



**FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL**  
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**DESTRUCTIVE LOGGING**

The destruction of forests has become one of the biggest problems worldwide, since its consequences affect not only the local communities but humanity as a whole. For this reason, the destruction of forests is also a big concern for many member groups of Friends of the Earth International, because of its devastating environmental, social and economic impacts. These organizations work on a daily basis to reverse the current trend and to build fairer societies.

At Friends of the Earth International we believe that we must fight against destructive logging, which we conceive as the process or activities of forest exploitation that threaten and/or negatively impact the health of the ecosystem and the livelihood and rights of the forest peoples and the local communities, from a social, economic, cultural and spiritual point of view. This is one of the main causes of forest destruction, and it is a practice most often undertaken by big trade driven transnational corporations. On the other hand, these practices are possible thanks to the current political frameworks and policies on forests and the environment. Destructive logging may take place within or outside a certain legal framework, given that these frameworks sometimes legitimize destructive activities in forests. Also, the unsustainable demand for timber continues to directly encourage forest destruction.

Forestry concessions have been the main instrument for the distribution of forest exploitation rights in many developing countries and in some developed countries as well. Forestry concessions have encouraged commercial exploitation of timber from forests and they have generated industrial forestry development. However, many of these concession systems have been promoted politically and/or established through flawed laws and governance policies which link them to corruption and other unjust social practices and rights violations, causing negative impacts on the rights and livelihood of the forest-dependent communities. Many even have technical flaws, resulting in unsustainable and destructive operations: some countries label as 'sustainable forestry management' some practices that result in enormous damage, and in other cases they allow the entrance of tractors and heavy machinery, while ancestral rights of the peoples are generally ignored. Timber operations around the world have therefore implied in many cases considerable costs in terms of other products and benefits of the forests that are lost to the detriment of the forest dependent communities and the general public. These practices result directly in a loss of total value of the forest and significantly reduce the benefits and income for the interested parties that are not corporations involved in timber logging or trade.

Logging activities around the world are usually dominated by transnational corporations that acquire large extensions of forests in the producing countries, either in the form of concessions or as properties they can exploit to produce timber mainly for export. In most cases these corporations are not required to pay high taxes, not even to take responsibility for the long-term management of forests. In some cases they are protected by foreign trade laws, which may mean in practice that they enjoy impunity and can go unpunished. Many of these concessions are often granted completely ignoring the customary and traditional rights of land ownership, and they operate under non transparent systems, leading to corruption. The concessionaires are allowed to control the lands that have traditionally been the property of the local and indigenous communities, who have lived there for generations, and whose lives are closely linked with the forest, thus depending on its good health. These communities have difficulties in accessing the judiciary when they face the powerful concessionaires. All these factors ultimately lead to destructive logging. The consequences of this phenomenon for the Indigenous Peoples is the loss of their rights over those territories, and the subsequent loss of livelihood, which brings about the significant decay of their quality of life, which may include negative impacts on their health conditions and their social fabric and their culture. This also leads to entrenched impoverishment and the perpetuation of poverty amongst these Peoples.

The environmental consequences of forest exploitation are also devastating, especially because of the destruction of habitats, the fragmentation of the natural environment and the loss of biodiversity. On the economic level, the expected benefits do not always materialize as a result of a failed system, in which most of the concessions that are established will in practice seek to guarantee that most of the income generated by the timber trade goes to private hands. Sometimes these concessions may focus on the pursuit of political benefits, and therefore promote profit-hungry corrupt operations. Moreover, the accounting practices and declarations of logging companies often lend themselves to illegal operations and other forms of criminal activities that run against the law, and corruption may percolate through a wide range of sectors that take part in logging operations. There is also the fact that most of the consumer countries do not have adequate legal controls to guarantee the lawfulness of the timber imports, and/or policies that promote sustainable consumption and strong governance in relation to forestry practices. Similarly, there are no proposed solutions that take into account consumerism, which is one of the causes of destructive logging.

These problems have increased in many timber producing and consumer countries over the past decades, and they usually vary from one country to another and from one region to another. The complexity of this phenomenon and its local and global consequences, have led many organizations to address the issue in different ways depending on their own realities. Some groups address the issue from the illegal logging point of view, focusing on legislative and governance aspects, therefore developing campaigns around the eradication of illegal timber trade. Meanwhile, others address it from a far more political perspective, which may involve the fight against the destruction of forests by big corporations and the political corruption in the forestry sector. A substantial part of the campaign work both in producing and consumer countries is also linked with the systemic lack of local community rights over their traditional territories. The targets and approaches to the issue are as diverse as the very nature of it.