held trainings to build their courage to speak out about the situation and the problems they have been facing ever since their forest began to be controlled by corporations. One of the strategies they have been using to defend their land from powerful investors is collectively gardening a variety of vegetables and herbal plants. They have also been weaving with rattan, which is a plant found in their forest. Through their weaving, women have recorded the history of Dayak civilisation, which is very closely related to nature and the forest. For indigenous women, continuing to weave is a form of resistance to the various injustices they have been experiencing.

The Dayak women have visited governmental institutions to demand justice and reclaim their forest. They have the support of Solidaritas Perempuan, an organisation that has consistently accompanied the struggle of the people of Sei Ahas, Kalimpang and Mantagai Hulu. Solidaritas Perempuan provides space for women to voice their struggles, not only in the region, but also at the national and even international levels.

So far, their struggles have resulted in three major victories. One victory is that the KFCP project got cancelled (though a local regulation continues to restrict communities from using fire in their traditional way). A second victory is that the palm oil company active in Sei Ahas village has had its business licence revoked. And a third victory is that the women, together with the people of Kalumpang village, have made the decision to reject the Food Estate project in their village. According to the women and their communities, these projects will not bring them welfare, but only take over and control their lands. In the end, this path would lead to increased marginalization for the community, and in particular for the women – as they would be separated from the spaces on which they have built their lives and livelihoods.

### **Yuni Warlif dan Rima Bilaut (Solidaritas Perempuan)**

- (1) Maneser Panatau Tatu Hiang: Diving into the wealth of our ancestors, book by Tjilik Riwut.
- (2) Dijah, Dayak woman from Mantagai Hulu village, Kapuas district, Central Kalimantan. 28 June 2024



# Gabon: Controversy over a eucalyptus monoculture project in the Bateke Plateaux

**The company Sequoia has obtained a lease over 60,000 hectares for a eucalyptus monoculture project in the Haut-Ogooué province, Gabon. Meanwhile, statements from communities and a survey of more than 1,400 people from the impacted region reveal a total rejection of this plantation project. Additionally, the Ministers of Oil and Tourism, and the First Quaestor of the Economic and Social Environmental Council in the current Gabonese government have openly expressed an unfavorable position on the project.**

Since 2021, initial implementation of a eucalyptus monoculture project has put the populations of the Plateaux and Djouori-Agnili departments on alert. These departments are in the Haut-Ogooué province of Gabon, in Central Africa. Gabon belongs to the Congo Basin, which is considered to be the second largest tropical forest after the Amazon. More than 80 percent of the country's territory is covered by forest; our focus in this article is on the savannahs of the Batéké Plateaux, a different kind of ecosystem with unique landscapes.

In the departments of Plateaux and Djouori-Agnili, like in many parts of the world, agriculture as well as the sale of raw, and/or processed products from the crops grown, represent the main sources of subsistence for most of the population. This is why the announcement to implement a monoculture mega-project on the Plateau has caused great concern among communities in the region.

Concerns have grown upon hearing that the project promoter also intends to sell carbon credits from the planting of the eucalyptus trees. Consultants for these polluting companies try to convince governments that it is important to plant trees in order to protect forests and help the climate.

In general, when companies come with their consultants to a country, they make promises that their tree plantations will support the national economy, protect the forest and create jobs. They talk to leaders about carbon and the climate, claiming that these trees will protect the environment. In reality, their true intention is to appropriate community lands so that they can plant trees for profit. In the case of the eucalyptus project in the Bateke Plateaux in Gabon, the Sequoia company has already registered its eucalyptus plantation project with Verra, the main organization that certifies carbon credit projects. (1) This would suggest that the eucalyptus project in the Bateke Plateaux, called AODA, is also envisioned as a carbon credit project.

## **Former director of Olam Gabon is behind this project**

The eucalyptus monoculture project is falsely named LAPHO (Leconi Agroforestry Project in Haut-Ogooué), a clear contradiction because eucalyptus does not lend itself to agroforestry. The project claims to have obtained 60,000 hectares for the planting of eucalyptus in this savannah region, a serious threat both to the people living on the plateaux and to the ecology.

The company promoting this project is Sequoia Plantation, which was created by a fund based in the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi). The main shareholder is Gagan Gupta, the former director of Olam Gabon – a company which has taken over almost all of Gabon's economic sectors. The Sequoia project would apparently constitute a group of economic activities under the management of the Gabon Special Economic Zone (GSEZ). GSEZ is considered to be a front company for the Bongo family, which ruled Gabon for decades until it was overthrown in a military coup in 2023.

## **Project advanced during the Covid period**

During the Covid-19 period in 2021, populations on the Plateau noticed the movement of vehicles and heavy machinery behind the village of Kandouo, in the eastern part of Haut-Ogooué province. The earthworks for a nursery and housing for workers were carried out without consulting the populations. In the process, the graves of their ancestors were razed. The concerned families approached the operators on the ground to complain about this situation; the operators told them to take up their concern with the president (of the country) at the time, Ali Bongo Ondimba. Thus, it became evident that the Bongo family was involved in this project. Going about setting up the plantations in this way – without public and participatory consultation with local populations – clearly demonstrated an abuse of power and a disregard for Gabonese regulations. After these occurrences, news of the project spread throughout society.

It was in this context that the organization, CREPB (Collectif des Ressortissants et Ecologistes des Plateaux Batéké), began engaging with ministries and institutions of the Gabonese government in early 2023. Yet their requests to access documentation on the project were ignored – revealing the dubious evolution of the project. The CREPB has initiated multiplied administrative procedures, organized press conferences to challenge national and international opinion and informed about the dangers of plantations and non-regulatory procedures of the project. The actions of CREPB have prompted the Sequoia company to turn to the Prime Minister's Office for support.

Meanwhile, the CREPB and JVE Associations (Young Volunteers for the Environment) organized and carried out a collaborative awareness mission in the Plateaux, in December 2023. Eventually, after continued pressure from the ground, Sequoia organized a so-called public consultation ceremony on July 31, 2023. However, instead of holding this event in the localities affected by the project in the Plateaux and Djouori-Agnili departments, the company organized the activity in Franceville, several kilometers from the site planned for the eucalyptus plantations. Sequoia company also publicly declared the cessation of its activities on December 7, 2023 by sending a letter to the Prime Minister's Office and four other ministries.

On March 23 and 24, 2024, the company resumed its consultations. This included a consultation in the village of Kandouo, which is adjacent to the Sequoia project plantations, and one in Bongoville, further away from the plantation site. On May 8, 2024, Sequoia submitted its environmental impact study report to the Department of Environment and Sustainable Development. The Department issued a press release on May 22 calling on interested parties to view and comment on the report. Four civil society organisations submitted a joint observation on the report, highlighting the project's shortcomings and the serious dangers it poses.

Among other things, the organisations showed (1) the discrepancy between the description of the project and its actual content; (2) the lack of participatory mapping; (3) the botched study parameters (e.g. failure to take into account animal and hydrological resources; small sampling sizes; and false identification of species in sites outside the area intended for exploitation); (4) the risks of groundwater pollution with pesticides; (5) the risks of drying up groundwater sources; (6) environmental disruption (through the destruction of plant and animal species); (7) the loss of biodiversity; (8) the risks of mega-fires; (9) the risks of the appearance of serious illnesses in impacted populations due to the effects of pesticides and the company's activities; (10) the risks of endangering local populations and forcing them to emigrate; (11) the lack of mitigation measures to address these risks; and (12) the farce of the public consultations. In short, the company's environmental impact study report had very serious omissions and shortcomings.

Despite the evidence of these shortcomings, the committee that evaluated the impact study chose only to address the discrepancy between the formulation of the project and its content, the absence of a budgeted environmental management plan, and the absence of a project management monitoring committee. Based on this reduced list of deficiencies, the evaluation committee rejected the report at first reading, and asked Sequoia to address or complete these elements.

### **Total rejection of the project**

The numerous missions that CREPB and others carried out in the heart of the Batéke Plateaux revealed that the population totally reject the Sequoia company's eucalyptus plantation project. The testimony of the district chief Djouani/Ompouyi reflects the opinion expressed in all the villages we visited: “We will never accept the monopolization of our land for eucalyptus trees. The Téké people only plant trees that nourish; go and see all our old villages and you will find: mango trees, safou trees, avocado trees – not the trees that will destroy our land, not the eucalyptus trees.” Except for the divided opinions in the village of Kandouo (where the nurseries are located), the people of all the other localities in the departments concerned are 100 percent hostile to the plantation project. The same goes for all the villages of Plateaux and Djouori Agnili, as well as the towns of Leconi and Bongoville. **A survey of 1,432 people that CREPB carried out recorded 100 percent rejection of the project.**

Since then, the organisations CREPB, JVE, Copil-Citoyen, Muyissi Environnement and the Bongo Ayouma Foundation have come together to collectively use administrative procedures to oppose the project. Specific actions they are taking include: drafting and submitting interpellations to governing bodies; analysing the Sequoia environmental impact study; and producing and submitting their collective observations to the Department of the Environment and Sustainable Development, as well as to television and radio broadcasts. (2) The work of these associations is resonating positively with national and international opinion, which is taking up the cause to preserve the environment of the Batéke Plateaux.

The Prefect of Djouori Agnili called for the resumption of real public consultations that respect the legal standards. Meanwhile, local populations held a public demonstration to oppose the project when the Minister of Agriculture visited Kandouo and Bongoville. Furthermore, high authorities inside the current government of Gabon – such as the Ministers of Oil and Tourism, and the First Quaestor of the Economic and Social Environmental Council (member of the parliamentary

assembly responsible for internal finances and administration) – have openly expressed an unfavorable position on the project. (3)

## **Perspectives**

The struggle of local populations and environmental associations against the Sequoia company's eucalyptus project is currently at a cross-road. Despite well-documented proof of the dangers of eucalyptus monocultures, and the overwhelming opposition of neighboring villages to the plantation project, Sequoia's illegal actions are gaining momentum.

But the populations and associations that oppose the project are on alert and are closely following its development. People are deeply concerned that the plantations will jeopardize their food sovereignty, and they have expressed their opposition to them. Community leaders continue to repeat what communities have expressed they need in terms of development:

“We need solutions to the elephant intrusions, and we need to improve family farming; plus road construction. No to eucalyptus,” notes the village chief of Ekouyi. The village chief of Souba, Department of Djouori Agnili, adds: “No to eucalyptus trees, yes to tractors for local crops.”

Likewise, the Chiefs of the villages of Saye, Kabala and Akou say: “We need solutions for agriculture and road construction, not eucalyptus,” and “We need mechanization for our agriculture, because in the Plateaux we plant cassava, pineapple, corn and yams, not eucalyptus.”

### **DR. René Noël Poligui (CREPB) and Remi Messessi Komlan (JVE GABON)**

(1) [Leconi Agroforestry Project in Haut-Ogooue \(LAPHO\). VCS ID-Nr. 4543. Project «under development».](#)

(2) [Radio Broadcasts.](#)

(3) <https://magazinesuperstar.com/solidarite-internationale-bertin-kourouvi-sallie-a-bertrand-zibi-pour-contrer-les-plantations-deucalyptus-au-gabon/>

# Republic of Congo: expansion of tree plantations linked to the carbon market - the underside of an opaque business and greenwashing

**In Congo-Brazzaville, tree planting projects intended for carbon markets have proliferated over the past four years. This concerns large-scale developments of monocultures initiated by oil companies under the seductive term of carbon neutrality and promises of job creation for communities. In reality, they are neither a solution to the climate crisis nor a benefit for the communities of Congo.**

Oil and gas industries represent the main source of global emissions. (1) Instead of reducing their emissions, they take advantage of human concern about climate change to promote misleading plans for the expansion of tree planting as a solution to offsetting their emissions. (2) In a vicious circle, very opaque plantation projects are developing, generating new sources of income for plantation companies and providing multinationals a justification to continue to pollute. Twenty years earlier, organizations were already sounding the alarm over greenwashing claims that the expansion of plantations could offset carbon emissions. (3) The devastating effects of these projects, however, do not appear in the advertising messages.

In the Republic of Congo, reforestation projects began in 1936, after colonial destruction. (4) A National Reforestation Service was created and a national afforestation and reforestation program put in place to install one million hectares of plantations. (5) In 2013, the country launched its first carbon project as part of the REDD+ process, the financing of which has not yet been resolved. (6) The expansion of carbon projects initiated by private entities begins in 2019, after several reforms including the revision of the Forest Code, the adoption of a REDD+ strategy and the establishment of a Carbon Task Force. (7)

In the space of four years, between 2019 and 2023, seven long-term lease contracts were concluded between the government and the extractive industries for a total of approximately 570,000 hectares- an area larger than the country of Luxembourg (see the map).

Among the signatories of these lease contracts are European multinationals operating in the country and the consultancy firm Forest Management Resource (FRM). FRM is the pioneer of carbon plantation projects in Congo and is now associated with the majority of multinationals, with its omnipresence carrying the scent of mixing roles and conflicts of interest.

Let's come first to the contracts, these are lease contracts for land the state inherited from the colonial era, this time leased out for the development of carbon compensation projects, thus encouraging the continuity of carbon pollution. This lease contract system presents a colonial reconquest of agricultural land obtained through colonial heritage (9), in a very opaque and non-consensual approach. The architecture of this approach is generally characterized by the absence of a framework to make the lease contracts public, thus reinforcing opacity of information that ought to be public. Specifically, we note the absence of community consultation before the start of





Now, it is important to understand the impact of the expansion of these projects on forest-dependent communities and what is behind these projects.

### **FRM COFOR: communities question an opaque carbon market**

In 2019, Forêt Ressources Management, created a subsidiary called Congo Forest Plantation (COFOR), a company under Congolese law. The same year, it signed a long-term lease contract with the government of Congo to develop the reforestation at Madingou-Kayes. The company is currently developing four projects with its investors. Interviewed by the Makanisi blog, the owner of the company stated that the projects will establish acacia-cassava and eucalyptus plantations, develop a sawmilling and plywood sector with an attractive promise of creating thousands jobs for communities. (12) Another objective of the project is to contribute to climate change mitigation through plantations. (13)

But the reality looks very different. Madingou-Kayes communities interviewed state that “we do not have access to either the lease contract or the project document. We are even surprised to hear that there are carbon projects here. All we know is not to enter this forest...”. Apart from the lack of information, the consent of the communities was evidently not obtained before the start of the project.

### **BACASI: greenwashing, violence against communities, a useless project for the country**

The BaCaSi project is a partnership of several entities, among others: French oil company Total Energies and the company Forêt Ressources Management, via its Congolese subsidiary Forest Neutral Congo and the Republic of Congo. The project aims to develop a 40,000-hectare monoculture plantation within a project area of 55,000 hectares (14), while paradoxically, the area conceded as lease in 2022 is 70,089 hectares. This raises questions about other unstated objectives of the project.

In addition, the project is said to involve ‘a partnership based on advanced local agriculture and forestry, serving integrated development and climate action, with co-benefits such as jobs as well as social projects in the areas of nutrition, health and education.’ (14)

However, research by local and international organizations has revealed that this is a very controversial project. In particular, farmers and indigenous populations were ordered to leave their land, an indication of the project's grabbing policy, some land-owning communities also received low compensation from the authorities (some at a rate of one dollar per hectare) and lost their livelihoods, which reinforces their food insecurity and poverty. (15) The revelations about the Bakasi project do not stop there. “Because this is not only be about carbon credits, the plantation in reality will only offset 2 percent of the carbon emissions of the oil company Total Energies, so behind this operation, is a question of money and not a question of corporate philanthropy” remarks a human rights defender who concludes that this project is not useful for the Republic of Congo.



## **Sequoia plantation: wood processing and opaque credit ambition**

After multiple attempts to develop a destructive plantation project which has been held in check by communities and civil society in Gabon (16, see also article in this bulletin), the company Séquoia Plantations found refuge in the Republic of Congo, thanks to significant support granted by the authorities, declared one of the company's managers. (17) Sequoia, founded by the multinational OLAM, is now part of the Equitane group, based in Dubai. Two lease contracts have been concluded for two projects currently under development: a 36,000-hectare replanting project was granted in May 2023 and the 69,000-hectare project obtained a lease in 2022, representing a total investment of 96.5 million Euros. (18)

Although according to the project document (19), the project focus is on the establishment of new tree plantations, plantation wood is already being harvested and processed at the site, thus raising questions about adding new to old plantations. Indeed, comments by the company manager point to objectives beyond those acknowledged in the project documents. During an interview (19), the manager suggested that his company will carry out large-scale plantations, with a view to fighting climate change and while reducing their carbon footprint. On the other hand, a resident of Mandingou-Kaye denounces the lack of accessibility to the lease contract and a consultation process tailored to local authorities. It is important to ultimately establish the existence of an unacknowledged carbon agenda and that the projects were developed with only partial information available.

## **ECO ZAMBA : excessive opportunism and unpredictable impacts**

EcoZamba is a project of the National Oil Company of Congo, taking place in the savannah zone of the Congo Plateau. A 30-year lease contract was concluded in 2024 with the government. The contract grants the company the use of 168,720 hectares of land. Afforestation and agroforestry projects said to cover 50,000 hectares aim, among other things, at the sale of carbon credits. (20)

Some NGOs are skeptical about the impacts of this project on communities and the environment. According to them, “reforestation is not the priority oil companies. Their calling is to produce and market oil. They are launching into a sector that is not theirs. It’s out of simple opportunism. Environmentally, we are losing our savannah ecosystem with impacts on animals, birds and insects that can only thrive in savannah areas.” The cost of financing the project has not been revealed, and neither has the lease contract been made public. (21)

## **RENCO : the Mbé carbon garden project**

The government of the Republic of Congo and the company RENCO GREEN SARLU, a subsidiary of the Italian multinational RENCO SPA, signed a partnership agreement on July 28, 2023 as part of the Carbone-Mbé Garden initiative. The project aims to establish acacia plantations on 40,050 hectares and market the carbon of the planted trees. Project plans include the proposal to establish 1,200 hectares of agroforestry plantations for the benefit of communities, following an “Acacia-Manioc” agroforestry model, with the plan to set up one hundred and fifty (150) hectares per year and rotations of eight years. (22)

The existing law grants exclusivity of the carbon credits generated in the plantations established on the lease lands that are part of the State forest domain to the private company that holds the lease. Thus, ultimately, the project does not provide for any benefit sharing plan from the carbon sold with the communities.

Additional carbon projects have been awarded in the Republic of Congo, in the forestry and conservation industry sectors. Among others, the forest industry of Ouessou (23); the logging companies Congolaise Industrielle de Bois and Yuan Dong Forestry Company, and the conservation NGO Wildlife Conservation Society have been awarded permits for carbon projects. (24) Also, African Park Network, manager of the Odzala-Kokoua National Park, has expressed its intention to diversify its field of activity into carbon credits. (25)

Ultimately, the interest of oil extraction companies remains to continue to extract fossil fuels, as well as to do business in the carbon market, which provides a double benefit for them. (26) To do this, they develop deceptive projects, seduce communities and use very opaque approaches. Meanwhile, the roots of the problem remain intact, including: climate change caused by the use of fossil fuels and communities lacking access and protection of their customary lands. So, no matter how large it is, no tree plantation will ever be able to absorb the carbon emitted by oil activities and will never solve the problems of communities dependent on land and forests.

### **Bernadin Yassine NGOUMBA, defender of human rights and the environment, and the WRM**

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- (13) Paul Bertaux et al. Les plantations forestières en Afrique Centrale. 2020.
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# Thailand's offset-based 'climate policy': more climate chaos and injustice

**With World Bank support, the Thai government is moving quickly to implement its 'climate policy' based on carbon offsetting through the use of so-called 'green areas'. These areas are projected to cover no less than half of the country's area. Yet hidden behind this 'green' discourse is an economic policy that is heavily reliant on the continued use of fossil fuels. [Available in Thai.](#)**

Buying carbon credits from forests or tree planting projects under the REDD mechanism (Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) has become very popular worldwide. REDD has enabled many companies and governments to claim they are 'carbon neutral'— despite the fact that the mechanism has proven to be a failure. This strategy fails because carbon 'stored' in trees, once emitted, has a very different impact on the climate than carbon emitted from underground 'stores' of oil, gas or coal (1). Thus, after more than 18 years of REDD projects and programmes worldwide, the climate crisis has only worsened. Meanwhile, the only way to reverse climate chaos is to stop the extraction of fossil fuels.

Following the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 – the gathering that put the climate issue on the international agenda – the Thai government started to formulate and implement its 'climate policy'. Thailand has been particularly keen to base its policy on carbon offsetting. Carbon offsetting is an attractive option for polluting industries, because it is cheaper than actually reducing their emissions from burning fossil fuels. Carbon offsets allow companies to buy carbon credits from a project located elsewhere; in other words, it enables them to 'buy' the right to continue polluting.

After the REDD mechanism was launched internationally in 2007, the Thai ministry of Natural Resources and Environment created the Thailand Greenhouse Gas Organisation (TGO) to promote carbon offsetting and carbon trading. In 2009, Thailand became a member of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank to 'get ready' for REDD. In 2014, the government set up the Thailand Voluntary Emission Reduction (T-VER) scheme, regulated by the TGO. After ratifying the Paris Agreement (2016), Thailand formulated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to combat climate change, which included: reducing its GHG emissions by up to 40% by the year 2030; becoming 'carbon-neutral' by 2050; and becoming 'net-zero' in terms of GHG emissions by 2065.

The World Bank's support, via the FCPF, has been critical in enabling the Thai government to formulate its REDD strategy for the period 2023-2037. In 2021, the government presented its REDD strategy to the Thai parliament for approval. The target of the strategy is to increase the country's forest cover from 31% (the current amount) to up to 40% in 2037. The Thai government claims this would lead to CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions of up to 120 million tons. While this proposal is still awaiting parliamentary approval – and the voluminous funding expected to come from both the World Bank and other donors following said approval – the Thai government announced an even more ambitious plan for offsetting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It aims to use so-called 'green areas' to offset GHG emissions, with the goal of covering 55% of the country's territory (more than half!) with these areas.

The creation of ‘green areas’ instead of forests creates incentives for private companies to invest in not just reforestation projects but, also, industrial oil palm plantations, and any kind of tree monoculture project – such as eucalyptus, acacia, rubber or teak plantations. These companies are then allowed to get carbon credits for these projects, which allegedly offset their emissions. In recent decades, industrial oil palm expansion has been one of the largest direct cause of tropical deforestation worldwide, and therefore a major source of CO2 emissions. At present, Thailand has about 1 million hectares of oil palm plantations and plans to further expand this area in the coming years (2). All industrial large-scale tree monoculture projects have major impacts, including massive land grabbing, ecological impacts, the use of violence, and forced evictions.

The plan to implement these ‘green areas’ and incorporate more than half of the country’s area into carbon offsetting schemes is being coordinated under the auspices of the T-VER programme. This plan anticipates an additional massive area of tree plantations totalling 30 million Rai (4.8 million hectares). As of September 2024, 460 projects had been registered under the programme, 87 of which involve tree plantations. The claim is that, together, they will purportedly prevent 13 million tons of CO2 emissions.

### **Thailand’s economic policy perpetuates fossil fuel dependency**

The central role that carbon offsets have in Thailand’s ‘climate policy’ can be better understood when one looks at Thailand’s economic development plans and energy matrix. Currently, 70% of Thailand’s GHG emissions come from the burning of fossil fuels. The 2024 draft energy plan of the government for the period of 2024-2037 foresees that fossil fuels – in particular gas and coal – will continue to be Thailand’s main source of energy, accounting for 48% of the country’s energy supply. This source will be complemented by solar energy and other renewable energy sources (32%), hydropower (17%), and other sources.

Thailand’s dependency on fossil fuels underpins the fact that its economic development policy is focused on implementing a network of 15 so-called “Special Economic Zones”, including so-called “economic corridors” (3). These areas ensure special conditions for investors, including tax incentives and concession periods of up to 99 years. These zones are expected to attract foreign investments, especially from China, Japan and the USA.

But these projects will inevitably also lead to more land- and sea-grabbing, as well as more fossil fuel-based GHG emissions, due to all the construction, transportation and industrial activities involved. For example, the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) planned in the South of Thailand will cover 14 provinces. The pilot sites will be in the Ranong, Chumphon, Nakhon, Thammarat and Surat Thani provinces, covering a total area of 300,000 Rai (48,000 hectares). This project will include a deep sea port, and chemical, petroleum-based and food processing industries. The SEC will destroy coastal and forest areas, evict communities, and heavily impact the food security of nearby communities. For context, this is a region where numerous communities depend on mangroves; the region also includes a Ramsar site (4) for biodiversity conservation.

### **Corporate profiteering and greenwashing**

Rather than addressing the severe problem of climate chaos and its root causes, the Thai government’s ‘climate policy’ – like that of so many other nations – benefits international investors

and the country's already privileged private sector. This 'climate policy' also provides an additional benefit to highly-polluting fossil fuel companies; it enables them to greenwash and direct attention away from destructive activities and the multiple violations of XXX that they commit.

One example of companies greenwashing and distracting attention from violations they commit is the case of the Thai national oil and gas company, PTT. PTT imports gas from Myanmar to ensure gas provision in Thailand. The payments that PTT makes to the Myanmar military regime allows that regime to continue its bloody war against its own people (5). Air strikes by the Myanmar army have already killed thousands of Myanmar citizens, and millions of its citizens have become refugees. However, PTT with its participation in the T-VER offset programme projects an image of a socially and environmentally responsible company. In 2023, it announced it will 'reforest' 2 million rai (320,000 hectares) nationwide by 2030. Its CEO claims that PTT 'has strictly adhered to its mission of maintaining energy security, as well as taking care of society and the environment over the past 45 years' (6).

### **More social injustice and more resistance**

Communities in Thailand who live in, depend on and take care of forests have had to deal with at least two major threats: attacks on their territory as the result of a destructive economic policy (including the SEZs); and a violent and authoritarian conservationist policy that constantly tries to evict them from the forest (7). And now, the rush to install carbon projects that would take control over their land – all under the guise of 'offsetting' pollution elsewhere – is an additional threat they will increasingly face.

As for the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) in the South of Thailand, communities have already been protesting these plans. They have written letters to investors expressing their concerns, including about how this project is a threat to their livelihoods. But, like in other countries, communities in Thailand often accept carbon projects because of the benefits promised to them by the government and NGOs. In Thailand, 89 communities registered 121 so-called 'community forests' under the T-VER scheme, including communities in the South that depend on mangrove forests. Perhaps one reason communities go along with these projects is because they do not directly involve the overtly visible destruction that other projects – such as mining, tree plantations, deep sea ports, and industrial zones – entail.

Consequently, several communities in the South of Thailand have already signed contracts for up to 30 years to sell carbon credits (8). According to these contracts, communities would receive 20% of the carbon credit sales, while 70% would go to the carbon project developer, and 10% to the government. To receive their part, the community needs to make sure that the carbon 'stored' in the mangrove areas will not only be kept there, but will also increase over the project period. However, what this means in practice is not clear; the contract does not clearly talk about, for example, restrictions on entering and using the mangrove forests. What the contract for the carbon project does say is that it will pay community people to work for the project – which means monitoring the mangrove area against potential threats. But what are those threats, if the communities have always taken care of the forest?

Experience elsewhere has shown us that such 'threats' are most often the community members themselves, when they want to cut down a tree or otherwise intend to 'disturb' the carbon stored



in the mangrove. These projects also engender conflicts within communities. For example, it is common for there to be divisions between a minority that in some way benefits from the project (e.g. through jobs), and a majority that is excluded from these benefits and even harmed by the project. Conflicts are very likely in the case of Thailand, where people on the ground in forest areas have historically been ignored, persecuted, and seen as not having any right to the land. Due to this historical precedent of ignoring forest dwellers' rights, the new 'right holders' of carbon (companies promoting and purchasing the carbon credits) usually do not properly inform the community about their projects, let alone seek their consent.

But increasingly, communities and people's movements across Thailand have begun to talk about and seek to better understand what is really going on with the government's 'climate policy'. They are talking about how carbon offset schemes tend to worsen the climate chaos and cause more social injustice, rather than doing the opposite (9).

Their struggle can help us address the multiple crises Thailand is facing, by pointing us in a new direction: instead of promoting carbon offset schemes that increase corporate profits based on the extraction and burning of fossil fuels, we can promote and recognize the rights of forest-dependent communities – such as the communities in the Southern mangrove forests of Thailand who depend on and have taken care of these forests for many generations. Supporting their struggles, and their demands, can advance both social and climate justice in the country.

**WRM International Secretariat, with input from Surin Onprom (independent researcher) and Bandita Yangdee (Center for Ecological Awareness Building)**

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- (2) <https://www.krungsri.com/en/research/industry/industry-outlook/agriculture/palm-oil/io/plam-oil-industry-2024-2026>
- (3) <https://www.thailand.go.th/issue-focus-detail/006-023>
- (4) So-called wetlands of international importance, see [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)
- (5) <https://globalmayday.net/bloodmoneymyanmar/>
- (6) <https://www.nationthailand.com/business/corporate/40030072>
- (7) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin-articles/forest-colonialism-in-thailand>
- (8) <https://dialogue.earth/en/nature/thailand-turns-to-mangrove-carbon-credits-despite-scepticism/>
- (9) The People's Network for Climate Justice and Against Greenwashing. Stop Greenwashing Say No to Carbon Offset End the false solutions to climate crisis. 14 October 2024, [See here](#).



# Portucel/Navigator and eucalyptus in Mozambique: “What the company leaves for the population is 0%”

**Besides the direct impacts on communities' lives, eucalyptus monoculture plantations represent absurd and obscene inequality. A group of 45 community people with whom we spoke was shocked to learn that it would take them 2,300 years of non-stop work to collectively earn the same amount that a single Portuguese family, one of the owners of the plantation company they work for, earned in one single year from the profits of their shares in the company.**

*“The stream is drying up. Over there, at that low-lying area, the eucalyptus is taking all the water; we aren't managing to produce well.”*

*“Now three or four women have to fetch water together, otherwise it's no longer possible [because of harassment by the company's security guards].”*

The above sentences and others below were said in August 2024 by community members of Nhamacoa, Nhamaduri and Cortina-de-ferro, in Gondola and Sussundenga districts, Manica province, Mozambique. Besides these, dozens of other testimonies were heard. They reveal the impacts suffered with the arrival of Portucel and its eucalyptus plantations in the region. These are reports of indignation in the face of empty promises of employment and improved infrastructure on the ground, as well as of conflicts with company representatives, guards and local authorities.

*“In that patch of land Portucel cut down the trees and removed the stumps to plant eucalyptus [...] It was an area of forest and machambas [small plots for cultivating food crops].”*

*“The company promised [to build a] school, well, bridge, fix the road, and so far, nothing! All it did was give us a few kid goats and expired seeds.”*

*“The machamba I inherited is completely surrounded by eucalyptus; it is no longer productive because of the shade.”*

The company has established not even 10% of the 240,000 hectares of plantations it intends to put in place as part of its eucalyptus “forestry” project. However, even this incipient presence has been enough to bring about various kinds of problems mentioned by the communities.

## Who is Portucel?

Portucel Moçambique is a eucalyptus plantation company for producing cellulose, created in 2009 by Portuguese giant The Navigator Company, one of Europe's largest paper and pulp corporations, and Portugal's third largest exporter, accounting for 1% of the country's GDP (1). In Mozambique, Portucel obtained from the government a concession to use 356,000 hectares for 50 years, renewable after that time, to set up the country's largest pulp production project meant for export.

It relies on planting extensive eucalyptus monoculture plantations in Zambézia and Manica provinces. The US\$2.5 billion investment had a 20% stake from the World Bank, through the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

In October 2024, 10 years after planting began, the company's plantations cover only 14,000 hectares, and the eucalyptus chip mill promised for 2023 never materialized. In 2020, the company started cutting to obtain its first crop, exporting raw timber. Since then, it has sent nine shiploads of eucalyptus trunks from the port of Beira to Portugal, totaling 285,000 cubic meters of wood (2).

After a period of delays and uncertainty, Portucel – Navigator's largest investment outside of Portugal – renewed its promise to build a wood chip mill by 2026 and a pulp mill between 2032 and 2034. Hence, it is forecast that the company will expand its green deserts of eucalyptus over the next two years, reaching at least 40,000 hectares.

### **Portucel's relations with communities**

In its advertising, Portucel states it has already obtained 4,000 land cession agreements from families, stressing its “permanent dialogue” and alleged “monthly meetings with communities” (3). As for jobs, recently the company published a list of supposed positive returns from its plantations, with “qualified employment and professional mobility” appearing in first place (4). However, based on numerous accounts heard on several visits we made to communities affected by Portucel in the two provinces in question, we can state that the company's publicity is absurdly fantastical. The lack of transparency of the pitiful community consultations, the small number of job offerings and the precarious working conditions have been recorded many times by means of visits, accounts and scientific publications (5). All this evidence was once again corroborated by the testimonies recently heard in Manica province.

### **Obscene accumulation**

However, one of the statements made by Portucel in its advertising cannot be denied: that its activity means “wealth and added value generation in the country”. Doubtless, the acquisition of cheap lands in the Global South by corporations from the Global North, with the support of international agencies, associated with the employment of highly exploited cheap labor, represents gigantic possibilities for generating wealth IN the country. It does not mean, however, that the wealth REMAINS in the country, and even less with the PEOPLE of that country.

The case of Portucel/Navigator, the self-proclaimed “world's most sustainable forestry company” (6), is an example of how the propaganda of sustainability and of social benefits legitimizes a process of primitive accumulation (appropriation of extensive tracts of land) that allows a corporation from the Global North to transform people and nature into mere resources of production (labor and land) and insert them – at a very low cost – in the circuit of expanded reproduction of its capital.

Although communities denounce countless irregularities and violations by Portucel/Navigator, the very rules of the game endorse the injustice that the business represents. For example, in 2022, Navigator distributed 200 million euros in dividends to its (few) owners. Of this, 70% went to the Semapa conglomerate, which belongs almost totally (83%) to Sodim, the holding company of the

Queiroz Pereira family (7). A group of 45 dwellers from the communities with whom we spoke was shocked to learn that it would take more than 2300 years (!) of non-stop work – assuming they got paid the agreed daily rate, which is not always the case – to collectively earn the same amount received in one year by the heirs of a single family, only taking into account what they earn in terms of profits due to their ownership of a company's shares, that is, without necessarily having worked (8). This comparison exposes absurd and obscene inequality levels, naturalized by a development model that basically promotes land grabbing and, in Mozambique, is materialized in the expanding eucalyptus monoculture plantations of Manica and Zambézia provinces.

*“The company got here saying ‘whoever hands over the land will get a job.’”*

*“Work lasts 15 or 30 days then it ends. And they deduct everything they can from the pay.”*

*“Payment is always late and disorganized.”*

*“They gave us company caps and T-shirts just to take photos.”*

## **Resistance**

Faced with the injustice that the corporation does its best to cover up or ‘wash’, part of those affected, in conjunction with community associations and partner organizations, insist in resisting the green deserts of tree plantations.

With this aim in mind, a gathering was held in August 2024 in Manica province. It brought together 50 members of communities affected by tree plantations and was organized by Justiça Ambiental, the World Rainforest Movement, Missão Tabita and the Montes Errego Young Combatants' Association. Communities were visited and several reports of violations were heard, including of the right to community consultation, labor rights and the right to physical integrity, as well as accounts of environmental impacts that affect food production by communities that surround plantations. While some still believe the companies will fulfill their promises – build schools, build bridges, “give” jobs –, others feel indignation, and the will to no longer allow the planting of new areas and to take back areas unduly appropriated by the company.

Based on the gathering, on the International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations (September 21), Justiça Ambiental published a statement celebrating resistance to the plans of forestry corporations and urging the Government of Mozambique to invest in diversified food production based on agro-ecology, as well as to promote and facilitate community-based income generation initiatives (9).

Hopefully the Mozambican people and communities will make use of their constitutional right to resist whenever they need, so that the sovereignty of those who live from the land will prevail over those who only want to profit from it!

## **WRM International Secretariat**

(1) As indicated by Agroportal in May 2024. [See here](#).

(2) As indicated by material made public by Portucel in October 2024, [available here](#).

- (3) Ditto.
- (4) Ditto.
- (5) For more details, check [publications by Justiça Ambiental here](#) and [here](#), [WRM](#) and [Observatório do Meio Rural de Moçambique](#).
- (6) According to a press release from Navigator in July 2024, [available here](#).
- (7) Data regarding the distribution of dividends obtained from [the corporation's website](#); data regarding the corporation's shareholder makeup [available at the corporation's accounts' report](#); and information referent to Sodim obtained from [Jornal de Negocios](#).
- (8) Considering the daily remuneration of 3 euros (about 210 meticaís) paid by Portucel per manual worker, it would require a group of 45 workers selling their labor every day for 2358 years to accumulate 116.2 million euros, i.e., the amount paid in dividends by The Navigator Company to Sodim, holding company owned by the Queiroz Pereira family, in 2022, if one considers the abovementioned percentages of share ownership.
- (9) Read the full statement [here](#).

# FROM THE WRM BULLETIN ARCHIVES

## **To reread: Destroy here and destroy there: The double exploitation of biodiversity offsets**

One of the central issues under discussion in Cali, Colombia, at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of Parties (COP) 16, are the so-called 'biodiversity offsetting mechanisms', a strategy to allow companies and their allies to continue expanding their profits and with them, destruction. We share a bulletin published in 2017, that contains several articles that show the harmful impacts of these proposals for the livelihoods of communities. [Access the complete bulletin here.](#)

## RECOMMENDED

### **From land grabbers to carbon cowboys: a new scramble for community lands takes off**

The growing trend of corporations, particularly in the tech and agribusiness sectors, investing in carbon offset projects through tree planting is leading to large-scale land grabs in the global South. In this recent article, the organisation Grain shows that the rise in tree planting projects, fueled by corporate demand for carbon credits, has led to over 9.1 million hectares being targeted for conversion, primarily in Africa and countries like Brazil and India.

Many of these projects are linked to historical land grabbers and notorious figures in the agribusiness sector, revealing the colonial dynamic of these projects, where foreign companies exacerbate conflicts and undermine community rights.

The publication includes an open dataset with information on all plantation projects for the voluntary carbon markets over 100 hectares in the global South initiated after 2016.

Available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

### **Mozambique's Carbon Credits: Low Revenues, Rising Deforestation, and Limited Benefits for Communities**

Mozambique's Zambezia Integrated Landscape Management Program (ZILMP) was launched in 2019 to combat climate change and reduce deforestation in nine districts, aiming for \$50 million in carbon credit revenues by 2024. In this publication, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIR) shows that six months before its ending, the initiative achieved only 25% of emissions reduction and 14% of revenue targets, with minimal benefits reaching local communities – around 3% of expected benefits. While protecting forests is vital, the increase in subsistence agriculture also reflects the necessity for local communities to secure their livelihoods. This contrasts sharply with the practices of the world's largest CO2 emitters and multinational oil and gas companies, which continue to emit greenhouse gases on a large scale while using carbon credits for greenwashing. Available in [English](#) and [Portuguese](#).

## **Why insist on using an ineffective mechanism for the climate crisis? Reflections on the ruling on carbon credits in the Colombian Amazon, by Censat Agua Viva**

Colombia's highest court, the Constitutional Court, recently issued ruling T-248. This ruling has widespread relevance because it responds to a lawsuit filed by peoples affected by REDD+ projects. The Court evaluated, and ended up recognizing, the claim of an indigenous group in the Amazon, who argued that the project violated several of their rights. Additionally, the judgement ratified the impacts caused by promoters of this kind of project, as well as the responsibility of the State in protecting the rights of populations. However, the ruling also provides guidance for the regulation of the carbon market. In light of this, Colombian organization Censat Agua Viva asks: Should these kinds of market be regulated, or eliminated? Read the full article [in Spanish here](#).

## **Brazil: Territories on Fire**

The Articulação Agro é Fogo, which brings together social movements, organisations and pastoralists who have been working for decades to defend the Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal and the rights of their peoples and communities, has released an open letter. It denounces the worsening systematic and orchestrated occurrence of arson as a result of what we should already call climate chaos in the Amazon and other biomes. Rivers and dry land have contributed to the spread of forest fires and one of the main causes is agribusiness and its non-stop advance. The letter also denounces the fact that 70% of the funds from the federal government's main programme to fight fires have not been committed. See the letter [in English here](#), in Portuguese [here](#), and in Spanish [here](#).

## **The Merauke ´s Food Production Program in Papua: a tragedy foretold**

In 2023, Indonesian president Jokowi´s administration announced a food production program of 2 million hectares in the South of Papua, focused on rice and sugar cane plantations, ignoring that similar programs in the past were complete failures, leading to massive land grabbing and rights violations of indigenous peoples, besides more corporate profits.

The new program “PSN Merauke”, being implemented at a high speed, might become the biggest deforestation project worldwide, is overlapping with customary lands and will directly affect 40,000 indigenous people. Read PUSAKA´s briefing paper calling for the immediate suspension of the PSN Merauke [in English here](#).

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