



WORLD GROWTH

NOVEMBER 2009

GREEN PAPERS: ISSUE II

Green Poverty

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The Greenpeace Strategy on Forestry and Climate Change

Greenpeace has been active in the global climate change negotiations. Its public message is “Stop Deforestation — save the Climate.” But this is not the Greenpeace forestry strategy. It is, as it was long before climate change became a global issue, to “halt commercial forestry” everywhere.

Greenpeace has developed technical proposals to support the negotiations and has been active in discussions with donors on strategies for developing countries. Yet its research advances its political goals and its record demonstrates that it will pursue its objectives at any cost, including to the poor.

Greenpeace mounts publicity stunts which it coaxes foundations to fund and celebrities to endorse. The latest is a “climate defenders” camp in Sumatra. Greenpeace claims the support of local communities, but local communities have protested its presence. Greenpeace also neglects to show the 70,000 or more people dependent upon forest industries for their livelihoods.

This latest exercise is likely to be an expensive failure like a similar camp it set up with funding from a Dutch foundation in Papua New Guinea in 2007.

Greenpeace strategies divide, not unite, attitudes towards forestry. It is as much an obstacle to efforts to build a new global consensus on climate change as those it criticizes.

Not only that, if Greenpeace forest strategies were implemented, poverty would increase.

Greenpeace’s Real Forestry Strategy

Greenpeace joined the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) when it was established nearly 20 years ago as an initiative of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Council promotes sustainable forest management. But that is not Greenpeace’s position.

Sustainable forest management is normally taken to mean supply of timber from plantations rather than natural forests, commercial logging using methods which protect environmental values — by minimizing the collateral damage of logging; maintaining biodiversity in forests; and promoting regrowth of forest.

In contrast, Greenpeace opposes any “industrial” (it means “commercial”) forestry in natural forests. Instead it advocates communal or “eco-forestry.” It is against plantations because it disapproves of monocultures. It also opposes sustainable forestry management as part of any climate agreement.

Consistent with this policy, Greenpeace therefore attacks forestry businesses which are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as operating sustainably managed forests.¹

It has run anti-forestry campaigns in Brazil, Canada, Congo, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Finland, Canada and the United States. The strategies and messages are similar in each campaign.

Every time Greenpeace attacks the industry or a company and urges a consumer boycott or import ban, it insists they must have FSC certification. Yet it continues to attack the FSC scheme.

So why did Greenpeace join FSC in the first place? To practice greenmail? Some evidently once thought it was useful to have Greenpeace inside FSC because it could exert pressure on companies already certified to FSC standards to adopt even more stringent standards,² but clearly there is now concern this strategy is backfiring.³ So there should be. Forest companies now naturally question the commercial value and integrity of FSC certification.

WWF’s own attitude is puzzling. It has not publicly criticized Greenpeace and there is no evidence it has complained to Greenpeace. In other areas WWF and Greenpeace collaborate closely. For example both worked together to produce the

“NGO Treaty” which laid out a blueprint on for a new global treaty on climate change, including payment of compensation for ceasing conversion of forest.

Greenpeace’s Anti-Forestry Climate Change Policies

Greenpeace has two declared policy interests in climate change. The first is to discourage strategies to offset emissions.

Emissions may not be offset by expansion of sinks.

Greenpeace has asserted repeatedly that emissions must be abated only by reducing consumption of fossil fuels. It discourages other strategies to reduce emissions.

It is widely acknowledged by forest industries as well as the official technical advisor to the UN, the IPCC, that the easiest way to reduce emissions is to expand sustainably-managed, regrowth forestry.⁴

Despite that, the UN’s rules for measuring carbon do not permit countries with forest resources to include the contribution their forests make to reducing emissions.⁵ Greenpeace (like WWF) has opposed this growth-friendly way to reduce emissions since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted.⁶

Developing countries may not trade forest carbon credits.

The World Bank and major Western Aid donors have advanced the idea that developing countries might earn carbon credits by reducing deforestation and reforestation degraded land. These credits could be sold to replace the income lost from ceasing the economic activity from conversion of forest land to other purposes.

Although the idea is seriously impractical,⁷ Greenpeace (and WWF) oppose it in principle. They do not want developing countries to turn forestry or plantation industries into active

systems to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Instead, Greenpeace contends that Western donors should offer aid to poor countries as an incentive to cease conversion of forest land.⁸

At least here they concede the economic cost to poor countries of their strategy. Conversion of forest land to other, more productive purposes is a vital process for raising living standards and reducing poverty. Stop conversion and economic growth falters.

And as report after report has demonstrated, conversion of land to high value economic activity like sustainable forestry and plantations is not the leading cause of deforestation: it is pressure from the poor for land for habitat, food and fuel.⁹

The Greenpeace strategy is to outlaw conversion of forest land to more productive purposes.

Greenpeace’s Politicization of Environmental Issues

It is Greenpeace practice to produce “research” papers with extensive references to support its attacks on forest industries.

These reports do not typically provide technical evidence to support key contentions, but rather sweeping claims about the pace of deforestation, the causes of deforestation and the impacts of commercial forestry. These Greenpeace reports do not stand critical analysis as recent reviews show.¹⁰

This is the strategy employed in all Greenpeace campaigns. Governments acknowledge that Greenpeace is a radical, activist political organization, not a conservation agency.

Greenpeace’s record of unsupportable and false claims

Greenpeace has a long record of making claims that cannot be supported.

- The most notorious was its confession that its claims about the amount of oil dumped into the North Sea by the Shell's Brent Spar de-commissioned oil rig were wrong.¹¹
- In 2007 Greenpeace issued a report claiming APP was purchasing illegally felled timber in the Kampar Peninsular in Sumatra. The report failed to mention that no charges were laid against any timber sellers following government legal advice that there was no wrongdoing.¹² APP is one of the two largest pulp and paper companies in Indonesia. It was always operated under official Indonesian Government licences. It has reserved for conservation environmentally sensitive peat land in the Kampar peninsular for which it had been granted a forest concession.
- In September 2008, Greenpeace sent its vessel *Esperanza* to the Gulf of Papua where it illegally boarded and seized a vessel, and claimed the timber was illegal and owned by a forest company against which it had waged a long campaign.¹³ Despite the fact both claims were publicly demonstrated to be wrong, Greenpeace continued to make them and does until this day.
- Greenpeace routinely claims that forest loss is greater than it is and that forest operators engage in anti-social activities (human rights, labor rights and sexual abuse).
- Greenpeace claims 90 per cent of the forest operations of Rimbunan Hijau, the largest forestry operator in Papua New Guinea are illegal. There is no evidence to support this claim. All of the company's operations are properly licensed under PNG law. The company has pioneered introduction of the first legality verification system in PNG.
- It routinely attacks the reputations of businesses and threatens to impugn the reputation of CEOs of companies by labelling them as "forest criminals" for practices they do not follow.
- In the Asia-Pacific region, Greenpeace has been criticized

for fostering anti-Asian sentiment as part of its anti-forestry campaigns in areas where racial sensitivities are routinely high.¹⁴

Greenpeace uses strategies that most mainstream political organizations in most countries would eschew as unethical.

Greenpeace's Anti-Forestry Claims in Climate Change

Greenpeace advocates regularly the following claims which are not true or not supportable.

- **The Amazon forest legacy is about to be lost.** Yet the World Bank reported in a recent loan to Brazil that more than 80 per cent of the Amazon rainforest remains intact.¹⁵
- **Commercial forestry is the leading cause of deforestation.** All leading forestry research bodies recognize the leading cause of deforestation is pressure for land, food and fuel wood by poor people.¹⁶ Even research commissioned by the Stern Review acknowledged conversion of forest land for commercial forestry or plantations was a minor driver and in fact generated economic growth, prosperity and jobs.
- **Palm Oil and pulp plantations are a major driver of emissions.** Greenpeace claims plantation development on peat land is causing continuous fires and increasing emissions, making Indonesia the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. The leading cause of the fires is acknowledged by research institutions to be a combination of clearance of land by the poor and a protracted drought. Most palm oil and timber plantations are not based on peat land. Research on the impact on peat is new and conclusions vary widely.

The claims made by Greenpeace and other environmental groups are not warranted. Greenpeace and WWF have been engaged in a long term campaign to pressure the Indonesian

Government and the pulp and paper industry to restrict their development, regardless of the fact 25 percent of Indonesia's forest land has been set aside and active programs are in place to protect biodiversity.

Greenpeace's Unethical Campaign in Indonesia

Greenpeace has recently publicized its "climate defenders camp" on the Kampar Peninsula in Riau. It attempted to garner the attention of the world's media by enlisting the services of a Hollywood actress.

This expensive circus will probably be as bungled as its last one in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea two years ago (see box).

Greenpeace claims to speak for the developing world, but local communities dependent upon Indonesian businesses protested against their presence on Kampar. Police detained a group of Greenpeace activists, a large number of whom were from EU states.

This is part of an elaborate campaign to demonize palm oil as well as the pulp and paper industry in Indonesia, specifically by attacking the two largest companies which produce both.

These companies are responsible producers, operate wholly in accord with Indonesian forestry law and Indonesian national development strategies and are playing a leading role in creating jobs and prosperity and reducing poverty. Moreover, one of the companies, APP, has reserved a 16,000 ha forest area for conservation.

Greenpeace has called for moratoria upon commercial developments in forested areas, but it is unable to provide genuine alternative sources of income for local communities; its prescriptions reduce just to rhetoric about "forest livelihoods." Greenpeace also rarely comes up with genuine conservation or forest protection programs for illegal forest clearing.

Greenpeace as well as everyone else in Indonesia knows illegal land clearing in Indonesia is caused by smallholder and subsistence agriculture, small-scale illegal logging — not the major companies — and that action by the Yudoyhno Government has substantially curbed illegal clearing.

The Greenpeace target is the Indonesian Government and Indonesia's national development strategy. The attacks on the companies are a proxy attack on Indonesia.

Greenpeace specifically singled out Indonesian President Yudoyhno as the target for its advocacy. It attempted to lobby President Yudoyhno from the beginning of 2009 in the lead-up to the Presidential election to make climate change emissions a campaign issue.

Indonesian voters put economic development ahead of climate change and re-elected him on his record of delivering prosperity and stability in Indonesia.

Why Greenpeace's Strategies Would Cause Poverty

If Greenpeace's strategies were adopted:

- **Growth would fall and poverty would increase in all tropical developing countries with significant forest reserves.** The economic benefit of conversion of forest land to more productive purposes in these economies ranges from 2 to 10 percent of GDP. That contribution to GDP would fall, reducing employment and revenue.
- **Substituting ecoforestry or community forestry for commercial forestry would further reduce economic growth.** Repeated studies show eco-forestry is not commercially viable and requires government subsidy.¹⁷ Activity which is economically positive would be replaced by one requiring government funding.
- **Former workers in forestry and plantations and related**

industries would become international climate welfare dependents. Greenpeace and WWF urge a vast increase in aid to compensate for stopping conversion of forest land to productive purposes.

- **An international committee of officials from foreign governments and NGOs (like Greenpeace and WWF) would control the climate change policies of tropical developing economies.** This is envisaged in the “NGO Treaty” which WWF and Greenpeace have advanced. It would administer the climate aid funding to these countries; approve their national climate policies and monitor compliance with them.

Greenpeace Consistently Rejects the UN Position on Sustainable Forestry

Greenpeace ignores the established consensus in the UN on sustainable development that economic growth should not be subordinated to measures to protect the environment.

It was forged at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992; it is enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Convention; was repeated at the Johannesburg Sustainable Development Summit in 2001; has been restated in the UN Forum on Forests; and was restated in the Bail mandate.

Greenpeace does not support sustainable development; it supports only protection of the environment, and only then on the terms it sets.

Greenpeace’s strategies would generate Green Poverty.

Why Do Donor Agencies Take Greenpeace Positions on Forestry Seriously?

The World Bank and aid donors recently accepted that Greenpeace could be the NGO representative on the steering body of the Forest Investment Program which the World Bank and

The Greenpeace Debacle at Lake Murray

In 2007, Greenpeace established a “forest rescue station” at Lake Murray, an inaccessible site in the middle of the Western Province, the least developed area in Papua New Guinea. There, a group of activists and volunteers including folk singers and artists operated a portable sawmill with local villagers to harvest ‘eco-forestry’ timber. After several month’s work, one barge load of timber was shipped off for the long journey to the coast and thereafter for export. There is no continuing eco-forestry industry to speak of at Lake Murray. The principal result appears to have been video footage for the Greenpeace website. The major event at the camp was the unfortunate death of the French Ambassador visiting as part of an EU delegation. The ecoforestry venture was subsidised by the Dutch Postal Lottery, despite public reports by WWF and other environmental agencies that ecoforestry in PNG is commercially unviable.¹⁸

In contrast, Rimbunan Hijau, a commercial forest business that Greenpeace likes to demonize runs a veneer mill at Panakawa, also in the Western Province. It employs six hundred skilled workers drawn from Western Province and surrounding areas, and provides a school and medical services. The mill draws sustainably harvested timber (no more than 20 percent of canopy is harvested) and is one of the largest value added manufacturing plants in Papua New Guinea and is one of PNG’s leading value added export businesses. There is no donor funding. ■

donors set up in July 2009 to provide financial assistance to tropical developing economies to support sustainable forestry.

It appears they have accepted the Greenpeace position that no funding should be provided by donors to projects which entail conversion of forest land to more productive purposes, regardless of national policies in all developing forest economies to set aside large areas of land for forest conservation.

Recent developments in the preparations for the Copenhagen

conference indicate forested developing economies will not agree that forest conversion be ruled out.

Do donors nevertheless intend as Greenpeace urges to refuse to fund projects which they themselves have recognized in the past as very effective strategies to reduce poverty?

One factor is the Forestry Alliance between the World Bank and WWF. Bank forestry policies now mirror WWF policy. Another is the noticeable absence of forestry experts in the delegations of industrialized countries which set these policies. ■

Endnotes

- 1 The most recent instance is an attack on forestry companies in Sweden ostensibly for not complying with FSC standards to protect “High Conservation Value Forests”. Greenpeace is a member of FSC but does not bother to raise these issues inside FSC fora.
- 2 This has happened. A “High Conservation Value” standard has been progressively developed which effectively prevents forestry in large areas of natural forest.
- 3 See Brendan May and Tony Juniper, “*Multistakeholder Initiatives Under Fire – is it Fair?*” IUCN Aborvitae39, April 2009. Accessed at: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/av_39_english.pdf.
- 4 IPCC, 2007a, *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change*, Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, Metz, B, Davidson, OR, Bosch, PR, Dave, R, and Meyer, LA, (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, p 543, accessed at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/ar4-wg3.htm>.
- 5 World Growth,(2008). *Winners All: How Forestry can Reduce both Climate Change Emissions and Poverty - Pro-Development Strategy*. World Growth, Arlington, VA. p.12.
- 6 WWF Strategy on Climate Change. WWF supports the Greenpeace position. Greenpeace and WWF now argue that no forestry should occur in “High Conservation Value Forests”. There is no independent standard for HCVF. Greenpeace and WWF mean it is a large forest area with highly representative populations of flora and fauna. It applies to large forests which is what characterizes forestry in tropical developing countries. This is not an accepted measure of how to protect biodiversity.
- 7 See World Growth (2009). *Forestry And The Poor: How Forestry Reduces Poverty*. World Growth, Arlington, VA.
- 8 This idea of compensation welfare payments is advanced in the “NGO Copenhagen Climate Treaty” which WWF and Greenpeace circulated during the Climate Change negotiations in Bangkok in September 2009. Accessed at http://assets.panda.org/downloads/treaty_vol2_web_compl.pdf.
- 9 See Seymour, Frances. Speech presented at United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation Committee on Forestry Meeting 19, Rome, Italy, March 17, 2009. <http://www.fao.org/forestry/media/17189/0/0/>; and UNFCCC (2007). *Investment and financial flows to address climate change*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Bonn, Germany.
- 10 For example see “Whatever it takes: Greenpeace’s ant-forestry campaign in Papua New Guinea” on www.forestryanddevelopment.com.
- 11 See Shell (undated). “Brent Spar Dossier”. Accessed at http://www-static.shell.com/static/gbr/downloads/e_and_p/brent_spar_dossier.pdf.
- 12 See “Riau Illegal Logging Cases Dropped Amid Disagreement Between Police, Prosecutors” in *The Jakarta Globe*, December 26 2008.
- 13 See <http://www.forestryanddevelopment.com/newsletters/septemberspecial2008.htm>.

14 See "Attacks by PNG not caused by forest industry" in The Star, May 28, 2009.

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/5/28/nation/3985775&sec=nation>

15 This is also confirmed by figures from the Brazilian National Institute of Space Research (INPE) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

16 See Frances Seymour, op. cit.

17 ITS Global (2006). *Whatever it takes: Greenpeace's anti-forestry campaign in Papua New Guinea*. ITS Global, Melbourne, Australia. p 39.

18 Scheyvens, Henry (2009). *Forest Management and Product Certification Service, PNG: Socio-Economic Impact Survey*. IGES, Tokyo, Japan.



WORLD GROWTH

PO Box 3693
Arlington, VA 22203-3693
(866) 467-7200

www.worldgrowth.org