



Ground-truthing to improve due diligence on human rights in deforestation-risk supply chains

Discussion paper
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Forest
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NICFI

Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative

Summary

Industrial agriculture continues to drive land grabs, deforestation and human rights abuse in the palm oil, soy, beef, leather, rubber, cocoa, timber, and pulp and paper sectors at the tropical forest frontier.

Many of the world's largest investment companies, retailers, consumer goods manufacturers and traders have clear commitments on zero deforestation and protecting human rights. Yet **their human rights due diligence practices remain wholly inadequate**, being over-reliant on paper-based assessments of compliance from secondary sources and company self-reporting.

Where audits are undertaken on the ground, they typically have major shortcomings, such as using poor indicators to quantitatively and qualitatively measure any negative human rights impacts, and **failing to consult with affected communities and local civil society organisations**.

Our research reveals that 'ground-truthing' can strengthen due diligence processes, thereby mitigating the risk of harmful impacts on human rights and the environment. It can reduce related reputational damage to companies, and positively influence the behaviour of companies upstream in the supply chain.

This paper highlights how **ground-truthing offers major potential to improve risk assessments and audits** to prevent harmful supply chain impacts on human rights. It intends to stimulate dialogue on actions and innovations needed to increase company and investor use of ground-truthing to enable better human rights due diligence.

'Ground-truthing'

The use of information about the actual situation on the ground, gathered from primary or secondary sources that are independent of companies in the supply chain, as opposed to paper-based compliance indicators and company self-reporting.

'Due Diligence'

A risk management process implemented by a company to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how it addresses environmental and social risks and impacts in its operations, supply chains, and investments.¹

1. Industrial agriculture still driving deforestation, land grabs and human rights abuse

While many progressive retailers, consumer goods manufacturers, processors and traders have made commitments to end human rights abuses and deforestation, and have increased transparency along their supply chains, violations persist. Among the laggards, many global businesses still lack even the most basic elements needed to ensure credible due diligence on human rights. Others have major gaps in their disclosure and reporting systems on deforestation and rights impacts in their business operations. Many leading international investment companies have still not committed to tackling deforestation and associated rights abuse, or have no due diligence frameworks in place to do so.²

The production of industrial agricultural commodities such as palm oil, soy, beef, leather, rubber, sugar, cocoa, timber, and pulp and paper is routinely linked to human rights abuses, including land grabbing. It is currently one of the main drivers of the seizure of indigenous peoples' and local communities' customary lands, which in turn is linked to widespread deforestation and the destruction of critical wildlife habitats.³

Deforestation is associated with potentially serious human rights impacts on forest-dependent communities,⁴ and contributes up to a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions.⁵



Palm oil expansion in Riau Province, Indonesia continues to drive human rights abuse, land expropriation and deforestation. Credit: Natalie Behring



Palm oil companies are destroying our forests and grabbing our lands with the complicity of government agencies. We have sought justice through the local courts, by appeals to government and filing complaints with the RSPO [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil]. Yet, palm oil produced by deforesting our stolen lands is being sold into the international market by RSPO-member companies, even after our complaints were found to be valid.”

— Miguel Guimaraes, the Shipibo people, Peru⁶

Forest Peoples Programme works directly with indigenous peoples and local communities at the tropical forest frontier who are affected by land grabs and violence linked to global supply chains.⁷ In 2017 alone, according to Global Witness, 207 land defenders and environmental activists—including indigenous community members, farmers, and environmentalists—were killed across more than 20 countries. With at least 40 of those killed linked to land for industrial agricultural commodity supply chains, industrial agribusiness as a sector was the most common link in these killings.⁸

In 2019, according to Front Line Defenders, 304 human rights defenders were killed, of which 40 per cent were working to defend land and environmental rights.⁹ The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre documented over 2,000 attacks on human rights defenders between 2015 and 2019, including arbitrary arrests, death threats, beatings and even killings, with over 570 attacks in 2019 alone.¹⁰

In many cases, the root causes of violent attacks against community leaders and environmental defenders are linked to conflicts associated with illegal or irregular land acquisition and the physical or economic displacement of communities to make way for commodity production (e.g. large-scale plantations, commercial farms and associated infrastructure, mines).¹¹

Santa Clara de Uchunya – Peru



Since 2011, a significant portion of the Shipibo-Konibo community’s lands have been deforested and converted to oil palm plantations by the company Plantaciones de Pucallpa SAC (now Ocho Sur P SAC), part of the ‘Melka Group’ of agribusiness companies. Plantaciones de Pucallpa capitalised on the State’s failure to fully recognise the Shipibo-Konibo people’s territory, exploiting illegal land trafficking and the alleged corruption of regional government civil servants to accumulate lands. Within four years, over 7,000 hectares of community land had been destroyed to make way for vast oil palm plantations.



Before, we had everything we needed. For us, our market was our territory. Now we can no longer walk for even an hour, because we are under threat. That’s why I’m concerned, because tomorrow, in the future, what will our children eat? How are they going to feed their children? We find ourselves under a lot of pressure, oppressed by fear. The community can no longer live in peace because of the company and the deforestation.”

— Luisa Mori Gonzalez, President of the Mothers Club and leader from Santa Clara de Uchunya

2. An invisible problem



Palm oil is destroying our entire way of life. It has not just taken our customary lands but the very basis for our identities and ways of life. There should be no further expansion so long as palm oil means land grabbing and dispossession.”

— **Krissusandi Gunui, Institute Dayakologi, Indonesia¹²**

Communities on the frontline of industrial agriculture face significant threats to their lands and, sometimes, their lives, but they have limited ability to access companies and investors at the downstream end of complex supply chains and investment flows, and to inform them about the human rights threats they face and the violations they experience.

Human rights violations and land conflict, and the deforestation that often follows, are a significant financial risk for investors and for companies downstream of commodity production i.e. buyers and consumer goods manufacturers. Yet, they are often not visible to investors and downstream companies, who might be well-placed to influence the behaviour of companies upstream in the supply chain.

While satellite monitoring (e.g. Global Forest Watch¹³, Google Earth Engine¹⁴) is allowing for closer scrutiny of deforestation on the ground, the human rights impacts linked to the production of agricultural commodities are more challenging to identify and monitor, and have lagged behind, as has the expertise of those performing the assessments. Both deforestation and human rights risk assessments and monitoring can only work with better supply chain accountability, transparency and traceability to identify whose supply chains are affected by violations that have been identified.



Land rights violations can be seen as an early warning sign for [impending] deforestation.”

— **Civil society representative**

The Accountability Framework Initiative highlights the invisibility of the problem:

‘Traditional monitoring and verification tools and approaches are often not able to detect non-compliant behaviour and conditions. This is especially true for human rights issues, for which geospatial monitoring tools are generally not suitable and for which it is necessary to use a variety of ground-based methods.’¹⁵

3. Slow progress on improving human rights due diligence

Upholding human rights in general, especially respecting customary land rights and protecting tropical forests, is a crucial precondition for safeguarding communities, maintaining biodiversity, tackling climate change and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁶ The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (the UNGPs) state:

In order to meet their responsibility to respect human rights, business enterprises should have in place policies and processes appropriate to their size and circumstances, including (inter alia): A human rights due diligence process to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their impacts on human rights.’¹⁷

The 2020 deadline for both the Consumer Goods Forum 2010 resolution to achieve zero net deforestation and the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests to halve natural forest loss and eliminate commodity-driven deforestation is fast approaching, yet the reality is that these commitments are far from being met.¹⁸

While there are some examples of investors who have taken steps to screen against unsustainable land-use investments, there is a long way to go. In a 2019 study on the corporate human rights performance of 200 of the largest global companies in four high-risk sectors, 95 companies scored zero on all indicators across the theme of human rights due diligence.¹⁹

IOI Group - Malaysia

In 2006, IOI Group, a major palm oil company, acquired plantations that had been developed without the consent of the Long Teran Kenan communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. Concerns were repeatedly raised with the company and with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) of which IOI was a member.

After 10 years of fruitless efforts to persuade the company to respect the communities’ customary rights and to control what happened on their lands, in November 2016 a number of IOI’s major customers, such as Unilever, Kellogg, Mars, Mondelez and Cargill, decided to drop the company for its continuing violations of RSPO standards.²⁷

Very belatedly the company is now following the detailed recommendations made by Forest Peoples Programme in 2013 for how to resolve the dispute. It is also notable that as a result of their delay, the company now faces land claims from 11 more communities. What is encouraging is that IOI are planning to apply their belated good practice from this dispute to other disputes across their portfolio²⁸.

In the financial sector, the UN Principles for Responsible Investments (PRI)’s *Responsible Investor’s Guide to Commodities* recommends that the “breadth and quality of relevant investment research, especially when it comes to social and human rights issues, needs to be expanded. It is also necessary to focus more on external third-party suppliers and contractors, whose poor track-record on ESG [environmental, social, and governance] issues can be a source of considerable reputation risk for investors”.²⁰



The status of ESG teams within an organisation in terms of their decision-making authority and skillsets may vary greatly depending on the investor.”

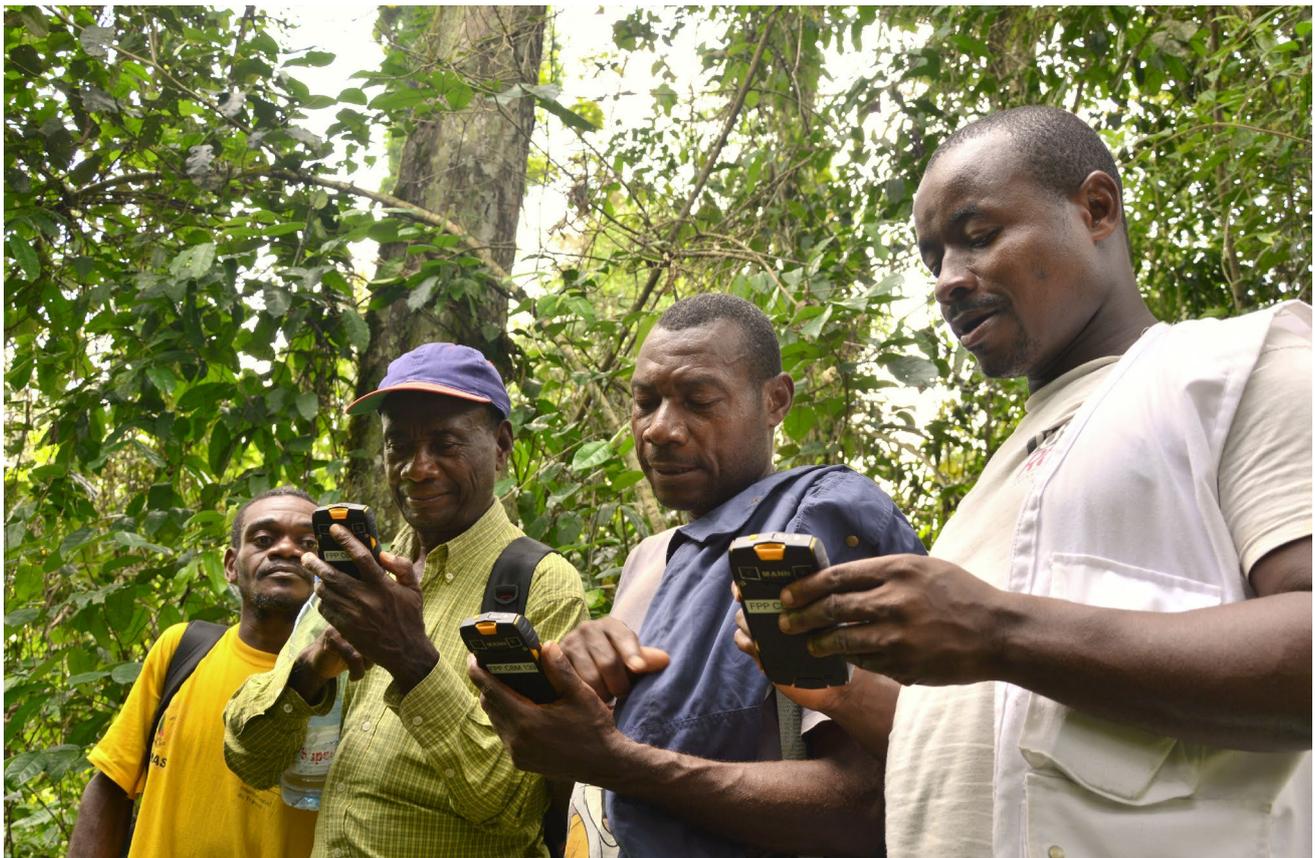
— Academic

4. Our research

To understand better why land conflict and rights abuse do not compel investors and downstream companies to act, and what can be done to make them more visible and be taken more seriously, in 2019 we conducted semi-structured interviews with several major investors; representatives of leading companies along the palm oil supply chain; civil society organisations; monitoring organisations; academics; and fee-for-service data providers/aggregators.

While major investors, retailers, consumer goods companies and traders said they wanted more information about the real situation in their upstream companies' operations and investments, our research revealed major gaps in companies' due diligence and risk assessment processes, and in the ways in which companies' assessment and monitoring results are shared with investors. The interviews, combined with our review of the literature on existing due diligence, risk assessment and community-level monitoring initiatives, revealed that ground-truthing has the potential to fill some of these gaps.

Though our research focused on the palm oil supply chain, the findings are relevant to other deforestation-risk commodities such as soy, beef, leather, rubber, cocoa, timber, and pulp and paper.



Community-based monitoring in Cameroon is an important source of ground-truthing data. Credit: Viola Belohrad, 2016

5. Major gaps exist in due diligence processes

The people who know what is really happening on the ground are local communities, indigenous organisations, NGOs and academic institutions. Yet, when conducting due diligence and risk assessments, investors and downstream companies involved in deforestation-risk commodities rely almost exclusively on paper-based assessments of compliance (often generic in nature) from secondary sources—data providers; environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risk firms; interested parties (including most social auditors)—and company self-reporting.

Investors and downstream companies lack the capacity and technical expertise to gather local data from these groups—data that can inform risk assessments, that can be used to critically evaluate information provided by companies, and that can reveal the true extent of human rights and environmental risks associated with particular suppliers and other actors on the tropical forest frontier. As a result, they routinely miss, or overlook, valuable information about upstream companies' operations, risks, and impacts.



Monitoring efforts and tools are typically resource intensive and come at a high cost.”

— **Large palm oil company**

The role of data providers and ESG risk firms (such as Sustainalytics, MSCI, RepRisk and Bloomberg) should be critically examined in terms of the extent to which their analysis goes beyond assessing paper-based compliance and reliance on company self-reporting. So too should the role of investors and downstream companies themselves who, in some cases, dismiss information from civil society and local communities in favour of company reports whose content is rarely verified and validated by independent entities.

Furthermore, many of the ‘scorecard’ initiatives that rank commodity producers and traders on aspects of their ESG performance (such as Forest 500, WWF Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard, Oxfam’s Behind the Brands, and SPOTT) focus on public disclosure and policy compliance rather than performance on the ground, which is much harder to assess.



It’s easier to put a number on the impact on climate change, flooding and water stress. Whereas the human rights issues that tend to pop up are less connected and investors have less power to flag these issues.”

— **Investor**

6. Time to step up to commitments and improve practices?

Today, with information that is already available in the public domain, it is possible with simple internet searches to find independent reports that point to significant human rights abuses in a company's supply chains. Moreover, many of these documented abuses have been accompanied by lengthy engagement or campaigns with the relevant companies—often with weak or non-existent responses to the concerns raised. The biggest obstacles for ground-truthing are 1) supply chain transparency in order to know if an incident relates to a particular company's supply chain and 2) the appetite of businesses and investors to commit to effective action on human rights abuses when such abuses are identified. Surmounting these obstacles requires both the will to act, as well as a clear mechanism by which abuses identified are effectively conveyed along the supply chain to the people who can make operational and investment decisions.

According to various data providers, academics, and independent land tenure analysts interviewed, deforestation is largely seen as presenting potential reputational risk to investors rather than any other material risks. One organisation stated, "Investors do not see environmental and social risks as materially significant". Companies also too often define materiality with respect to the impact on the business, though the UNGPs are clear that it should be about the impact on the people affected by the company's operations.²¹



A logging truck transports tropical hardwood logs in Republic of Congo (RoC). Under current national laws, logging concessions and commercial timber harvesting in RoC do not require the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples.

Credit: Viola Belohrad

Investors and companies that care more about being perceived to be involved in clean supply chains may choose to limit their due diligence to paper-based ESG rankings rather than actively seeking out information that verifies, or indeed undermines, their risk assessments. Some upstream companies and their legal advisors may be averse to disclosing their risk assessment information as it may expose them to liability or provide information to competitors.

In addition, much of the information about human rights abuses is qualitative in nature. Verification agencies, investors, and data providers do not necessarily know how to use ground-truthing data of this nature in quantitative risk algorithms or scoring systems. And investors, academics, and civil society organisations all mentioned a lack of capacity, resources, and technical understanding within investment firms to actively monitor deforestation and related risks. As one academic pointed out, “Fund managers are not environmental scientists, ecologists, or supply chain specialists”.



[It’s] too expensive for companies to verify every human rights or social report.”

— **Investor**

Highlighting this lack of capacity, in many cases communities and companies report that auditors (such as Earthworm Foundation, Proforest, Daemeter, DAI, Aidenvironment, SGS) working for downstream companies do not visit affected communities who live adjacent to plantation/production sites—communities who may have been evicted or are otherwise affected (e.g. indigenous and ethnic communities in Colombia affected by palm oil plantations and mills).²² In this way, auditors ignore important evidence from rights holders, fail to gather adequate information about potential risks and, as a result, under-report the full extent of the social impacts of a company’s operations.



We do not understand how the overseas companies and their auditors do not visit us to ask us about the impacts of oil palm on our communities, our livelihoods and our fundamental rights! If they do visit, they just talk to the company workforce and people inside the plantations. They have never come to talk to neighbouring communities who have suffered displacement, violence and loss of access to water and land.”

— **Montes de María, Human Rights Defender, Colombia**

7. Ground-truthing as a solution



Too often, monitoring deals in numbers and statistics and does not allow for ground level realities, that can be better expressed in qualitative ways to reach decision-makers.”

— **Monitoring organisation**

Our interviews revealed what seems to be a genuine demand by a range of actors for data that comes from the community level. As part of due diligence processes, investors and downstream companies (internationally and domestically) would benefit from using local information and evidence from civil society to augment and ‘ground-truth’ the self-reporting by companies they invest in or buy from. This includes questioning the reliance of data providers and ESG risk firms on paper-based compliance metrics.

Where does ground-truthing information come from?

Ground-truthing information may come from primary or secondary sources, as long as the sources are independent of the supply chain, such as indigenous peoples and local communities, local civil society organisations, independent researchers, local NGOs, and international NGOs who have been on the ground. Sources of ground-truthing information include:

- community evidence and testimonies, which may already be documented or may be sourced directly, and which are independent of local companies and the State (e.g. Shipibo and Wampis indigenous peoples’ reports of illegal mining and palm oil-related deforestation in Peru)
- published or unpublished community monitoring reports (e.g. the Wapichan nao environmental monitoring report on the Marudi Mountain mining field in Guyana which is seeking major international investment)²³
- information from communities gathered by local NGOs in the country, or international NGOs with close links to local communities
- local archives and official documentation, including legal cases and judgments; the reports of human rights and environmental authorities, such as the public ombudsman; and local/regional government environmental sanctions on companies (e.g. in Colombia)
- local and national media and press reports
- evidence collected directly in the field by independent third parties talking with communities, by citizen groups and by academics (e.g. social and environmental audits).

Note that local information is often documented in the local/national language.

Benefits of ground-truthing

Ground-truthing provides valuable alternative and independent information about the operations, performance, and related human rights and environmental risks of upstream companies. Robust ground-truthing can help companies to verify risks, performance and impacts by using locally sourced information to check or ‘triangulate’ with assessments of a company’s paper-based ESG compliance and company self-reporting.

It can yield important information about indirect actors and third-party suppliers implicated in the complex supply chains of transnational companies. It can also identify corrupt and unethical business conduct and transactions.

When used to inform due diligence, ground-truthing can improve companies' compliance with laws at home and overseas, and enable them to better fulfil their commitments under international frameworks such as the UNGP and the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct. It can also make member-based certification schemes more robust and credible.

Ground-truthing has the potential to inform global supply chain management and increase accountability to communities and concerned citizens in producer countries. Giving proper weight to independent civil society and community-level information and evidence could also improve company and investor ESG systems.



We are not against palm oil, but we do not accept the reckless environmental destruction and rampant human rights abuses that accompanies palm oil production.”

— Kota Kinabalu Statement on Palm Oil and Freedom of Expression²⁴

Taking proper account of local, independent sources of information in assessing human rights, environmental and governance risks can end the over-reliance of investors and downstream companies on paper-based compliance assessments and company self-reporting.

More broadly, it can, and ideally should, enable two-way information flows between local communities and civil society organisations on the one hand, and businesses and investors on the other, to inform risk assessments



Indigenous people's territories remain under threat in the Peruvian Amazon from expanding oil palm, ranching and extractive industries. Credit: Tom Younger, 2019

and catalyse investment and management decision-making aimed not just at mitigation but also at avoidance of potential harm.

Crucially, ground-truthing can help to reduce destruction of tropical forests, protect the land rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and reduce the violence and intimidation that they face as a result of global supply chains.

Bagyeli community – Cameroon



Bagyeli encampment, Gwap, Cameroon 2016. Credit: Viola Belohrad

Under threat of land grabbing by agribusiness company Biopalm, indigenous Bagyeli women from the department of Océan want to stop new plans for oil palm production that would destroy their forests.



If this project comes here, our forest will disappear. They [Biopalm] will snatch our land away. We have a lot of good things in this forest. We accept to preserve it as we greatly benefit from it. In contrast, this palm plantation thing: we don't need it. We want what secures our forest.”

— Bagyeli community member, Cameroon

8. How can we promote greater use of ground-truthing?

While the potential for ground-truthing to better inform investors' and companies' due diligence processes is significant, and while there appears to be appetite from a wide range of actors, the following questions still need to be answered:

- What changes, innovations or collaborations are needed to integrate local, qualitative data into due diligence and risk assessment processes?
- How can this be done in a cost-effective way?
- What are the key data requirements of different information users?
- Who are the most appropriate stewards and users of such information?
- How can the information be organised and shared across the spectrum of existing data platforms (see Appendix B for examples of existing platforms)?
- How can the safety and security of communities on the frontlines of industrial plantation expansion, who are often facing threats of violence, criminalisation, and intimidation, be assured?

Information alone is unlikely to drive the breadth of changes necessary to strengthen accountability on social and human rights commitments. Ground-truthing will be ineffective unless the information is used to: strengthen due diligence processes, and human rights and environmental audits; empower affected communities and organisations to contribute information that informs economic decision-making; and improve accountability mechanisms.

Drawing on FPP's research, Appendix A sets out some ideas for enabling greater use of locally derived information in due diligence processes.

The next question for investors and downstream companies is: **How can ground-truthing information be used to drive positive changes in company behaviour along the supply chain?**

Appendix A: Ideas for creating an enabling environment for ground-truthing

Our interviews with investors, industry leaders, civil society, monitoring organisations, academics, and fee-for-service data providers revealed important findings in terms of creating an enabling environment for using ground-truthing to strengthen due diligence processes and improve the accuracy and credibility of business risk assessments.

Regulating corporate and investor due diligence

Several investors stated that regulation setting out clear requirements on corporate and investor due diligence obligations would be welcome. The need for legal and binding regulation comes in part from the failures of voluntary CSR compliance to effect real and widespread change on the ground, reflecting a lack of effective enforcement as well as a lack of clear standards for addressing human rights and deforestation, among other issues.



We believe capitalism is flawed and regulation can help correct market failures and level the playing field. We would welcome regulation in this area. Deforestation is such a huge issue both in terms of climate change and biodiversity, and the voluntary approach over the last ten years has had no material impact in slowing down the rate of deforestation.”

— Investor

Ensuring full traceability, transparency, and visibility

Ground-truthing that reveals where abuses take place needs to be complemented by the knowledge of whether they affect one’s own investees or operations. While some companies have made substantial progress in increasing traceability and mapping out their supply chains to the plantation level, greater transparency, including full mapping of supply chains and better verification of risks and impacts, will allow for more effective ground-truthing of issues related to deforestation and human rights. It may be helpful to investigate further how scientific methods (such as isotope analysis to determine the provenance of a commodity) may contribute to mapping and traceability, to reduce risks such as falsified documentation of place of origin.

Investors taking collective action

Collective action by investors has in the past been instrumental in changing company behaviour, including prompting companies in deforestation-risk supply chains to adopt policies of no deforestation, no peat and no exploitation (NDPE), and to seek greater transparency around suppliers in supply chains. The effective and systematic use of ground-truthing is likely to be a similar joint endeavour. The impact of ground-truthing information could be scaled up through collaboration between investors and companies doing business in the same sectors/ commodities.

Collectively assessing risk in producer-country jurisdictions

In addition to a company’s due diligence on its own supply chains, within certain jurisdictions in producer countries it may be helpful to put in place systems to assess risks, independently monitor rights abuses, and address them. This two-tiered approach could better reveal geographic clusters of risk, strengthen oversight across a geographic area, and increase accountability to communities, while offering economies of scale to companies operating in the same region and/or sector.



[There] need to be more geographical approaches which implicate companies operating in certain jurisdictions so that coordination, intervention, prevention respond to geographies and not mitigating liability or risk in particular supply chains.”

— Agro-commodity company

Systematically reviewing deforestation-risk companies

Downstream companies and investors should conduct or commission regular ground-truthing reviews of investees associated with the industrial production of deforestation-risk and conflict-risk commodities (e.g. palm oil, soy, beef, leather, rubber, cocoa, timber, and pulp and paper) in order to strengthen their assessments of relevant subsidiaries and direct and indirect suppliers.

If an issue fails to be rectified and remedied within the context of a time-bound action plan, companies and investors need to consider suspending or terminating business relations and/or financing, as some large banks (and the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund) do.²⁵

Including customary land rights and land conflict as integral parts of due diligence and risk assessment

Investors should strengthen their procedures and methods for due diligence and related risk assessment to include information about customary land rights, their legal protection within the producer country, and local information about the respect for these rights in practice. These changes are necessary to mitigate, or at least minimise, risks of their business and supply chain being associated with expropriation or ongoing occupation of customary lands in violation of international human rights law, or other forms of illegal or violent land acquisitions.

Linking communities and local CSOs with independent government agencies

To ensure efficacy of ground-truthing efforts, several civil society organisations interviewed mentioned engaging quasi-independent government agencies in producer countries, agencies that are mutually respected by local communities, civil society and the private sector (e.g. Public Ombudsman Offices in Latin American countries). A balanced and independent agency could lend legitimacy to community evidence so that it is taken more seriously by investors and downstream actors. It could also reduce security risks to local communities engaged in monitoring, and potentially facilitate national government enforcement of, and access to, grievance or other accountability mechanisms.

Having a two-way communication channel for communities

It is important for information to flow back to communities whose territories are under threat and who face human rights abuses. They often do not know who is behind the threats they face and how they can respond. They also frequently lack control of the information they share about their situation. Where interviews and contributions from communities are recorded, the option to remain anonymous or prevent personal identities from being disclosed may be essential because many communities risk retaliation or intimidation for speaking out.



We welcome the fact that buyers and manufacturers are now refusing to buy palm oil that comes from land-grabbing, deforestation and exploitation.”

— Nikodemus Ale, WALHI Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia²⁶

Appendix B: Existing data platforms and tools

The following data platforms and tools are used, to a greater or lesser extent, to monitor deforestation, land tenure issues and conflicts, and in some cases provide some sort of risk analysis. This list is by no means exhaustive, and presents only a chosen sample of what already exists.

Community Monitoring

Integrity Watch Afghanistan

<https://communitymonitoring.org>

Maps the monitoring of infrastructure projects, mining extraction, schools and status of trials across Afghanistan in order to keep government accountable and fight corruption. As part of the programme, Integrity Watch Afghanistan trains community monitors, and provides a community-based monitoring toolkit, which includes how to build and lead an advocacy campaign (<http://toolkit.communitymonitoring.org>).

ForestLink

Rainforest Foundation UK

www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/rtm

Real-time, community-based monitoring to connect local populations with law enforcement. Focuses on illegal logging and deforestation in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Peru at the time of writing.

Forests and Finance

TuK INDONESIA, Rainforest Action Network and Profundo

<https://forestsandfinance.org/data/>

This website highlights the role that finance plays in enabling tropical deforestation by assessing the financial services received by over 190 companies directly involved in the palm oil, pulp and paper, rubber and tropical timber supply chains, whose operations impact natural tropical forests in the Southeast Asia region.

Kumacaya

Earthworm Foundation

www.kumacaya.org

Coordinates monitoring projects around a theme (e.g. deforestation) in a set location by calling for funds from the private sector at the same time as calling for proposals from civil society to carry out the monitoring work. The results of the monitoring are made available to the private funders for only 9 months, after which the monitors are free to do what they want with their data, including making it widely available. The platform does not allow visualisation of the monitoring data.

Land Conflict Watch

<https://land-conflict-watch.webflow.io/#nav>

Is a data-research project that maps and analyses ongoing land conflicts in India. A network of researchers spread across India combine academic rigour with factual reportage to collect data that answer questions about conflicts and their impact on the environment, investments and people.

Land Portal

The Land Portal Foundation

<https://landportal.org>

Aims to “build an information ecosystem for land governance that supports better informed decision and policy making at national and international levels”. Acts as a repository of information and datasets by region, sector, and issue. No information seems to be directly community-based.

LandMark

www.landmarkmap.org

Global map showing land collectively held and used by indigenous peoples and local communities, and relevant information pertaining to these lands. The datasets are not community-based but tend to be national-level data.

Landscape

TMP Systems

<https://landscape.info>

Provides an analysis of risk (e.g. tenure) per sector (agriculture, energy production, extractives, infrastructure) per location based on a range of datasets. It provides recommended actions for the risk(s) identified. It uses national and global datasets, and none of the data used is community-based.

ManaVox

www.mana-vox.org

Scrapes information from verified civil society sources on private sector actors linked to forest-risk commodities, and analyses the ‘noise’ a controversy is making (i.e. how many times it is picked up from different credible sources), to calculate a risk rating. The ratings are calculated in near real time (scores are updated every day), the platform already links to the financial sector, and is entirely open and freely accessible. So far, ManaVox is forest-specific and only maps environmental controversies. However, the aim is to expand to other ecosystems and include social controversies with the same methodology.

OpenTimber Portal

World Resource Institute (WRI)

<https://opentimberportal.org>

Information sharing platform to “incentivise the production and trade of legal timber”. Provides data per country and specific producers. Some observations can seemingly be made by third-party monitors and RFUK’s ForestLink programme might start contributing their results to the platform.

Rapid Response Monitoring System

Mighty Earth in partnership with

Aidenvironment and Maphubs

www.mightyearth.org/rapidresponse

Detects and documents cases of deforestation and peat development for palm oil, soy and cattle. Links to global finance and supply chains, but is not community-based (uses satellite imagery) and is deforestation-specific.

TIMBY

(this is my backyard)

<https://timby.org>

A suite of tools to gather data, investigate it and publish the corresponding story, ensuring the safety of monitors. The ownership and access to monitoring data by local monitors can be an issue without connectivity.

Ulula

<https://ulula.com/category/blog/worker-voice>

Surveys workers to gather information directly from them on a range of issues relevant to them, including working conditions. The information is only available to the organisation who commissions the survey.

Appendix C: List of interviewees

AVIVA Investors
Carbon Disclosure Project
Domini Investments
Earth Tracker
Earthworm Foundation Kumacaya
Earthworm Foundation Starling
Evenlode Investment
Financial Reporting Council Future of Corporate Reporting
Global Canopy
Golden Veroleum Liberia
Harvard Law School Program on Corporate Governance
Hermes Investments
Inclusive Development International
Independent – Dr Paul Hatchwell
ManaVox
MSCI
Northern Trust
Oxfam US Behind the Brands Campaign
Proforest
Rainforest Action Network
Rainforest Foundation UK ForestLink
ROBECO
Sime Darby
TIMBY
TMP Systems
Ulula
Wilmar International
Zoological Society of London SPOTT

Endnotes

- 1 This definition is taken from the Accountability Framework Initiative: <https://accountability-framework.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Definitions.pdf>
- 2 The Forest 500 report for 2019 finds that: “the finance sector is ignoring the (deforestation) problem: 102 (68%) of the financial institutions assessed, including BlackRock, Aviva and the Bank of New York Mellon, have no deforestation policies”: <https://forest500.org/publications/forest-500-annual-report-2019-companies-getting-it-wrong-deforestation>
- 3 See ‘Closing the Gap’: <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/node/50213>
- 4 See ‘Human rights impacts of deforestation’ in Griffiths, T (2018), *Closing the Gap: rights-based solutions for tackling deforestation*, pp 14–15, Forest Peoples Programme: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/en/node/50213>
- 5 WWF (2017), *Risky business: Understanding the UK’s overseas footprint for deforestation-risk commodities*, WWF and RSPB: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/riskybusiness>
- 6 The Kota Kinabalu Statement on Palm Oil and Freedom of Expression, 7 February 2020, signed by 22 indigenous peoples and non-governmental organisations from 11 palm oil-producing countries in Latin America, Africa and South East Asia: <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/global-finance-trade-private-sector-palm-oil-rspo/news-article/2020/palm-oil-impacted-people-demand>
- 7 See, for example, the Zero Tolerance Initiative seeks to address the causes of violence and killings in supply chains <https://www.zerotoleranceinitiative.org/>
- 8 Global Witness (2018): <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/at-what-cost/>
- 9 Front Line Defenders (2020), *Global Analysis 2019*: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2019>
- 10 Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (2020), *Human Rights Defenders & Business: January 2020 Snapshot*, London: <https://dispatches.business-humanrights.org/hrd-january-2020/index.html>
- 11 Martone, F (2019), *Enough! Pledging Zero Tolerance to attacks against environmental and human rights defenders*, Forest Peoples Programme, Moreton in Marsh.
- 12 The Kota Kinabalu Statement on Palm Oil and Freedom of Expression, 7 February 2020: <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/global-finance-trade-private-sector-palm-oil-rspo/news-article/2020/palm-oil-impacted-people-demand>
- 13 Global Forest Watch: <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/>
- 14 Google Earth Engine: <https://earthengine.google.com/>
- 15 Accountability Framework Initiative; <https://accountability-framework.org/contents-of-the-framework/>
- 16 Particularly Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>
- 17 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs): <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/un-guiding-principles>
- 18 Open letter to members of the Consumer Goods Forum, 23 September 2019: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/en/node/50461>
- 19 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark 2019: <https://www.corporatebenchmark.org/>
- 20 UN Principles for Responsible Investments, *Responsible Investor’s Guide to Commodities*: <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/212>
- 21 UNGP, Commentary, Principle 17 “Human rights due diligence can be included within broader enterprise risk management systems, provided that it goes beyond simply identifying and managing material risks to the company itself, to include risks to rights-holders.”
- 22 Recommendations to companies and investors involved in projects acquiring or using customary lands with significant risk of impacts on human rights and ancestral, collective and/or community forests – made by 14 human rights defenders from 11 producer countries at the international Closing the Gap forum on supply chains and human rights, Amsterdam, February 2018: <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/node/50213>
- 23 South Rupununi District Council (2018) *Wapichan Environmental Monitoring Report*, SRDC, Georgetown: <http://wapichanao.communitylands.org/1548691773093-wapichan-environmental-monitoring-report-2018-v2.pdf>
- 24 The Kota Kinabalu Statement on Palm Oil and Freedom of Expression, 7 February 2020: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/en/global-finance-trade-private-sector-palm-oil-rspo/news-article/2020/palm-oil-impacted-people-demand>
- 25 For more details, see the non-compliance section of the AFI Core Principles and its guidance on ‘supplier management’: <https://accountability-framework.org/>
- 26 The Kota Kinabalu Statement on Palm Oil and Freedom of Expression, 7 February 2020: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/en/global-finance-trade-private-sector-palm-oil-rspo/news-article/2020/palm-oil-impacted-people-demand>
- 27 NGO Coalition Calls On IOI To Respect Land Rights in Sarawak: https://www.ran.org/the-understory/ngo_coalition_calls_on_ioi_to_respect_land_rights_in_sarawak/
- 28 IOI’s description of how they are responding https://www.ioigroup.com/Content/S/S_Stakeholders

Front cover image:

A member of WAHLI, the Indonesian Friend's of the Earth affiliate, stands on a stump of a forest tree to get a better view of the recent destruction of acres of peatland. Credit: Chris Stowers.

Editorial team

This report was written by Tom Griffiths, Anna Levy, Gaurav Madan, Audrey Versteegen, and James Whitehead with contributions from Anouska Perram and Vanessa Jimenez.

Edited by: Mary O'Callaghan, Mdash Editorial

Designed by: Tim Harcourt-Powell

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Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)
1c Fosseway Business Centre,
Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 9NQ,
United Kingdom

Tel: 00 44 1608 652 893
info@forestpeoples.org
www.forestpeoples.org

