



Governments and NGOs serving corporate interests: impacts and resistance struggles

WRM Bulletin 273

December 2024

[Access the bulletin on the WRM website](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Table of contents

OUR VIEWPOINT: How the COPs and carbon markets are fueling more fires in the Amazon.....	3
Corporate appropriation of women's struggle: 'Purplewashing' in the activities of big NGOs.....	7
How Jurisdictional REDD in Indonesia threatens forests and benefits NGOs: the case of East Kalimantan.....	11
West and Central African grassroots organisations reaffirm their commitment against tree monocultures and in defence of their ancestral lands and forests.....	20
Madagascar: Community of Sainte Luce says NO to destruction from mining.....	23
Million-dollar biodiversity funds: A dangerous proposition.....	28
FROM THE WRM BULLETIN ARCHIVES	
To reread: REDD+ in the Paris Agreement secures funding for conservation industry while large-scale deforestation advances unhindered.....	34
RECOMMENDED	
Brazil: Dossier launched about the resistance and traditional land tenure of the Turiwara Temb� people in the upper Acar� River area, Par� state.....	34
A brief history of colonialism, climate change and carbon markets.....	34
COP29 approval of Article 6.4 is "opening the floodgates for a global carbon market that will have devastating impacts on communities in the Global South".....	35
New Book: Climate Opiom. How we are overdosing on false solutions to the climate emergency.....	35

OUR VIEWPOINT

How the COPs and carbon markets are fueling more fires in the Amazon

On November 22, the UN Climate Change Conference COP29 ended in Baku, Azerbaijan. At one of its sessions, Brazilian authorities spoke about the next one, COP30, to be held in the Amazon region. They did so in front of a mega photo of untouched Amazon forest. However, away from Baku's spotlights, the reality of many Amazonian peoples is one of despair at the forest being consumed by forest fires.

With one year to go until the 30th United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP30) on Climate Change in Belém, in the Brazilian state of Pará —the first to be held in a tropical forest region— the Amazon is facing serious crises. In 2024, in addition to the worst drought ever, forest fires are also among the most severe in history. This year, Brazil is leading the forest fire ranking in Latin America. By November 17, 256,445 fires had been detected in Brazil, followed by 89,400 in Bolivia and 40,994 in Venezuela. One of Brazil's most affected states is Pará, whose capital city is Belém. By November, the state had had 48,842 fires in 2024, second only to the state of Mato Grosso (49,969). (1)

Many territories have been affected by fire in Pará. For example, some 70km from Belém, the Anambé Indigenous Land has had more than half its area destroyed by fire in less than a month. The Anambé community had to camp out on the edge of their territory, and cope with scarce food and water. (2) Not far from there, in the Acará River Valley, quilombolas from the AMARQUALTA association and Tembé indigenous people also asked for help.

At least three factors explain this tragedy that has been devastating so many territories.

One factor was recently revealed by the Brazilian coalition Agro é Fogo, upon denouncing the fact that **more than 70% of the budget of the main federal agency tasked with fighting fires has not been set aside or executed.** (3) This is consistent with the appeals and denouncements made by peoples impacted by the absence of the State – federal and state governments – when it comes to firefighting, thus putting at risk the lives of many affected people. For them, trying to contain the fires on their own account is what remains.

The second and most important factor related to forest fires has been revealed in an in-depth analysis by the Agro é Fogo coalition. This results from academic studies connected with the lived experiences of communities that depend on the forest and other biomes, like Cerrado and Pantanal. The analysis shows that one is not dealing with a lamentable misfortune or an environmental-climatic problem. Rather, **“forest fires and deforestation are tools to consolidate the land grabbing that goes hand-in-hand with the expansion of the capitalist agricultural frontier into the territories of indigenous peoples and traditional communities”.** (4) Above all, it is one of the consequences of the expansion of agribusiness, ex-president Jair Bolsonaro's key support base, with strong representation in Brazil's National Congress and current government.

The third factor is **the priority given by the authorities to the carbon market, heralded as the main way to save the Amazon and firmly rooted in an international agenda.** In September, for instance, Pará's governor signed in New York an agreement worth USD 180 million in carbon credit sales from the state forest carbon program. He was harshly criticized by 38 peoples, traditional communities and partner organizations in a letter denouncing the absence of the "broad participation" he claims to have taken place. (5) The governor also attended COP29, where he was able to celebrate the approval of rules for the carbon market on the same week when the Brazilian Senate passed a bill to regulate the domestic carbon market. (6)

REDD+ and the COPs: legitimizing and intensifying oil use

Since their introduction in 2007, REDD (Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) projects and programs have shown that the promises to save the forest and mitigate climate change are lies. (7) In essence, the main purpose of carbon credits has been to legitimize and intensify the use of oil and other fossil fuels, which is accompanied by impacts on populations at the places of extraction.

In other words, the conversation about forest carbon is fundamentally about oil. For this reason, COPs have more and more become corporate gatherings, chiefly attended by representatives of corporations and lobbyists for the fossil fuel sector. At COP29 in Baku there were 1773 representatives of the sector, a figure likely to recur at COP30. This amounts to more than the number of delegates sent by the ten countries most threatened by climate change combined. (8)

As well as being fundamental to the carbon market, the Amazon region is also in the crosshairs of the oil industry. According to the Amazon Fossil-Free Monitor, more than one million square kilometers in the region are part of areas where there is some stage of oil exploration going on. (9) The initiative also shows that 101 projects funded by the Amazon Fund, Brazil's largest REDD+ program, are in areas of oil exploration, of which 77 inside Amazônia Legal, leading to more destruction. A proposal attracting major attention is the one made by the Brazilian government to use Petrobrás to explore the Equatorial Margin. This very company has become one of the main backers of the Amazon Fund. (10)

But the oil industry is not the only sector that destroys the forest and benefits from the carbon market. There also are other initiatives that hide behind friendly terms. One example is the 'bioeconomy', conceived by the Pará state government and its partner TNC, a conservationist NGO from the USA. Despite these actors' propaganda, the populations that have experienced it in practice do not notice any difference between the bioeconomy and the 'old economy' that has devastated the Amazon region, persecuting and massacring its inhabitants.

A recent case in point: on November 5, members of the Turiwara-Tembê People from Alto Acará, 150km away from Belém, were violently expelled by the police from an area of their traditional

territory that they had re-occupied. The police followed orders issued by a Pará state judge, who sided with a dendê palm oil and 'bioeconomy' company called Agropalma, which claimed that the indigenous people had 'invaded' its land. (11) Since 2021, in partnership with a company called Biofílica, Agropalma has imposed a REDD+ project on the traditional territory of the Turiwara-Tembê People and the forest that remains on it. This project considers the Turiwara-Tembê People – and not Agropalma – as the cause of deforestation, blaming indigenous people for a problem they did not create. Agropalma has relied on other 'partner' NGOs, like US-based Conservation International and the Earthworm Foundation, to conduct its macabre policy of 'conservation' and oppression. (12)

Another battle is being fought 350km away from Belém by the Ka'apor People. They are seeking to defend their territory and the forest from an invasion by Wildlife Works, the world's largest REDD project private company. This company began establishing a REDD project with the consent of just one association that does not represent all the Ka'apor People and territory. For this reason, on October 30, through their political representation organization *Tuxa Ta Pame*, the Ka'apor filed a lawsuit against Wildlife Works, denouncing a series of illegalities and abuses perpetrated by this company among the Ka'apor, and calling for its immediate removal from the territory. (13)

While carbon programs sow confusion, division, violence and persecution among communities that depend on the forest, they do not prevent the advance of agribusiness, directly and indirectly benefitting the corporations that control this sector, most of which are international. Walmart, for instance, launched a new initiative in Mato Grosso – a state devastated by the advance of agribusiness – based on carbon credits. It provides incentives for forest recovery and maintenance, something that theoretically should already be an obligation of the sector. (14)

Hence, by deflecting attention away from the real causes of deforestation and from the reality faced by Amazonian communities, the forest carbon market – and also the COPs, by validating it – ends up being an underlying cause of deforestation. When one adds in the interest of agribusiness in expanding across the Amazon region and the lack of state resources to combat fires, the result is evident: more fire and destruction of forests.

(1) https://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/queimadas/situacao-atual/situacao_atual/ Data from January 1 to November 18, 2024.

(2) <https://www.mpf.mp.br/pa/sala-de-imprensa/noticias-pa/fogo-destrui-mais-da-metade-da-terra-indigena-anambe-pa-e-mpf-questiona-orgaos-sobre-medidas-adotadas>

(3) <https://agroefogo.org.br/blog/2024/10/09/nota-publica-queimadas-nos-territorios/>

(4) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/pt/artigos-do-boletim/agro-e-fogo-grilagens-desmatamento-e-incendios-na-amazonia-cerrado-e-pantanal>

(5) <https://terradedireitos.org.br/noticias/noticias/povos-tradicionais-cobram-consulta-previa-sobre-contrato-bilionario-de-creditos-de-carbono-no-para/24072>

(6) <https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202411/cop29-comeca-no-azerbaijao-com-acordo-sobre-mercado-de-carbono-global>

(7) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/pt/publicacoes/15-anos-de-REDD>

(8) <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/fossil-fuel-lobbyists-eclipse-delegations-most-climate-vulnerable-nations-cop29-climate-talks/>

(9) <https://monitor.en.amazonialivredepetroleo.org/>

(10) <https://agencia.petrobras.com.br/w/sustentabilidade/petrobras-e-bndes-fazem-nova-parceria-para-restauracao-ecologica-na-amazonia>

- (11) https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2024/11/05/pms-e-indigenas-entram-em-conflito-em-acao-de-retirada-de-comunidade-de-fazenda-controlada-por-empresa-de-oleo-de-palma-no-para.ghml?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=share-bar-mobile&utm_campaign=materias
- (12) <http://novacartografiasocial.com.br/lancamento-do-dossie-indigenas-turiwara-tembe-no-alto-rio-acara-conflitos-etnicos-e-territoriais/>
- (13) Petition by the Ka'apor filed before Federal Court in the state of Maranhão
https://www.wrm.org.uy/sites/default/files/2024-12/Kaapor_Wildlife_Works.pdf
- (14) <https://www.qcintel.com/carbon/article/brazilian-state-partners-with-walmart-ngo-to-advance-jredd-31586.html>

Corporate appropriation of women's struggle: 'Purplewashing' in the activities of big NGOs

Initiatives by NGOs and corporations with a focus on the "gender issue" that distort and depoliticize the feminist struggle are more and more common. The various examples of "purplewashing" do not tackle the structural causes of oppression over women, perpetuating systemic inequalities within the capitalist system.

Around the world, more and more women identify themselves as feminists. The growth in feminism in recent years has been accompanied by the capture of the movement by capitalism. In this regard, the number of transnational corporations and organizations like The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Conservation International (CI) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) that incorporate into their activities the discourse of women's individual "empowerment" and sexual diversity has increased.

It is more and more common for these organizations to position themselves as organizations responsible for improving women's living conditions, giving them more opportunities and visibility. Thus, they link women's freedom to the fact that they take up positions of power within the capitalist logic. Popular feminism starts from the assumption that the emancipation of women will never be complete in a society where the labor of most of the population is appropriated by a capitalist minority; territories of collective use are appropriated by private interests; and much of the population is structurally exploited. This is why feminism must be anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-colonial in order to truly serve as a tool of women's emancipation. We believe in the kind of feminism that places its bets on popular self-organization and builds alliances with other subjects in struggle, walking together towards a horizon of transformation.

The "colorful" capitalism of transnational corporations and NGOs, on the other hand, does not provide real answers to the problem of the exploitation of women and of peoples all around the world, and does nothing but continue expanding the exploitation of labor and the incorporation of nature into its accumulation process. Their profits increase also on the basis of the exploitation of female labor without any rights. This process of appropriation of feminism is known as 'purplewashing': a strategy of appropriation of struggles that serves to improve corporations' image in the eyes of the public, while at the same time driving a process of commodification and neutralization of the feminist critique of the system.

This "multicultural neoliberalism with a 'human face'" is a type of strategy where States and international agencies incorporate "professional" feminist organizations to integrate the gender dimension into their programs. (1) Out of this process there emerge, for example, "gender equality policies". These are documents that all the large conservationist organizations have, full of good intentions, but devoid of any actual political commitment. It is a shrewd way to de-politicize conflicts and reduce the critique of patriarchal capitalism to questioning the "sexism" present in individual behaviors inside the organizations, thus removing the systemic character of oppression. (2) Within this logic, the (false) solution for gender inequality is on the market, via its "social" projects. In other words, investments in "gender programs" ultimately – and as per usual – have the intent of positively impacting corporations' profits through the washing of their image. (3)

One example of this is the oil company Chevron, one of the greatest violators of Indigenous People's rights throughout the globe. It has established a partnership with a feminist fund in Brazil, the ELAS fund, to develop economic entrepreneurship projects with women from local communities (4). This dynamic of corporate funding of feminist actions is a trap. These are strategies that reinforce two kinds of misleading discourse. One is that there is no alternative outside of the business logic, and that working strategically with these partnerships might change corporations' behavior. Another argument is that it is better that companies invest in women rather than continuing along the same logic of having only male leaders. These are rationales that remain hopeful vis-à-vis the activities of companies and major transnational organizations. However, the systematic violations of communities' rights all over the world do not let us forget that there is no room for naivety in relation to such actors. The objective of enhancing women's and communities' autonomy over their bodies-territories is always incompatible with the intrinsic logic of any capitalist corporation, namely, to continuously amplify its control over 'natural resources' and over other people's labor.

The “gender policies” of big NGOs

In previous WRM bulletins we have talked about how big conservationist NGOs in practice behave like companies. (5) It is no different in the case of 'purplewashing'. Like transnational corporations, big NGOs have increasingly placed their bets on selling a feminist image to the world.

This trend may be seen in big conservation NGOs like The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Conservation International (CI) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). It also happens in smaller organizations, such as Solidaridad.

All these organizations have their own “gender policies”, documents where they record their supposed commitments to equality between men and women. Conservation International, for example, states that it builds gender equality by directing the benefits of projects equally to men and women, hence increasing women's access to and control of resources, and promoting women in leadership roles. A study by this organization about a protected area in the Philippines states that “conservation initiatives too often overlook or insufficiently address the fundamental rights of women to participate in, and benefit from, conservation projects, programs, and policies”. (6) The organization has also created a program in support of female indigenous leaders in countries of the Amazon region, meant to “promote the ideas and actions of Indigenous women to conserve the Amazon and maintain climate stability”. (7)

However, when we analyze the actions of Conservation International in the communities' territories, we see that its conduct does not strengthen communities by respecting their knowledge and practices. The organization has been accused by the Association of Amerindian Peoples (APA) of disrespecting the territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples in Guyana, owing to its involvement in the creation of a protected area in the south of the country with no consultation of Peoples in the region. (8) In a more recent case in Peru, a project led by Conservation International that is trumpeted as a success story in fact brought about forced evictions, loss of livelihoods, destruction of about ten homes (most on Mothers' Day) and other impacts on communities. (9) How could it be possible to support local women's organizations and conduct “feminist” actions without at least respecting peoples' self-determination over their territory?

Another example: The Nature Conservancy launched its “Women in Climate” initiative, which intends to gather female leaders in efforts against climate change. (10) The webpage of the initiative starts off with a discourse on the importance of women’s political participation and the inclusion of women of all sexual orientations, affirming a “feminist” approach. However, when we reach the program’s strategic plan, we see that the perspective is business as usual: it is based on the goals of the 2030 Agenda – a major failure of the UN system (11) – and reinforces the importance of so-called nature-based solutions, the new name for commodification and financialization of nature and of the commons. (12)

NGOs may also act towards purplewashing agribusiness. This is the case, for instance, of a project by Dutch-based NGO Solidaridad, which works to ensure traceability and low carbon soybean production in Brazil. Furthermore, it concerns itself with ensuring “female participation” in agribusiness.

One of the initiatives that this NGO supports is the production of Fazenda Laruna, headed by estate owner Claudia Liciane Sulzbach, located in Balsas, Maranhão state. Fazenda Laruna has 1100 hectares of farmland devoted to growing soy, corn and beans. In an interview, the owner stresses her great concern with “good practices” in production, socio-environmental certification and the affirmation of the “strength of women in agriculture”. It is a very explanatory example of combining the “greenwashing” of agribusiness with ‘purplewashing’, which supposedly promotes “women’s empowerment”. It is not a kind of isolated initiative, considering that there is a yearly event in Brazil called “National Congress of Women in Agriculture” where entrepreneurs like Cláudia stand out by telling their stories.

In practice, we know that soybean production is one of the main causes of socio-environmental conflicts in Maranhão, and that “sustainable” and low carbon soybean production is no more than a fairytale. (13) This type of “climate-smart” agriculture perpetuates the same injustices as “classic” agribusiness, maintaining the unjust distribution of land in Brazil, socio-economic inequalities and the power of transnational corporations.

The experiences of “successful” women in agribusiness are major exceptions and have nothing to do with the experiences of millions of peasant women, rural workers who are mostly black, have no access to land and have to fight incessantly for their right to land and against monoculture soy plantations. (14)

While so-called “successful women” promote themselves on the back of such initiatives, the overwhelming majority of women continue to suffer the impacts of the destruction of nature and of the exploitation of labor in their territories. Or, as Tica Moreno puts it, corporations’ actions “are aimed at breaking the ‘glass ceiling’, while the vast majority of women are ever more bound to sticky floors, more akin to quicksand”. (15)

Natália Lobo – Sempreiva Feminist Organization (SOF)

(1) ALVAREZ, Sonia. Neoliberalismos e as trajetórias do feminismo latino-americano. In: MORENO, Renata (ed.). Feminismo, economia e política: debates para a construção da igualdade e autonomia das mulheres. São Paulo: SOF, 2014.

(2) FARIA, Nalu. Desafios feministas frente à ofensiva neoliberal. Caderno Sempreiva. São Paulo: SOF,

2019.

(3) MILLER, Julia; ARUTYUNOVA, Angelika; CLARK, Cindy. Actores nuevos, dinero nuevo, diálogos nuevos – un mapeo de las iniciativas recientes para las mujeres y las niñas. Toronto, Awid, 2013.

(4) Idem

(5) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/pt/artigos-do-boletim/alem-das-florestas-ongs-conservacionistas-se-transformam-em-empresas>

(6) https://www.conservation.org/docs/default-source/publication-pdfs/tabangay-westerman---policy-matters-issue-20.pdf?sfvrsn=1c03f4f4_3

(7) <https://www.conservation.org/about/fellowships/women-fellowship-opportunity-for-indigenous-women-leaders-in-environmental-solutions-in-the-amazon>

(8) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/pt/node/13339>

(9) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/18/forest-communities-alto-mayo-peru-carbon-offsetting-aoe>

(10) <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/women-on-climate/>

(11) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/pt/artigos-do-boletim/a-agenda-das-grandes-ongs-de-conservacao-em-tempos-de-crise>

(12) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/pt/declaracoes/declaracao-nao-as-solucoes-baseadas-na-natureza>

(13) <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2023/12/06/soja-sustentavel-avanca-no-maranhao-para-pesquisadores-conceito-e-conto-de-fadas>

(14) <https://www.miqcb.org/post/empres%C3%A1rios-da-soja-usam-corrent%C3%A3o-para-desmatar-territ%C3%B3rio-quilombola-no-cerrado-maranhense>

(15) MORENO, Tica. Armadilhas do poder corporativo: maquiagem lilás e mercantilização das lutas. In: MORENO, Renata (ed.). Crítica feminista ao poder corporativo. São Paulo: SOF – Sempreviva Organização Feminista, 2020. p. 130-154. <https://www.sof.org.br/critica-feminista-poder-corporativo/>

How Jurisdictional REDD in Indonesia threatens forests and benefits NGOs: the case of East Kalimantan

In the province of East Kalimantan, the World Bank is supporting the Indonesian government's first jurisdictional REDD programme. International conservationist NGOs, TNC and WWF, have been playing a key role in the preparation and execution of the programme. While they proclaim it to be a "success story" (1), this programme is full of contradictions.

[Available in Indonesian](#)

Large conservationist NGOs have played a major role in turning REDD into the dominant forest policy worldwide. This mechanism was introduced in 2007, and the first wave of REDD projects and programmes was implemented from 2008 to 2013. Some of the promoters of REDD projects included these large NGOs, which benefit from receiving millions in grant money for 'pilot projects' and 'capacity building', as well as from selling carbon credits on the carbon market.

Evidence from the past two decades has confirmed that the early warnings about carbon offsetting in general, and about REDD in particular, have proven to be true. **REDD projects have completely failed** in their objective of reducing deforestation, and therefore have failed to mitigate climate change too (2). And yet a second, bigger wave of forest carbon projects and programmes has been underway since 2020, when the Paris Agreement came into effect.

Sub-national and national REDD programmes have received less attention than private REDD projects. These projects are referred to as "Jurisdictional REDD" or "government REDD", and they cover a whole province or country. The World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) is one of the major promoters of jurisdictional REDD. Its aim is to help countries in the global South get prepared to receive REDD payments, through a Readiness Fund; and then to reward them for reducing deforestation with so-called 'results-based payments' through a Carbon Fund.

Since it was launched in 2008, the FCPF has struggled to disburse the funds and to demonstrate results. **Furthermore, in places where the FCPF has paid out money, many problems have appeared. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, the FCPF supported the PIREDD/Plateaux REDD+ Programme in the province of Mai-Ndombe.** This WWF-run programme restricted communities' land use and caused conflicts (3). Problems also appeared in another jurisdictional REDD programme in Zambezia province in Mozambique, where the FCPF fully failed to achieve its main objective: to stop deforestation (4).

And yet, big conservationist NGOs like TNC refer to the FCPF as a "success" (5), not least of all because of the key role they play in such programmes. This is the case of the by FCPF supported East Kalimantan Jurisdictional REDD programme, which is the focus of this article. This programme was approved in 2019 by the World Bank and has run from 2019-2024. It covers

the entire province of East Kalimantan, Indonesia. When this article mentions 'programme documentation', this is in reference to the East Kalimantan jurisdictional REDD programme (6).

The prominent role of NGOs represents a conflict of interest

According to the programme documentation, the Indonesian government initially intended to implement the FCPF's jurisdictional REDD programme in Indonesia in seven districts, located in four different provinces with widespread deforestation: Jambi, Central Sulawesi, Central and East Kalimantan. Two of these seven districts – Berau and West Kutai – are located in East Kalimantan.

Since 2008, TNC and WWF, have been involved with REDD-related activities in Berau and West Kutai. The programme documentation states that TNC and WWF have a “key role” as “implementation partners,” stating that these two organizations' experience offers “opportunities” for a bigger program in the future. The Berau Forest Carbon Program, set up by TNC, is referred to as “the first REDD+ program in Indonesia to span an entire political jurisdiction”, allowing it to “generate lessons for national REDD+ programs”.

The programme documentation also states that one important criterion to receive FCPF funding is the need for additional funding from other donors. While the other districts – which were part of the original proposal – were not successful in raising these extra funds, TNC ensured USD 50 million to go to Berau, while WWF and its partners ensured “up to US\$ 82.5 million” in West Kutai (7).

There was no explanation as to why the decision was made to channel all the FCPF funding – USD 110 million - to East Kalimantan and not to the other provinces. But the strong impression remains that both TNC and WWF had a significant influence, revealing the conflicts of interest at play. For example, both NGOs prepared the ground with their activities in Berau and West Kutai; TNC was one of FCPF's founding members and donors and developed the idea of the FCPF together with the World Bank (8); and WWF participated in elaborating the programme documentation, which should have been the Indonesian government's responsibility (9). There are additional examples of how these NGOs exercised their influence, which reveal the entrenched conflicts of interest (10).

In November 2022, the Indonesian government received the first advance payment of USD 20.9 million – equivalent to IDR 320 billion – from the World Bank (11). According to a letter from the Provincial government about the distribution of the money, **“intermediary institutions” (NGOs, or *lembaga perantara* in Indonesian) will receive as much as IDR 3,190.914.000 in so-called Performance payments and IDR 19,502.000.000 in Reward payments. These payments amount to IDR 22,692.914.000, or USD 1.482 million – about 7% of the total initial payment of USD 20.9 million.** One third of this money is for 'management fees', and two thirds are for 'program/activities' costs (12). If one takes into account the total approved amount of USD 110 million, based on this percentage, NGOs could receive up to USD 7.6 million of FCPF funding.

A programme full of contradictions

A programme focusing on those who do not drive deforestation

The programme documentation claims that the jurisdictional REDD Program in East Kalimantan is “designed to address drivers of deforestation”, and it identifies industrial oil palm plantations (51%), logging (22%) and mining (10%) as the three main drivers. However, as with TNC's pilot project in Berau, most of **the Program budget- 53,2% - is focused on “providing alternative livelihood opportunities” to rural communities, including indigenous communities. This is in order to address “deforestation linked to encroachment and agriculture” [excluding oil palm], rather than on the main causes of deforestation: oil palm, logging and mining.**

In spite of the programme's stated focus on “alternative livelihood opportunities”, this does not seem to be reflected in the reality on the ground. Three communities in West Kutai district, visited by WRM, JATAM Kaltim and NUGAL Institute in September 2024, complained through their local government representatives that the **money they were promised for a project they presented to the programme coordination and which was approved, has not arrived yet.** This is almost two years after the Indonesian government received its first payment from the World Bank. According to the villagers, each village was supposed to receive IDR 201,64 million, or about USD 12,938, mentioned too in the aforementioned letter from the provincial government (13).

Local government representatives have made several other complaints. One is related to how **people from the REDD programme team came to the community to ask questions and fly a drone around, without explaining their objective or sharing the outcome of their survey.** Local representatives have also questioned why each community in West Kutai is receiving the same amount of money, even though the smallest village in West Kutai has an area of 815 ha, whereas the biggest covers 56,957 hectares. This should translate into differential costs when it comes to forest monitoring. However, village size seems to be irrelevant to the programme coordination, which decided that all 82 villages included in the REDD program in West Kutai will receive the exact same amount. The community also complained that they have not been informed, nor consulted, about the REDD programme or about what REDD actually is. Only the community leader was invited for one information-sharing meeting, which took place outside the village territory.

One of the local representatives' complaints in particular stands out. Although the World Bank declares in the documentation that “communities will be able to select the benefits they prefer to access, which will reflect their priorities”, two villages had their community proposals rejected. Their proposal requested the purchase of car to patrol their forest area, which they determined to be a priority. The argument was that cars cannot be allowed because they contribute to global warming. This is quite a hypocritical reply, to put it mildly, for a programme that is built on the logic of generating carbon credits so that polluting industries responsible for the climate chaos can continue to destroy the climate. Meanwhile, the **REDD programme penalizes communities that are not responsible for the climate crisis.**

A programme ignores one of the main drivers of deforestation, mining

1,434 mining permits as of 2020 cover more than 5 million hectares, or 41% of the province's territory (14). Mining companies, most of which are coal companies, are some of the biggest drivers of deforestation and other social and environmental violations in East Kalimantan. In the programme documentation, the World Bank expresses concern about the fact that the governor of East Kalimantan who took office in 2009 “campaigned on a platform of support to mining industries”.

However, **“Mining companies are not included” in the REDD programme**. They “will not implement any ER [Emission reductions] activities” with a footnote in the programme documentation, justifying the exclusion of mining on a governor's decision from 2018 that “suspends new coal mining permits, and adds additional requirements for companies who want to extend their permits”.

First, the argument that no new mining permissions will be given out is simply not true. For example, **PT Adaro Energy, Indonesia's 2nd largest coal company, benefited from a new concession in 2024** (15). Besides, the governor's decision from 2018 does little to prevent deforestation in the concessions that were given out before 2018, but are still under development. What's worse, **ignoring the mining sector also underestimates the widespread phenomenon of illegal mining in East Kalimantan**, which is causing even more destruction and risks than the legalized destruction.

Indonesia's mega-project of a new capital: a “manageable” kind of deforestation for the World Bank

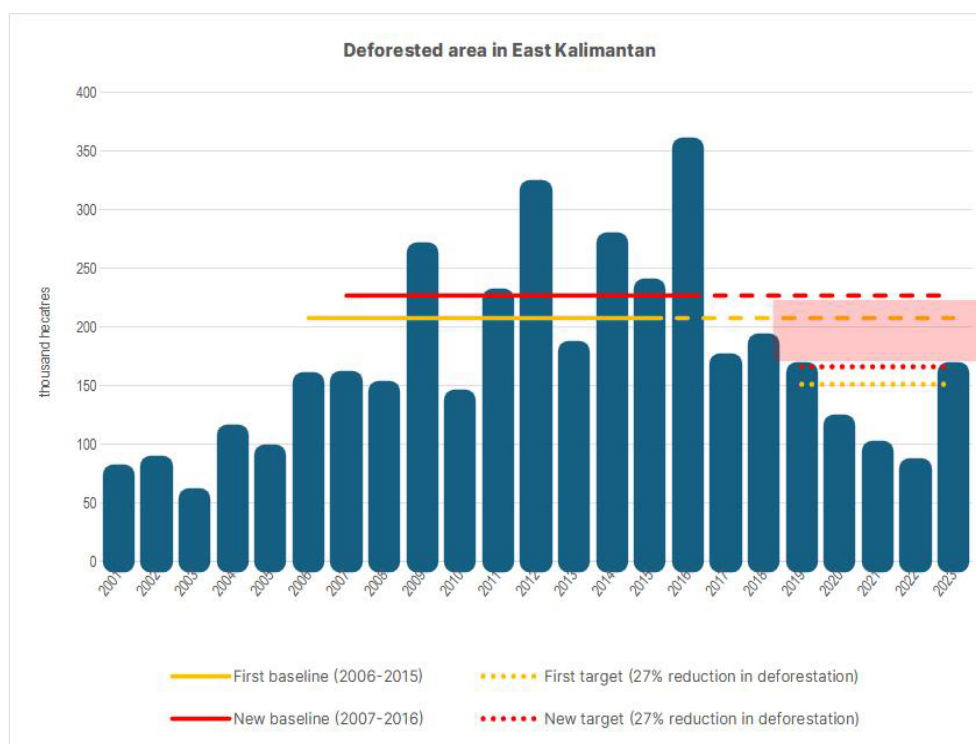
Another major contradiction is exemplified in **the construction of Indonesia's new capital city (IKN), a mega-project that was launched in 2020 in East Kalimantan**. While on the one hand, the World Bank admits this “is likely to affect emissions in the province”, due to deforestation, it also states that the impacts of IKN “appear to be manageable”, arguing that it has the “potential” to “green” and “reforest” the area. The USD 30 billion IKN project has been particularly promoted by ex-president Jokowi, who wants to transform it into his main legacy.

What the World Bank considers to be “manageable” shows the complete ignorance of this multilateral institution, both about the scale of this mega-project (which increased in area from 180,000 to 256,000 hectares following its launch in 2020), as well as **the social and environmental violations against the Balik indigenous people** – whose territory overlaps with the capital construction site. Furthermore, there will be other, more devastating indirect impacts related to the construction of the new capital, which the World Bank is ignoring (16).

A programme that claims to have “results” even with deforestation on the rise

In order for jurisdictional REDD programmes to set a target for reduced deforestation, they first set a baseline; this involves defining a period of years over which the average annual rate of deforestation and forest degradation is calculated. In the case of the World Bank supported REDD programme in East Kalimantan, this period is 2007-2016. During this period, 700,800 hectares of forest cover was lost – or about 5.5% of the entire province. The next step is to set an emissions reduction target for the programme period (2019-2024), based on the average deforestation rate from the baseline period. In the case of the East Kalimantan REDD programme, the emissions reduction target set is 27%. **This modus operandi raises at least two questions: What is the reasoning behind choosing one baseline period over another? And who makes these choices?**

In the programme documentation, the first baseline period chosen was 2006-2015. However, in the final project document of 2019, this period was changed to 2007-2016. **This seemingly small modification meant a significant change, because the new baseline period included the year 2016. This was a peak year in forest loss in Indonesia and East Kalimantan;** massive forest fires hit Indonesia in 2015 but were only fully accounted for in the 2016 figures, due to a lack of image data of the 2015 destruction (see graph 1 below).



Graph 1: Forest cover loss in East Kalimantan 2001-2023. In orange is the reference level, the period on which the East Kalimantan jurisdictional REDD programme defined its baseline; compared with the estimated emission reductions or reduced deforestation level during the programme period (2019-2024). (Figures from Global Forest Watch)

While the programme developers provided no justification for changing the baseline period, it is obvious that the new baseline makes it easier for the REDD programme to achieve “results”. Moreover, the deforestation rate in East Kalimantan reduced in the years after 2016, due to state policies as a reaction to the forest fires from 2015 that caused severe impacts. According to the REDD programme documentation, it was because of a national moratorium on primary forest clearance for plantations and logging.

Another consequence of the 'generous' baseline is that **even though deforestation increased in the province, almost doubling from 79,200 hectares in 2022, to 161,000 hectares in 2023, the provincial government can still claim it has achieved “results”**, as the graph above shows. This increased deforestation was due to the expansion of oil palm plantations, among other activities. (17)

Those who define the baseline and programme targets are the very same actors who are most interested in ensuring “results”, and therefore their own payments from the programme. These actors include the World Bank, the East Kalimantan government, TNC, and WWF.

Jurisdictional REDD also promotes carbon trading

Environmental and social organisations tend to critique private REDD projects much more than jurisdictional REDD programmes, also in Indonesia (18). One reason is probably due to the erroneous perception that carbon trading, the main critique of private REDD projects, is not involved in jurisdictional REDD programmes. **Yet jurisdictional REDD programmes follow the same logic of focusing on carbon, carbon accounting and carbon trading – just like any other REDD project. And like other REDD projects, these programmes also use the same manipulation wherein project proponents themselves define baseline scenarios and 'results'.**

In the case of the FCPF, most of the money has come from governments, such as Norway, Germany and the UK. But since this project's inception, there has also been money coming from private entities, such as TNC and the oil company, BP, which expect to receive carbon credits in return (19).

In recent years, carbon trading seems to play an ever-increasing role in the FCPF's functioning. Since 2018, the FCPF has engaged with CORSIA, the aviation sector's offsetting scheme. According to the World Bank, this scheme “is expected to offset more than 2 billion tons of CO₂”. In 2023, the FCPF became eligible to supply CORSIA with carbon credits. By the end of 2023, the FCPF started to offer carbon credits for sale on the carbon market (20). In the latest update on the East Kalimantan FCPF programme on the World Bank's website, **the programme is categorized as 'CORSIA eligible', meaning that East Kalimantan's REDD programme will allow the aviation industry to grow, whilst claiming it is not damaging the climate.**

Final considerations

This article points to a number of contradictions in the jurisdictional REDD programme in East Kalimantan, based on the erroneous assumption that REDD is actually about reducing deforestation. **REDD is not about stopping deforestation, but about creating more business**

opportunities for extractive industries and business-oriented conservationist NGOs, like TNC and WWF – all while increasing the threats to forests and forest-dependent communities.

Working under that assumption, what is written in most of the programme documentation makes much more sense. For example, **the World Bank describes East Kalimantan as a province “rich in natural resources, such as timber, oil, gas, and productive soils”**. Through such a lens, it makes perfect sense to exclude the mining sector from the scope of this programme, and to downplay the main drivers of deforestation, –logging and oil palm – by promoting certification schemes that have only helped expand these destructive monocultures. (21)

Understanding REDD as a policy that threatens forests also helps to better understand why there is a focus on the activities of people who are not a threat: forest-dependent communities. The World Bank describes them as “poor” in East Kalimantan – in contrast to the “rich” natural resources. The rural people, such as the Dayak communities, are particularly poor, states the World Bank. And the FCPF is creating new threats for their livelihoods. **With NGOs like TNC and WWF involved as “implementing partners”, the focus is on creating more protected areas, without people. Never mind the fact that the World Bank and its business-friendly REDD programme does not hinder the threat of further mining, logging and oil palm expansion.**

To provide a picture of what can really be expected from the REDD programme in East Kalimantan, let us quote once more from the programme documentation – this time from a rare passage of clarity amidst the blurred vision of the World Bank: “Expanding agriculture, logging, mineral extraction, urbanization and housing development have resulted in not only increased land conversion, but also forest degradation, reducing environmental benefits which further exacerbate poverty”.

NUGAL Institute, JATAM Kaltim and WRM International Secretariat

For security reasons, the names of the people who gave their testimonies for this article and the names of their communities are preserved

- (1) See for example in https://www.ykan.or.id/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/ykan/laporan-kuartal-dan-tahunan-ykan/YKAN-Annual-Report_EN_.pdf, and also in <https://www.undp.org/indonesia/press-releases/south-south-exchange-sse-2024-indonesia-leads-example-redd-knowledge-exchange>
- (2) News about ‘fake credits’ and fraudulent practices are increasingly widespread (<https://www.source-material.org/vercompanies-carbon-offsetting-claims-inflated-methodologies-flawed/>). Additionally, projects imposed restrictions on the lives of forest-dependent communities that were already taking care of the forest. (<https://www.wrm.org.uy/publications/15-years-of-redd>)
- (3) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/15-years-of-redd-PIREDD-Plateaux-REDD-Project-DRC-Conflicts-Complaint-Mechanism>
- (4) <https://reddmonitor.substack.com/p/world-bank-funded-zambezia-integration>
- (5) https://www.ykan.or.id/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/ykan/laporan-kuartal-dan-tahunan-ykan/YKAN-Annual-Report_EN_.pdf
- (6) The programme documentation consists of a confusing set of documents that all have similar content, including the first ‘readiness preparation proposal’, presented to the FCPF in 2009, and approved in 2011; the first draft of Indonesia’s jurisdictional REDD program presented in 2014 (https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/Indonesia%20ER-PIN%20September_12_resubmitted_edit_final.pdf); and the final proposal based on this initial draft that focuses

on East Kalimantan: the East Kalimantan Jurisdictional Emission Reduction Program (EK-JERP), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/934171621490185436/text/Indonesia-East-Kalimantan-Project-for-Emission-Reductions-Results.txt> which was approved in 2019 and covered the entire province. The EK-JERP claims it will achieve 22 million tonnes of “verified CO2 emission reductions” from 2019-2024. In exchange, the World Bank has committed to paying an amount of up to USD 110 million, against a fixed price of USD 5 per tonne of CO2, based on a Benefit-Sharing Plan that was formulated by the Indonesian and East Kalimantan governments (<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/606071637039648180/pdf/Indonesia-East-Kalimantan-Project-for-Emissions-Reductions-Results-Benefit-Sharing-Plan.pdf>)

(7) TNC succeeded in raising funds from the governments of Germany (KfW/GIZ/FORCLIME), Australia, Norway, USA (a debt-for-nature swap scheme) and from charities like Ann Ray Charitable Trust and Grantham Foundation (<https://www2.cifor.org/redd-case-book/case-reports/indonesia/tncs-initiative-within-berau-forest-carbon-program-east-kalimantan-indonesia/>)

(8) <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/history>

(9) <https://wwf.panda.org/es/?226019/Local-actions-lay-the-groundwork-for-REDD-implementation-in-Kutai-Barat-Indonesia>

(10) For example, according to the Programme Documentation, the Regional Council on Climate Change (Dewan Daerah Perubahan Iklim), is a “key partner” in the implementation of the REDD programme, adding that it has “significant experience” in the “management of donor development funding”. This Council was created in 2011 and consists strictly of governmental representatives, however it could count on “substantial support” from TNC (see https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/TNC_CaseStudy_Indonesia_FINAL_lowres.pdf). Possibly one result of the ‘substantial support’ that the Council opened the door for NGO participation in 2017 and, thus, increasing influence of NGOs in the programme. Another example is the signing of agreements and MOUs between NGOs and the provincial government, like WWF did in 2018 around the activity of measuring carbon, a key activity in any REDD programme. According to WWF, it is “the first online-based data cooperation model of calculating, monitoring, and reporting the carbon in Indonesia” https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?328470/East-Kalimantan-Province-Leading-in-Emissions-Monitoring-and-Development

(11) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/08/indonesia-receives-first-payment-for-reducing-emissions-in-east-kalimantan>

(12) Provincial Government East Kalimantan, nr. 500-4/15008/EK from 10/10/2023 about ‘Pembayaran Alokasi Insentif RBP FCPF-CF Untuk Kelompok Masyarakat’.

(13) Ibid

(14) <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/01/indonesia-capital-relocation-borneo-kalimantan-tycoons-coal-mining-pulpwood/>

(15) PT Pari Coal, owned by Adaro International Pte Ltd, PT Mitra Megah Indoprima, and PT Alam Tri Abadi. PT Pari Coal was granted a 24,971-hectare, 30-year concession by the national government on 01/02/2024. The location is partly on the border of Central and East Kalimantan, in North Barito and in Mahakam Ulu Regency. Adaro's coal will be transported on a special road that passes through Geleo Asa Village in West Kutai district; a port is being built too to facilitate the transport on the Mahakam River.

(16) This includes two hydropower dam projects: one is a 1,375MW plant that will directly affect the Mentarang and Tumbuh rivers; this project is already under construction and has already removed communities that are partly indigenous; the second one is a 9,000MW dam on the Kayan river, and construction has yet to start. If completed, both projects would further worsen climate chaos, due to the greenhouse gases that would be emitted from the forest being submerged. In addition to providing electricity for the new capital, the electricity generated would also fuel another devastating project in the region that is impacting other communities: the Green Industrial Park in North Kalimantan (<https://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin-articles/the-industrial-park-kipt-reveals-the-dirty-and-destructive-face-of-indonesias-green-transition>). Likewise, the coastal area of West and Central Sulawesi is being dismantled to dredge rocks that will be used as building materials for various IKN infrastructure projects. And what the Indonesian government promises to be a 'smart' city, means a city driven by electric transport. This fuels the

demand for minerals like nickel, which has been causing severe social and environmental violations and protests in East Indonesia, for example on Halmahera island

(<https://www.wrm.org.uy/multimedia/indonesia-protests-against-mining-for-electric-vehicles>)

(17) Sawit Watch, an organisation that monitors industrial oil palm plantations and their expansion in Indonesia, has observed a trend of oil palm expansion in recent years. Furthermore, it disagrees with official figures of the area covered by industrial oil palm plantations in East Kalimantan – which the Ministry of Agriculture estimates to be 1,287 million hectares. Sawit Watch estimates the area of oil palm plantations in East Kalimantan to be 3 million hectares (Report and Projection, Indonesian Palm Plantation 2023, Sawit Watch, www.sawitwatch.or.id)

(18) https://www.aman.or.id/filemanager/files/surat_terbuka_perdagangan_karbon_2023_231013_120638.pdf

(19) <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/donor-participants>

(20) https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/_web_world_bank_2023_fcpf_annual_report_r01.pdf

(21) <https://www.wrm.org.uy/other-information/sign-on-statement-rspo-failing-to-eliminate-violence-and-destruction-from-the-industrial-palm-oil-sector>

West and Central African grassroots organisations reaffirm their commitment against tree monocultures and in defence of their ancestral lands and forests

The just-released “Mouila Declaration” is a message of resistance, solidarity and unity from communities and grassroots organisations of the Informal Alliance against the expansion of Industrial Monocultures.

For almost 10 years, the Informal Alliance against the expansion of Industrial Monocultures in West and Central Africa has had an important role in connecting grassroots organisations and activists and strengthening the resistance against land grabbing and other attacks by oil palm and other plantation companies in the region.

Last November, community activists and grassroots organisations that are part of the Alliance, from 10 countries, gathered at their General Assembly to renew their commitment to the defence of ancestral lands and to keep resisting against neo colonial interests and the corporate takeover of communities' lands.

See below the full declaration:

Gabon, November 2024

THE MOUILA DECLARATION of the Informal Alliance against the expansion of Industrial Monocultures

We, the 60 members gathered at the 6th General Assembly of the Informal Alliance against the expansion of Industrial Monoculture Plantations, in Mouila, Gabon from November 19 to 22, 2024, representing communities and organizations of Gabon, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Congo Brazzaville, Liberia, Ghana, Congo Kinshasa, Ivory Coast and Uganda are deeply committed to the fight against land grabbing, particularly by tree plantation companies. LET US ADOPT this Declaration which marks our conviction in the vital importance of the recognition and return to ancestral community land ownership in Africa, for the well-being of the first occupants.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT:

- Ancestral lands are home to communities of people with traditional culture and knowledge of nature;
- Women play a critical role in the defense of their ancestral lands and forests;
- Community ancestral land in Africa has intrinsic worth and warrants respect regardless of its usefulness in habitats and humanity as a whole;
- The natural wealth, rights and freedom to their land is being eroded this day at a frantic and unprecedented manner and rate because of deliberate harmful development policies laden in colonial legacy;
- Ancestral community territories illegally occupied during colonial and post-colonial government regimes as concessions to corporations for business development violate the rights of the people and therefore, constitutes serious crimes against human, an illegality is an illegality

regardless of the time they were committed;

WE FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

- Post-colonial governments have failed in their responsibilities by giving true independence to the communities by prioritizing colonial interests by foreign agents by enacting neo-community laws to dislodge and rob communities of their ancestral land using various opaque notions of national land and/or government land ownership;
- The threats caused by the senseless acts of grabbing ancestral land and awarding them as concessions to business has brought untold hardship, violence and irreparable damage such loss of lives and biodiversity, entrenched poverty due loss of livelihoods and community property, early child pregnancy, and gender-based violence, etc.
- African countries that got independence in the 1960s and 70s, today consider communities as belonging to the State and governments and sit in the comfort of their armchairs in faraway land to grant concessions to corporations without Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of the true of the ancestral landowners.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO:

- Promote and defend agroecological practices and food sovereignty as a form of resistance;
- Facilitate the establishment of effective and efficient network of communities, activists and NGOs cooperating at local and international level to understand the strategies and tactics used by corporations to steal communities ancestral land and to develop further strategies and tactics to guide communities to stop land grabbing and recover previous illegal occupied land according to the Alliance objectives;
- Develop mechanisms that permit all sectors of society, especially the longstanding local populations to nonviolently start the journey to assert their ancestral rights to land fondly referred to by some governments as national land and/or state own land, be partners in planning, establishment of initiative that add value to the ancestral land;
- Strengthen nonviolent resistance education and provide training that will improve their ability to confront governments and corporations that want to take over their territories.
- Strengthen education for nonviolent resistance and provide training that will improve their ability to confront governments and corporations that want to take over their territories.
- Plead for the authorities to provide young people with access to land in rural areas, facilitate their training and support.

RECOGNIZING that action to protect the living riches and beauty of ancestral land depends, on the full commitment of the affected local people, WE PLEDGE OURSELVES to work wholeheartedly to implement the provisions of this Declaration.

EMPHASIZING that the recognition of ancestral land is essential to sustaining human society and conserving our planet, WE INVITE THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE ALLIANCE to convey this Declaration far and wide with the purpose of ensuring that the conclusions are incorporated in daily activities.

Signatories:

- Community members from Gabon
- Musiru Divag de Fougamou Gabon

- Institute of sustainable Agriculture, Grand Bassa county, Jogba clan, Liberia
- Women's Network Against Rural Plantations Injustice (WoNARPI), Sierra Leone
- Alliance Uganda Chapter
- Witness Radio, Uganda
- Nature Cameroon
- Synaparcam, Cameroon
- COPACO, DRC
- RADD, Cameroon
- Struggle to Economize Future Environment (SEFE), Mundemba, Cameroon
- CPPH, Cote d'Ivoire
- Collectif des Ressortissants et Écologistes des Plateaux Bateke, Gabon
- REFEB, Cote d'Ivoire
- YVE Ghana
- JVE Côte d'Ivoire
- Association Gulusenu du village Doubou, Gabon
- Muyissi Environnement, Gabon
- Komolo Agro Farmers Association Kiryandongo, Uganda
- Ndagize julius, East African, Uganda
- LOOK GREEN, CARE FOUNDATION, Nigeria
- Association les Rassembleurs du Village Mboukou, Gabon
- Joegba United Women Empowerment and Development Organization (JUWEDO), Liberia
- COLLECTIF ADIAKE. Cote d'Ivoire
- CNOP, Congo
- Maloa, Sierra Leone
- World Rainforest Movement
- GRAIN

Madagascar: Community of Sainte Luce says NO to destruction from mining

“We declare our opposition to the mining project” - that is the message from the community of Sainte Luce to QIT-Madagascar Minerals (QMM) and Malagasy authorities. The community declared their opposition to the company's intentions to mine ilmenite – a mineral used in white paint and plastics, among other products – as this would destroy their lands and fishing grounds. They made their position clear in a letter and video testimonies, which they delivered to the Rio Tinto subsidiary and authorities in December of 2023.

Sainte Luce is a fishing village with a population of 2,500 located in the District of Fort Dauphin, Commune of Mahatalaky, in Southeastern Madagascar. Fishing is central to the livelihoods of families in Sainte Luce; nearby forests and wetlands additionally provide them with medicine, materials and food sovereignty. There is very limited access to public services like education and health services, and the nearest schools and health posts are some 15 kilometers away from the commune.

The village of Sainte Luce is afraid that ilmenite mining by Rio Tinto subsidiary QIT-Madagascar Minerals (QMM) will destroy their fishing grounds, lands and livelihoods. Even though no date for the mining expansion has been communicated, the community fears that such expansion may be imminent. To protect their survival as community, the village of Sainte Luce says NO to this mining project, which, if it were to proceed, would destroy the land of their ancestors.

“We declare our opposition to the mining project”

In December 2023, the community of Sainte Luce delivered a letter and video testimonies to QMM and Malagasy authorities, in which they made known their opposition to the destruction of their lands and fishing grounds to mine ilmenite. This mineral is used in white paint and plastics, among other products. (1)

The community of Sainte Luce has every reason to believe the expansion of QMM's mine would spell destruction for them, based on the company's record so far.

Amidst much controversy, Anglo-Australian mining corporation Rio Tinto received a long-term mining lease from the Malagasy government in 2005. The lease handed over nearly 6,000 hectares of land to QMM – a joint venture between Rio Tinto and the Malagasy state – to mine ilmenite at three locations near the city of Fort Dauphin in southeastern Madagascar. These three locations were Mandena, Petriky, and Sainte Luce. So far, the company only has operations at one of these locations: Mandena. The ilmenite extracted by QMM is shipped to a Rio Tinto processing plant in Canada and sold as titanium oxide, which is used in white paint and plastics, among other applications. The price for one tonne of titanium oxide stood at around USD 290 in August 2024.

Mining at the 2,000-hectare lease in Mandena, just outside of Fort Dauphin, began in 2008. Shortly after QMM was granted the lease, families living near various installations related to the project were forced to give up their lands – including near the new mining port, the private conservation areas, and Mandena. Fifteen years later, there are still ongoing disputes over the compensation that QMM promised families for lost livelihoods, as families affected by the mining at Mandena

claim that the compensation process left them short-changed. In May 2024, QMM agreed to re-assess the compensation payments.

Despite the massive destruction caused by the project, Rio Tinto claims that it helped protect the forests around the port from being destroyed, by having them declared as protected areas. In so doing, the company claims to have “offset” the destruction of the forests and biological diversity at the mining sites. (2)

In June 2023, prior to national elections that would take place later that year, Rio Tinto and the Malagasy government announced that an inter-ministerial committee was being set up to facilitate “the obtaining of different authorisations” needed to advance preparations for mining at the remaining sites, Petriky and Sainte Luce. (3)

Rio Tinto profits, Malagasy communities pay

Mining multinational Rio Tinto owns 85 percent of QMM, while the government of Madagascar holds the remaining 15 percent – according to a 22 August 2023 company press release. In this press release, the company announced that the process of renegotiating the financial agreements had concluded; this renegotiation was planned for and included in the initial lease agreement. (4) In both the original and renegotiated deal, most profits go to Rio Tinto, while communities and the state of Madagascar are left with conflicts and the manifold damage left behind by the mining operations. Rio Tinto pays a mere 2.5 percent royalty on the raw extracted minerals – minerals which the company exports to its own processing factory in Canada. The renegotiated financial agreement also reduces the state’s share in QMM to 15 percent (down from 20 percent), in exchange for the cancellation of USD 77 million that the company advanced to the Government of Madagascar “to finance their funding of QMM.” Additionally, the first dividend that Rio Tinto has agreed to pay out to the government comes with conditions: the state must spend USD 12 million of it to rehabilitate 110 km of National Road 13, a main road in the region.

Communities face destruction and water pollution from mining in Mandena

In Mandena, QMM’s mining over the past decade has hit three villages especially hard, and in particular the fisherfolk. Approximately 15,000 people live in the three villages bordering the mine. Many families lost their livelihoods when the QMM mining operations began to destroy the surrounding forests and fishing grounds. Families saw their fishing catch drop by nearly 50 per cent. They were forced off their lands, and many never received the promised compensation. (5)

Other major impacts of QMM’s mining include water pollution and high concentrations of lead. (6) In early 2022, residents protested that dead fish were appearing in bodies of water on the outskirts of Fort Dauphin. Shortly before the dead fish began to appear, the company had carried out “a controlled water release” to prevent (yet another) breach of the sand embankments that the company uses to keep polluted water at the mining site. This was not the first time the company had carried out an emergency release of toxic water. In 2010 and 2018, the company also spilled large amounts of polluted mining waste into bodies of water around the mine, in order to prevent the mine’s containment system from collapsing. In 2018, after the waste water was released, dead fish started appearing in the lakes. (7)

Shortly after the dead fish appeared in early 2022, the government imposed a fishing ban – which meant that fisherfolk lost their income from fishing for months. Meanwhile, QMM did what mining corporations usually do in such instances: it denied any connection between its release of the polluted water and the dead fish. (8) In a statement to the journal, *The Intercept*, the company claims that a water sample analysis it commissioned showed “no conclusive link between our mine activities and the dead fish observed by community members.” (9)

There have been regular protests against QMM’s mining operations for a multitude of reasons: there are unresolved compensation claims; lakes and lagoons have been polluted for well over a decade from the mine’s wastewater system – which QMM can’t be bothered to fix; communities have lost income they used to make from fishing and harvesting forest products – such as Mahampy to produce the traditional mats common in the region; communities have lost land where they grow food; the promises of employment have been unfulfilled; and communities face major health risks due to elevated uranium and lead levels around the mine. Here too, the Rio Tinto subsidiary has done what mining companies usually do in response to protests to their destructive activities: it has ignored the cause of the protest and called on state authorities to send in the police.

A report released in March 2022 by the Publish What You Pay network states that “there have been protests against QMM since the operation began in 2009. Hundreds of Malagasy people have erected barrages/road blocks and taken to the streets to strike against displacement and involuntary relocation, loss of lands and access to their local forests, destruction of sacred forest areas, inadequate compensation for lands and livelihoods, removal of ancestral tombs, and perceived inequity over QMM employment practices which have favoured workers from other countries or regions rather than training and hiring local people.” (10) Many of those protests have been met with heavy-handed police crackdowns and repression of union leaders and villagers – who are demanding that the company stop breaking the law, polluting the water, and destroying their livelihoods. (11)

Faced with police crackdowns, the incarceration of protesters, and the mining company’s refusal to address their demands, residents living near QMM’s Mandena mining operations initiated legal claims in the UK in April 2024. They accuse Rio Tinto of polluting the lakes they depend on for their domestic needs with levels of uranium and lead that pose a serious risk to their health. (12)

15 years of QMM mining at Mandena has resulted in destruction, pollution, conflicts, violent repression of protests, and state and QMM repression against citizens who have demanded their rights be respected. It is in this context that the community of Sainte Luce declares its opposition to QMM’s proposed expansion of ilmenite mining onto their territory.

Sainte Luce says NO to destruction of their way of life

Sainte Luce is the lobster capital of southern Madagascar. The fish, crabs, and especially lobster caught off the shores of Sainte Luce are sought after by restaurant chefs from as far away as Madagascar’s capital, Antananarivo. Seafood fishing and the processing of forest products like amboza and mahampy – natural fibers that women use to weave mats and crafts – have sustained the community for generations.

Alarmed by the destruction and dangerous pollution caused by QMM's mine, and the drastic reduction in fish in nearby Mandena, residents of Sainte Luce have vowed to protect their ways of life and the land of their ancestors.

In March 2023, the community informed QMM and Malagasy authorities about their decision to oppose the ilmenite mine at Sainte Luce and the destruction it would bring. "We declare our opposition to the mining project" the community stated in a letter to QMM and authorities. In December 2023, community representatives delivered copies of a video from the community to Malagasy authorities and QMM. In the video, residents explain the community's decision to oppose QMM mining in their territory. They say that the community decided to prepare a video as proof that the decision was taken collectively. (13)

"We do not want this project that will destroy our sustainable sources of income."

QMM already restricts Sainte Luce community's access to their forests

In December 2023, in between delivering the community video to Malagasy authorities and to QMM in Fort Dauphin, Sainte Luce community members had a court case to attend. At issue was the community's right to their ancestral lands – the forests that QMM calls S8, S9 and S17. QMM had these forests declared as protected areas, and claims that by doing so, it saved them from destruction. These forests are now managed by a group called FIMPIA (Fikambanana Mpiaro ny Ambatoatsinana), which is supported and financed by QMM. FIMPIA is now accusing the community of illegally entering their own ancestral lands which QMM had declared 'protected area'.

In 2009 the company released a press kit about the mine entitled 'A mine at the rescue of the unique biodiversity of the littoral zone of Fort Dauphin'. (14) The publication was part of Rio Tinto's initiative to win over – or perhaps buy off – conservationist NGOs. Some of these NGOs were initially opposed to the Rio Tinto mine because it would destroy 1,600 hectares of coastal forests. To curb this NGO opposition to its mining plans, Rio Tinto agreed to 'compensate' for the biologically diverse forests its mine was going to destroy.

But when conservationist NGOs dropped their opposition to the QMM mine, they ignored a very important question: How can one possibly offset the destruction of a unique forest – which is not only home to many rare and endemic species of plants and animals, but also home to the Sainte Luce and Mandena communities, their culture, and their ancestral connections? The alleged biodiversity offsets involve prohibiting the community from using several forests, both immediately around the mine, and in Antsofso, some 60 km north of the mining operations.

The community forest just outside Manafiafy – which is the Malagasy name for Sainte Luce – is one such location that Rio Tinto had declared as a protected area, as part of the company's "biodiversity offset" programme. QMM refers to the forest as "Zone S9, S8, S17," where "S" stands for Sainte Luce. Just like in Antsofso, the community forest outside of Manafiafy has become a biodiversity priority area for Rio Tinto. The QMM mining operation in essence involves a double land-grab: first of the mining sites, and second of the biodiversity compensation sites – in this case S9, S8, S17, and the Tsitongambarika forests at Antsofso – where community forests have been declared as protected areas at Rio Tinto's behest. (2)

“We declare our opposition to the mining project”

The community of Sainte Luce has made it clear that they will protect the lobster capital of southern Madagascar against the destruction, violence and conflict that the QMM mine would bring. They have informed the company that they put their community, livelihoods, ways of life and the home of their ancestors before the promise of short-term profit. They call on the tourism and lobster industries to support their effort to protect Sainte Luce against destructive mining, and they call on the Malagasy authorities not to sacrifice their community for quick money and personal gain. QMM has already left a trail of conflict, violence, pollution and threats to residents' health (from the elevated uranium and lead levels in Mandena and Fort Dauphin). In this David-against-Goliath struggle, we stand in solidarity with the village of Sainte Luce, whose residents have vowed to protect the land of their ancestors and the future of their community.

Association Finoana and WRM Secretariat

- (1) Sainte Luce says NO to destruction of their forests and livelihoods for mining. [Video testimonies here](#).
 - (2) [Your Mine. 17-minute video](#). ReCommon.
 - (3) 23 June 2023. [L'Etat entend faciliter l'extension du projet QMM à Petriky et Sainte-Luce](#). 2424MG.
 - (4) [Rio Tinto statement](#) on the renegotiation of financial aspects of the concession with the Malagasy government.
- See (7) for how Rio Tinto uses election years to strike deals with governments.
- (5) [Villagers demand Rio Tinto compensation. Yvone Orengo. The Ecologist](#). December 2022. Orengo also notes that despite “QMM claims that they have paid out almost USD 4 million in compensation to people who were negatively impacted by the Mandena mine, by December 2009 there were reportedly 563 outstanding complaints about compensation lodged with QMM”.
 - (6) [Rural villagers living near mine in Madagascar take legal action against mining giant Rio Tinto after tests show dangerous levels of lead in their bodies](#), Leighday, April 2024.
 - (7) [Rio Tinto's Madagascar mine promised prosperity. It tainted a community. Neha Wadekar](#). The Intercept. 03 April 2024.
 - (8) [The section of Rio Tinto's website on its QMM operations in Madagascar](#).
 - (9) Idem 7
 - (10) [Large-scale mining's impacts: a case study of Rio Tinto /QMM mine in Madagascar](#). Publish What You Pay Network. March 2022.
 - (11) Collectif TANY & CRAAD-OI communiqué on 2018 protests.
 - (12) Idem 7
 - (13) Idem 1
 - (14) A mine at the rescue of the unique biodiversity of the littoral zone of Fort-Dauphin. QIT Madagascar Minerals SA Press kit. 2009.

Million-dollar biodiversity funds: A dangerous proposition

The proposal to “close the biodiversity finance gap” does not address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss. Instead, it intensifies the commodification of nature, which allows the corporate and financial sector to profit from the environmental crisis. Andre Standing, member of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), offers an analysis of this situation in this interview, which was published by Acción Ecológica during the COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

While the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was taking place in Cali, Colombia, Ecuadorian organization Acción Ecológica published a conversation with Andre Standing, a member of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA). CFFA is a platform of European and African organisations in defense of African artisanal fishing communities.

Standing offers a critical analysis of one of the prevailing ideas at the CBD meetings, which claims that in order to combat biodiversity loss, it is necessary to invest 700 million dollars per year, especially in countries in the Global South.

The COP16 concluded this 1 November without an agreement on the creation of a global fund to cover this deficit. However, the proposal remains in the documents that guide the agenda of the CBD, in which 196 countries participate.

Below we share the full interview, which [was published](#) on 28 October 2024:

Talk of a \$700 billion deficit to finance biodiversity is a dangerous proposition for people and nature

The 16th Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1) is being held in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November. The framework document for the negotiations is the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted during the CBD COP 15 in 2022. (2)

The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) sets, among its global targets for 2050, the goal of achieving sufficient financial resources to progressively close the US\$700 billion annual biodiversity financing gap. For this reason, one of the key issues to be discussed in Cali at COP16 are the financial mechanisms needed to close this gap.

However, as with climate finance, which claims that at least \$100 billion a year would be needed to combat climate change, this figure is based on wild calculations, clearly aimed at trying to save capitalism from its current crisis of accumulation.

One of the reports that was key in the CBD arriving at this \$700 billion figure at the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is the document *Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Finance Gap*. (3) This is not the first time that documents produced by renowned consultants have served as a basis for international discussions on climate and biodiversity. The

same happened with the landmark document, Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change (4), commissioned by the British government and published in October 2006 (Nicholas Stern was an economist at the World Bank); or the interim report on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) in 2008 (5), commissioned by the European Commission, with Pavan Sukhdev in charge (then head of the international markets division of Deutsche Bank).

In the case of *Financing Nature*, it was produced by three organisations: The Paulsen Institute, founded by Henry Paulson, former US Treasury Secretary and former Goldman Sachs senior manager; The Nature Conservancy, the world's largest transnational conservationist organisation and now a partner of the international financial system; and the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability, a US think tank created by David Atkinson, former vice president of JP Morgan, one of the world's largest financial conglomerates. The foreword to the publication includes names such as directors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Central Bank, as well as Michael Bloomberg, founder of the financial information company, Bloomberg, among others.

It is not surprising that these reports, such as *Financing Nature*, are led by bankers, as they are not proposals to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss or climate change. Rather, they are proposals to use the global financial system to further the financialisation of nature, profit from environmental crises, and favour the private corporate sector.

In the following interview with Andre Standing of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), we will learn more about the *Financing Nature* report and the dangers of putting a price on biodiversity.

Acción Ecológica: Andre, you have just published a long article (6) on the document, *Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Finance Gap*, which has become one of the most cited reports on biodiversity conservation. It is also referred to in Goal D of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework and was used to set precise targets for resource mobilisation by Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). So it is argued at COP16 that there is a huge funding shortfall, or gap, of at least \$700 billion a year.

Tell us, why is there so much talk about a biodiversity funding gap, and what do they mean when they talk about a shortfall in the money that should be invested?

Andre Standing: *Financing Nature* has been an incredibly influential report. Many organisations accept the \$700 billion funding gap with blind faith, and of course this also includes the architects of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. There is something very attractive about seeing the biodiversity crisis as a problem that requires a lot of money to solve. However, I think it is essential that people realise that this figure is nonsense, based on very dubious calculations. I also believe that the idea of a funding gap is a dangerous way to approach debates about what is needed to transform societies to improve nature conservation. But it is an approach that suits many organisations.

Funding gap reports have become a popular type of publication in the last decade. They all follow the same formula and consistently show that the gap is so large that public funding cannot close it, so private funding must come to the rescue. Their recommendations always include strategies

such as 'blending' public money with private investment. (7) So the important thing to consider is that these reports on the funding gap, including *Financing Nature*, are ideologically motivated. No one should accept these figures unless they are willing to endorse the view that saving biodiversity depends on a massive transfer of power to the private financial sector.

Acción Ecológica: In your article you describe why the 700 billion figure is unreliable. Can you explain what the problems are with this figure?

Andre Standing: I think the problem is that many of the people who use this figure probably haven't read the report in its entirety.

Reports on the financing gap start by establishing a baseline of what is currently being spent. Thus, the *Financing Nature* document attempts to account for all the money being spent in the world that would have a positive impact on biodiversity conservation. It seems strange to me to imagine that anyone could do this. However, what the authors of this report did was to add up all the money spent by governments on biodiversity, with all the money spent through development aid, as well as the money spent through private finance and market-based schemes such as eco-labelling, biodiversity offsets and green bonds. The result, according to the authors, is that the world spends about \$140 billion a year on saving biodiversity.

As I describe in my article, there are many problems with the underlying data. Part of the problem is that this method accounts for things that we know are ineffective. *Financing Nature*, for example, assumes that when the World Bank reports that it has spent millions on a project aimed at forestry or fisheries reforms, that money has been successful. It also assumes that the billions spent on biodiversity offsets have produced a net benefit for nature. A large part of the funding accounted for by this same report also comes from fake green bonds and the global value of things like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and 'sustainable palm oil'.

But there are also more fundamental issues. The report assumes a straightforward link between money and biodiversity conservation. More money equals more success. But comparing the costs of a US company paying for a biodiversity offset with those of a community organisation working on a permaculture project in a Southern country makes no sense. What is also particularly problematic about *Financing Nature* is that it makes no effort to capture the efforts and expenditures of millions of Indigenous peoples and small farmers or fisherfolk who act as custodians of vast areas of the planet. They are not included at all, whereas a few million dollars raised in a green bond is. Similarly, the value of a product with a corporate eco-label is added to the total biodiversity expenditure, but something produced by small-scale farmers or fishers without a label is not counted, even though we know that the latter is much more environmentally friendly than the former.

So the baseline figure of what is being spent is not only false, it is based on the wrong perspective. There is no critical reflection on the results of the money earmarked to save nature. Much of the money represents corporate greenwashing, which, in fact, has a detrimental impact on biodiversity.

Acción Ecológica: So if the *Financing Nature* report has invented a figure for what is spent, how does it arrive at a figure for what is needed?

Andre Standing: Well, the short answer is that they make up this figure based on a few controversial reports. It is incredible that the authors of the report claim to know how much money is needed to solve the biodiversity crisis.

Of course, the problem of calculating how much money is needed to save nature depends on the approach taken. A good example is the 30×30 target. In *Financing Nature* they draw on a figure produced by another report that estimated how much it would cost to declare 30% of the planet a strict nature reserve. According to that report, the annual running costs of protected areas would amount to about 190 billion dollars. Many things could be said about the accuracy of that figure, but the most serious is that the \$190 billion estimate is based on a specific type of management regime, based largely on law enforcement and ecotourism. Someone would come to a completely different perspective on costs if they believed in protected areas managed by local communities, where many management functions are based on volunteerism and mutual aid.

I am particularly interested in marine fisheries, and *Financing Nature* assumed that the world needs to spend between \$23 billion and \$47 billion on fisheries management to ensure the sustainability of fisheries and the recovery of fish stocks. This is a ridiculous figure based on an obscure academic paper written by US marine biologists that projected the global costs of fisheries management if all countries managed their fisheries as the US does: through individual catch quotas. Anyone familiar with fisheries knows that this model is totally unacceptable to many countries in the South, as it would jeopardise the livelihoods of millions of people. Also, a considerable amount of literature on fisheries management shows that how much governments spend on management is not a good indicator of how well fisheries are managed. Experts disagree on what the ingredients for success are, but many point to the importance of democratic governance, the ability to resist corporate lobbying and corruption, and tenure systems that favour low-impact artisanal fishing methods. Money, or lack of it, is not the biggest problem.

So, if we ask ourselves how the authors of *Financing Nature* have arrived at an estimate of what needs to be spent, it is quite clear that these figures come from some very dubious research that no one should take seriously.

Acción Ecológica: Your article describes *Financing Nature* as a neoliberal fantasy. This is because of the way the funding gap is envisaged to be closed. Can you explain this?

Andre Standing: *Financing Nature* is a long report. It is more than 230 pages long. About half of it is devoted to describing how to close the imagined funding gap. What is stated in this part of the report is that the huge financing gap is too big for governments, so most of the money needed must come from private finance and business. A fairly detailed proposal is made on where the money should come from. Governments are only expected to increase spending on biodiversity by 50%, and development aid by 100%. These are fairly small parts of the proposal. In comparison, elements such as biodiversity offsets, green bonds and ecolabels have to grow by more than twenty times, which means that they become the dominant funding stream for biodiversity conservation.

I think this proposal is not surprising, given that *Financing Nature* was drafted by three US organisations closely linked to the banking sector. But we have to recognise how radical this view is. What the report also says is that, in order to unlock this flow of private finance, states and

communities have to fall into line, so that they can make sure that the circumstances are conducive to private investors. I think we need to ask what that means in practice. Essentially, it means that natural resource management has to be privatised and managed for profit, and that scarce state funds have to be used for things like credit guarantees.

What is clear from reading *Financing Nature* is that this is all fantasy. The report is not a serious publication on solutions to the biodiversity crisis, but an elaborate marketing tool written by organisations that want to sell conservation to investors. The question we must ask is how this report ended up being taken so seriously and how it came to be included in the text of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Sadly, many organisations that are opposed to private finance also refer to the \$700 billion funding gap as if it were real.

Acción Ecológica: We agree that this is a problem we are witnessing at many international meetings. For example, in September this year, a month before COP16, the Biodiversity Finance Summit, organised by the Colombian government, was held in Colombia. (8) At this summit, which was attended by the World Bank, IDB, private banking associations, institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Resources Institute (WRI) and big NGOs such as WWF and others, it became clear where this funding is going. It will be used to open up huge flows of money from the public sector to the private sector and banks; to create devastating and dangerous indebtedness for small- and medium-sized Colombian entrepreneurs through access to green or blue credits; to search for new businesses with lower risk for investors through guarantees and insurance; and, at the same time, to take from philanthropic environmental funds, known to amount to billions of dollars from private donors. To name but a few of the interests of those who set their sights on profiting from the crisis of biodiversity loss and who do not seem genuinely concerned with tackling the causes of this crisis.

The same logic is now being applied at the COP16 meeting. So why is the idea of the funding gap so widely supported?

Andre Standing: I think exposing the flaws in the idea of the \$700 billion financing gap raises a number of difficult questions. Of course, many conservation organisations are looking for more money, and these huge funding gap figures are clearly useful. It is also true that countries in the North owe an ecological debt to those in the South, and I think some organisations misinterpret these figures as a kind of reparation target for this debt.

But we need to think more seriously about the role of money in conservation, and in particular about the threats posed by moving towards a model of paying for conservation through private finance. The central question of *Financing Nature* is how society manages shared resources. How money is generated and distributed is vitally important, but the idea that sustainable and equitable systems of resource management depend on huge amounts of external investment seems misguided and contradicts much of what southern social movements advocate, such as reviving and caring for the commons and moving towards food sovereignty.

As you say, the private finance route will increase the flow of money to Southern countries, but much of it will be in the form of debt. This money will have to be repaid. So, if the financing gap is closed, it will end up representing a huge transfer of wealth from the South to the North. It will also probably involve a continuation of the transfer of control over the use of natural resources to

organisations better placed to access financial capital. I think it is clear why the \$700 billion financing gap should not be associated with the repayment of an ecological debt.

In denouncing the \$700 billion target as dangerous nonsense, we must not overlook that there are genuine needs for redistribution of money, including support for under-resourced government entities and civil society or community organisations. But the question, which should be the focus of COP16, is how this money can be generated in a sustainable, equitable and fair way while complementing a system that is not wedded to endless economic growth. Unfortunately, thanks to reports such as *Financing Nature*, we seem to be heading in the wrong direction.

Acción Ecológica: As you rightly explain, the *Financing Nature* paper has had a profound impact on global discussions on biodiversity conservation and is used for one of the four objectives of the Kunming-Montreal CBD Framework Agreement. This is being seen in the COP16 biodiversity negotiations. In Cali, the idea that putting a price on nature can serve to save the planet is being deepened.

We must remember that the proposal to 'close the financing gaps' did not first appear with the issue of climate finance or biodiversity. This has been an obsession of capitalists for centuries. This logic has already been used, for example, to speed up the outflow of goods, justify the need for railways or roads, create state subsidies, and above all, control the resistance of nature and the resistance of peoples

Focusing on increasing funding for climate change or biodiversity is a distraction from taking real actions that would actually address the root causes of biodiversity loss or global warming, such as leaving hydrocarbons in the ground, producing and transporting less manufacturing, consuming less in the global North, and respecting collective, people's, and nature's rights.

(1) Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 16) <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2024>

(2) Decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, December 2022 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

(3) The full Financing Nature report is available here: https://www.paulsoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FINANCING-NATURE_Full-Report_Final-with-endorsements_101420.pdf (4) UK Government. TEEB. https://web.archive.org/web/20061114045919/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/stern_review_report.cfm Summary in English: https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/cambio-climatico/publicaciones/documentos-de-interes/stern_conclusiones_esp_tcm30-178350.pdf

(5) La economía de los ecosistemas y la biodiversidad, Comunidades Europeas, 2008 https://www.teebweb.org/media/2008/05/TEEB-Interim-Report_Spanish.pdf

(6) CFFA, Why the \$700 billion funding gap for biodiversity is dangerous nonsense: Implications for the oceans and small-scale fisheries, October 2024 <https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/funding-gap-dangerous-nonsense>

(7) See UNCTAD (2023) "SDG investment is growing, but too slowly: The investment gap is now \$4 trillion, up from \$2.5 in 2015", available at: <https://unctad.org/publication/sdg-investment-trends-monitor-issue-4>.

(8) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kToDWiNbQMY>

FROM THE WRM BULLETIN ARCHIVES

To reread: REDD+ in the Paris Agreement secures funding for conservation industry while large-scale deforestation advances unhindered

This issue of the bulletin revisits an article written by WRM in 2017. In it, we showed how formal recognition of REDD+ in the Paris Agreement meant yet another possibility for corporations and big conservationist NGOs (the “conservation industry”) to appropriate financial resources. The article also dealt with the creation of REDD+ as a “conservation fad”, which served as a parameter for the channeling of resources from investment banks and governments of the global north, immediately also arousing interest among corporations of the food and consumer goods sectors. [Read the article here.](#)

RECOMMENDED

Brazil: Dossier launched about the resistance and traditional land tenure of the Turiwara Tembé people in the upper Acará River area, Pará state

Meticulous research conducted by the New Social Cartography of the Amazon Project in conjunction with traditional communities in the upper Acará River area over the course of five years has resulted in the dossier “Indígenas Turiwara Tembé no alto rio Acará: conflitos étnicos e territoriais”. This outstanding work describes in detail the history and resistance struggles of traditional communities in this part of Pará, proving that the Turiwara Tembé belong in the territory they have demanded for many years. This dossier makes a detailed account of the resistance, traditional occupation of the territory, recent process of re-occupations of territory, and brutality practiced against this indigenous people by the company Agropalma that illegally occupies this territory. As such, it is a strong denouncement of how this company brutally denies their existence and identity, treating them as ‘invaders’. Given the evidence contained in this document, the inertia of the relevant agencies of the Brazilian State, evinced by the non-demarcation of the Turiwara Tembé territory, is unacceptable. The document may be accessed [through this website.](#)

A brief history of colonialism, climate change and carbon markets

Climate change is not a natural disaster. It is the result of decisions, practices and policies adopted and maintained by a relatively small number of actors, primarily for their own interests. Its consequences, however, are global and have the most significant impact in places and on communities that bear the least responsibility for creating the crisis.

Climate change is embedded in the history of colonialism and capitalism. It is important to reflect on this history in order to better understand the emergence and promotion of the carbon market. Without such context, issues risk being addressed technocratically rather than with justice and equity as the essential framing. This article by SOMO is part of the series “Facing the facts: carbon offsets unmasked”, which debunks eight myths promoted by the offset industry. [Read the full article here \(available in English and Dutch only\).](#)

COP29 approval of Article 6.4 is “opening the floodgates for a global carbon market that will have devastating impacts on communities in the Global South”

COP29 approval of Article 6.4 is “opening the floodgates for a global carbon market that will have devastating impacts on communities in the Global South”. This post by REDD-Monitor looked at the approval of the Paris Agreement mechanism for a global carbon market on the very first day of the last UN climate conference in Baku. With a text that many would find “puzzling”, the rules created “on the fly” reflect a process in which the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body went outside its mandate to establish the standards for the mechanism. However, regardless of how the drafting and approval process went, the mechanism is bound to mislead and worsen the climate crisis. That's why the approval generated immediate criticism from many civil society organisations, some of which gathered in the second part of this post. [Read it here.](#)

New Book: Climate Opium. How we are overdosing on false solutions to the climate emergency

In her latest book, Cassandra, a long-standing activist against the carbon markets, puts together important information about the “overdose” of false solutions to the current climate emergency. Who is responsible for the current crisis? What have they done to get rid of their responsibility while making profits and destroying peoples’ livelihoods? By presenting past and recent cases, the book provides an anti-colonial analysis of the environmental crises and highlights Indigenous and forest-dependent peoples’ resistance. [The book is available in English for free here.](#)

Articles of the Bulletin can be reproduced and disseminated using the following source:
Bulletin 273 of the World Rainforest Movement (WRM): “Governments and NGOs serving corporate interests: impacts and resistance struggles” (<https://wrm.org.uy/>)

[Subscribe to the WRM Bulletin](#)

*The Bulletin aims to support and contribute to the struggle of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities over their forests and territories.
Subscription is free.*

Did you miss the last issue of the WRM bulletin
"Offsets and monoculture plantations: growing threats for territories"
[You can access all the past issues of the WRM bulletin at this link](#)

Bulletin of the World Rainforest Movement

This Bulletin is also available in French, Spanish and Portuguese

WRM International Secretariat

Av. Bolivia 1962 Bis, CP 11500 Montevideo, Uruguay

Phone/Fax: +598 26056943

wrm@wrm.org.uy / <http://www.wrm.org.uy>