

# COP30 Presidency Forest Degradation Roadmap Submission To Stop Deforestation, Direct 25% to Local IPLC Solutions by 2030



## Health In Harmony

Seeding Change with Rainforest Communities.

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**Health In Harmony** (HIH) is a global organization with independent affiliates working in and beyond all of the earth's climate-critical rainforest basins, working alongside rainforest communities to reverse deforestation for planetary health. Through our Radical Listening approach — deep, sustained community consultation that centers Indigenous and local peoples as the true experts — HIH supports over 306,000 community members protecting more than 4 million hectares of tropical rainforest in Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Madagascar, and Panama.

We submit these comments in support of the COP30 Forest Roadmap, and urge the Member States to respond proportionately to ensure (a) more funding; (b) spent more intelligently through reformed mechanisms; (c) routing at least 25% of climate funds to directly finance Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' locally designed solutions at the rainforest frontlines; (e) while halting global trade in deforestation commodities.

By redirecting funds away from slow moving bureaucracies and a bare *minimum* of 25% towards communities who have proven they can do what the world needs to survive, we will generate better, faster, more durable, and more just results – the kinds of results that no top-down intervention has managed. If we meet community needs on the supply side, **and** remove the economic incentives driving deforestation on the *demand side*, we can indeed halt and begin to reverse deforestation by 2030.

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### Response to Question (a): Critical Barriers

1. The most critical barrier to halting and reversing deforestation is not a lack of scientific knowledge about solutions — it is a **profound, systemic mismatch between where the evidence points and where the money flows**. UN-hosted funding systems are in need of reform.

Indigenous and local communities protect 36% of the world's intact tropical forests, yet receive [less than 1%](#) of global climate finance.<sup>1</sup> This contradiction is not a funding gap — it is a funding failure. The communities who have delivered the most durable, cost-effective, and measurable forest protection on earth are almost entirely excluded from the international finance system intended to pay for exactly that work.

The structural reasons for this are well-documented and must be named plainly. **Complex requirements prohibit funding from being released** directly to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.<sup>2</sup> **The dominant model routes money through “implementing agencies” that do not implement:** development

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<sup>1</sup> "Climate finance must reach Indigenous communities at COP30 & beyond." *Mongabay*, November 5, 2025.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2025/11/climate-finance-must-reach-indigenous-communities-at-cop30-beyond-commentary/>

<sup>2</sup> "Climate Finance Needs Rethinking to Reach Indigenous Peoples on the Ground." *SDG Knowledge Hub / IISD*, July 13, 2024.

<https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/climate-finance-needs-rethinking-to-reach-indigenous-peoples-on-the-ground/>

banks, UN agencies, and large international NGOs, filtering through labyrinthine layers of bureaucracy, overhead, and institutional inertia cost years we don't have, and suck money away from communities who could deploy the funds most effectively. Evidence submitted to COP28 by the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities found that serpentine funding delivery systems — often through third parties — mean most funds just “[evaporate](#)”, and only a sliver actually reaches Indigenous Peoples and local communities.<sup>3</sup> The results from the COP26 IPLC Forest Tenure Pledge [are illustrative](#): in the pledge's first year, only 2.9% of disbursed funds reached communities directly; in the second year, that figure fell to 2.1%.<sup>4</sup>

***“Money often appears to evaporate in complex transactions through numerous layers of multilateral institutions”*** – Lord Goldsmith (2023), Former UK Minister Department for Environment, Food, Rural Affairs

2. A second critical barrier is the policy failure to recognize that **the drivers of deforestation are only in-part environmental problems. They are poverty problems, healthcare and family planning problems, food security problems, and land rights problems.** Deforestation is driven both by communities under duress who must turn to the forest to survive — logging because there is no clinic, no income, no alternative — and by the much larger and more destructive force of industrial actors clear-cutting for cattle, mines, minerals, and timber. Conservation strategies that blindly stick to their silos and ignore these compounding human conditions — that **treat deforestation as a land management problem rather than an economic justice problem** — will fail. This is not a failure of values — it is a failure of systems, and any roadmap that does not address why deforestation is economically rational for the people living alongside forests, and who profits from making it so, will not halt deforestation by 2030.

3. A third barrier is the ongoing failure of states to **recognize, demarcate, and defend Indigenous land rights.** Between 1985 and 2020, 90% of Amazon deforestation occurred outside of Indigenous lands, making them the most protected areas in the Amazon, with just 1.2% of native vegetation lost over that period.<sup>5</sup> Where land rights are not legally secured, even motivated communities cannot defend their forests from waves of invasion by extractive industries, criminal networks, and land speculators.

4. A fourth and deeply underaddressed barrier is **the role of corporate supply chains in financing deforestation at scale.** The communities bearing the cost of forest loss—in displacement, in health, in cultural destruction—are not the ones capturing the value.<sup>6</sup> That value flows overwhelmingly to corporations and to the wealthier nations that consume beef, soy, palm oil, timber, gold, and minerals and more extracted from or through Indigenous territories and shipped to global markets.<sup>7</sup> This is a form of extractive colonialism operating in plain sight, and it will not be addressed by conservation programs alone. **It requires trade policy.** Member states must enact, strengthen, and enforce laws prohibiting the import and export of any products linked to illegal deforestation anywhere in their supply chains. The EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) represents a meaningful step in this direction. A roadmap should urge

<sup>3</sup> “Climate funds for Indigenous Peoples ‘evaporate’ before reaching them, report reveals.” *Euronews*, December 5, 2023.

<https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/12/05/climate-funds-for-indigenous-peoples-evaporate-before-reaching-them-report-reveals>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> “New Analysis Finds Indigenous Lands and Protected Areas Are Key in Slowing Deforestation; Without them Brazilian Amazon Forest Loss Would be 35% and Carbon Emissions 45% Higher.” *Environmental Defense Fund*, October 28, 2025.

<https://www.edf.org/media/new-analysis-finds-indigenous-lands-and-protected-areas-are-key-slowng-deforestation-without>

<sup>6</sup> Scheidel, A. et al. “Global impacts of extractive and industrial development projects on Indigenous Peoples’ lifeways, lands, and rights.” *Science Advances*, 2023. <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.ade9557>

<sup>7</sup> Environmental Investigation Agency. “Commodity-Driven Deforestation.” <https://eia.org/campaigns/forests/commodities/> — An estimated 60% of deforestation in the tropics is driven by the expansion of commercial agriculture, the majority of it in violation of producer country laws, with the resulting commodities — palm oil, beef, leather, soy, rubber, cocoa and coffee — often destined for international markets whose largest consumers are China, the European Union, and the United States.

repeal of EUDR delays, and immediately move towards strong adoption and full enforcement, as a model for the rest of the world's other major import markets. A forest protection roadmap must call for protections against globalization's destruction of rainforests the earth needs to survive. **Voluntary commitments have proven insufficient. What is required are binding laws, with teeth.**<sup>8</sup>

5. Energy production, including at a very front-lines, grassroots-level, such as charcoal, must be taken into account, crossing paths solidly with the much-needed global transition away from fossil fuels. Charcoal's impact on forest ecosystems and human health is highly significant; millions rely on charcoal to cook, at grave cost to critical forests and habitats. **Demand for firewood and charcoal results in the loss of forests the size of Ireland each year.**<sup>9</sup> The roadmap(s) must establish a Just Transition to cleaner cooking energy resources for communities. The roadmap may *understandably* include *low-hanging fruit* support for *temporary* sustainable production of cooking charcoal and improved cookstoves. But **that** fruit is *not very good*. The primary focus should be on supporting clean cooking for millions of low income people.<sup>10</sup>

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### Response to Question (b): Key Levers for Acceleration

The evidence is now extensive and convergent: the single highest-return lever available to this roadmap is directing substantially more funding, directly and without excessive conditionality, to Indigenous and locally designed solutions.

**The evidence from Health In Harmony's work is illustrative of a broader pattern.** In Indonesian Borneo, HIH, and later, its local affiliate organization Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI), began work in 2007 at Gunung Palung National Park in West Kalimantan, a region that had lost more than 60% of its forest to illegal logging between 1985 and 2001. The intervention did not start with a conservation plan. It started with listening. We asked, "What do you need as a thank you from the world for protecting the forests we all rely on for survival?" After 400 hours of "Radical Listening" — a clear answer emerged: families were logging illegally because they had no other way to pay for healthcare and fertilizer for food production. HIH and ASRI responded to what communities said they needed: an affordable health clinic with flexible, non-cash payment options including tree seedlings; sustainable livelihoods training; and conservation education. Communities designed the solutions. HIH and ASRI supported them.

A ten-year analysis by Stanford University [published in PNAS](#) found that HIH and ASRI's \$5.2 million investment in community-designed solutions in Indonesian Borneo averted 27,000 hectares of deforestation and [\\$65.3 million](#) in carbon emissions, while reducing logging households by over 90%, and increasing health and wellbeing with a 67% drop in infant mortality.<sup>11</sup> During this period, approximately 20,000 hectares of degraded forest was replaced by regenerating secondary forest regrowth.<sup>12</sup> That is a return on investment of over 12 to 1. Across HIH's program sites, when carbon value is calculated at

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<sup>8</sup> Lambin, E.F. et al. "Deforestation-Free Commodity Supply Chains: Myth or Reality?" *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 2022. <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-environ-112321-121436> — Despite zero-deforestation commitments made by many private companies, public-private coalitions, and governments since the early 2000s, high rates of deforestation persist and may even be increasing, with supply chain initiatives covering only a small share of tropical deforestation as currently implemented.

<sup>9</sup> IEA, "A Vision for Clean Cooking Access for All," 2023. <https://www.iea.org/reports/a-vision-for-clean-cooking-access-for-all/executive-summary>

<sup>10</sup> Lawal, Balarabe (Minister of Environment, Federal Republic of Nigeria). Quoted in: "Govt Commits to Clean Cooking Energy by 2030," *The Guardian Nigeria*, October 27, 2025. <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/national/govt-commits-to-clean-cooking-energy-by-2030/>

<sup>11</sup> Jones, I.J. et al. "Improving rural health care reduces illegal logging and conserves carbon in a tropical forest." *PNAS*, 117(45), 28515–28524 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2009240117>

<sup>12</sup> N. I. Fawzi, A. M. Indrayani, and K. DeKay, "Forest Change Monitoring and Environmental Impact in GPNP, West Kalimantan, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmu Lingkungan*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 197-204, Sep. 2019. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1755-1315/149/1/012038/pdf>

exchange market prices, community-designed solutions have delivered overwhelming ROIs, typically ranging from 12x to 128x.

Critically, this intervention did not achieve forest protection *instead of* improving human welfare. It achieved both simultaneously, **because they are the same problem**. Where communities can meet their healthcare, livelihood, and food needs, destructive pressure on the forest rapidly disappears. This is not a coincidence — it is the mechanism. Solutions that treat human health and forest health as separate domains will always underperform solutions that recognize them as one system.

HIH has replicated and expanded adapted variations of model in Madagascar, Brazil, Panama, and recently beginning in DRC. We consistently find that *listening* reveals *locally specific* drivers of deforestation — and that locally designed responses to those drivers *outperform* externally designed, top-down interventions in every measure: cost, durability, community ownership, and outcomes.

**The return is clear. The lever is clear. Fund communities directly. Secure their land rights. Listen to what they need. Reverse the incentives: instead of funding barriers to the planet's historic rainforest stewards, impose trade barriers that prohibit sales of exported deforestation commodities in wealthy nations.**

These measures also will substantially reduce risks of zoonotic spillover, greatly lowering the odds of another horrifically deadly pandemic. **The well-established connection between deforestation and zoonotic risk warrants recognition as a central co-benefit of forest protection investment.** Proactively averting new zoonoses averts trillions in economic damage and millions of lives lost.

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## Response to Question (c): Best Practices and Lessons Learned

From nearly two decades of work across five countries, HIH offers the following lessons:

- 1. Start with listening, not with solutions.** Every HIH program begins with deep community consultation before any actions are taken. Communities are not beneficiaries — they are the architects. Programs designed without this step routinely fail to address actual drivers of deforestation and fail to achieve community buy-in necessary for long-term success.
- 2. Holistic, integrated solutions outperform sectoral interventions.** Funding structures that require programs to be siloed into "forestry" or "health" or "livelihoods" miss the interdependence of these systems. Deforestation and disease, poverty and forest loss are not separate crises with separate solutions. The most effective interventions address multiple drivers simultaneously.
- 3. Non-cash and culturally appropriate payment and incentive systems work.** In Indonesia, patients paying for healthcare with tree seedlings generated both healthcare access and reforestation. This approach was not designed by funders — it was designed by communities. Funders must accept that community-designed mechanisms may not fit standard grant and reporting templates, and build flexibility into financing accordingly.

**4. Communities can and do manage funds directly and responsibly** — when given the opportunity. The persistent donor assumption that Indigenous and local organizations lack the capacity to receive and manage funds is not supported by evidence. It reflects colonial legacies, not data. Where communities have received direct financing, results have been measurable and positive. Indigenous leaders have [stated clearly](#): "When given the chance, Indigenous Peoples and local communities can manage the funds properly — but they rarely get the chance to prove that. With direct funding, we can upscale our work so it can have a greater impact."<sup>13</sup> The roadmap should include a call to **reform funders, especially including UN- and World Bank hosted family of multilateral funds, as well as bilateral programs, and even the so-called 'innovative finance mechanism' schemes** rooted in the private sector. All should dedicate at least 25% of existing and new funding for IPLC organizations and IPLC-designed solutions, as well as bringing to bear new support for communities to establish the conditions and support structures to manage higher percentages of funding at the community level.

**5. Outcomes improve when countries formally recognize and enforce Indigenous land rights.** A growing body of research shows that lands managed by Indigenous people have lower deforestation rates than similar lands managed by other forest users, and lands legally held or titled to Indigenous people exhibit even lower rates than untitled Indigenous lands — underscoring the importance of tenure security. [World Resources Institute](#) analysis also found that forests managed by Indigenous people in the Amazon were strong net carbon sinks from 2001–2021, collectively removing 340 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually — equivalent to the UK's entire annual fossil fuel emissions.<sup>14</sup> Studies further suggest that by ensuring land rights for Indigenous people, these territories in the Brazilian Amazon could decrease deforestation by up to 66%.<sup>15</sup> When governance weakens and invasions go unprosecuted, deforestation inside Indigenous territories surges. When rights are enforced, forests are protected, and restored. This is among the most cost-effective climate investments available to any government.

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#### **Response to Question (d): Reflecting Diverse Realities and Indigenous Rights**

The roadmap must do more than acknowledge Indigenous and local communities — it should structurally require that they be given the support and resources needed to lead, to design, and to receive direct access to the funds to implement their own solutions. We must also address the underlying drivers of deforestation, from the village, to multilateral agencies, to international import/export policy.

Health In Harmony urges the COP30 Presidency to include the following concrete targets and commitments in the Forest Roadmap:

**1. A 25% direct financing floor (NOT CEILING) by 2030, with annual escalation.** All member states, donor countries, multilateral funders, and philanthropies working on climate, biodiversity, deforestation, or conservation issues should be required to direct a minimum of 25% of all relevant funding to locally designed solutions from Indigenous and local communities, delivered as direct financing — not through multiple layers of implementing agencies. This target applies explicitly and without exception to UN-hosted and multilateral funds including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the

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<sup>13</sup> "Climate funds for Indigenous Peoples 'evaporate' before reaching them, report reveals." *Euronews*, December 5, 2023. <https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/12/05/climate-funds-for-indigenous-peoples-evaporate-before-reaching-them-report-reveals>

<sup>14</sup> World Resources Institute. "Indigenous Forests Are Some of the Amazon's Last Carbon Sinks." 2023. <https://www.wri.org/insights/amazon-carbon-sink-indigenous-forests>

<sup>15</sup> Fonseca, A. et al. "Brazilian Amazon indigenous territories under deforestation pressure." *PMC / Scientific Reports*, 2023. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10085996/>

Adaptation Fund, the Pandemic Fund, and all other multilateral mechanisms whose mandates touch forests, biodiversity, climate, or community resilience. These institutions were designed to serve the countries and communities most affected by climate change. A 25% direct financing floor is the minimum credible expression of that mandate. This target should be reached by 2030, with annual increases thereafter of at least 2.5 percentage points per year until we exceed 50%. Bilateral funders and private sector finance schemes should adopt this target as well.

**2. Meaningful reform of financing architecture.** The current model, in which the vast majority of international climate and forest funding flows to development banks, UN agencies, and large international NGOs before any portion reaches communities, is in particularly dire need of urgent reform. The *reality* of how little reaches communities is well below 1% — and the figure commonly cited understates the problem, since much of what is counted as IPLC funding goes to government institutions or international implementing organizations rather than to communities themselves.<sup>16</sup> Multilateral institutions including the GEF and its implementing agencies must be required to demonstrate direct community access as a condition of forest-related funding, not merely as a stated aspiration.

There is positive movement to build on: The GEF's Global Biodiversity Framework Fund has set "aspirational" 20% targets for indigenous Peoples,<sup>17</sup> and even exceeding them.<sup>18</sup> Newer initiatives like the Tropical Forest Forever Facility went further to mandate at least 20%.<sup>19</sup> This is important progress to be built upon. It's time for the entire funding system to set a deadline for at least 25% as a minimum policy.

Bilateral donors should meet the 25% challenge for IPLC solutions as well, and demonstrate faster and more limber response times than the UN systems. So-called "innovative finance schemes" from the private sector, notorious for combinations of vaporware and greenwashing, may also take great steps towards remediating an unimpressive track record by redirecting funding towards the interventions with the biggest bank-for-buck results: Indigenous and Local Community-designed solutions.

**3. Binding trade policy to close the demand-side loop.** Forest conservation cannot succeed in producer countries while consumer countries maintain open markets for the products driving deforestation. Member states should enact and rigorously enforce legislation prohibiting the import or sale of any product whose supply chain includes illegal deforestation. The EU Deforestation Regulation represents a meaningful first step, but its implementation has already faced delays under industry pressure, and equivalent measures are absent in most major import markets. Strong, consistent, and coordinated enforcement of supply chain due diligence laws across all major consumer economies is not peripheral to this roadmap—it is a prerequisite. Voluntary private sector action has failed to generate meaningful progress on commodity-driven deforestation: nearly two-thirds of companies that *have* made commitments are failing to publish adequate evidence of implementation, while 60% of the 150 financial institutions most

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<sup>16</sup> Gjefsen, T. "Indigenous people get less than 1% of climate funding? It's actually worse." *Mongabay*, November 2021.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/11/indigenous-people-get-less-than-1-of-climate-funding-its-actually-worse-commentary/>

<sup>17</sup> Global Environment Facility. "New biodiversity fund approves project preparation grants."

<https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/press-releases/new-biodiversity-fund-approves-project-preparation-grants>

<sup>18</sup> Global Environment Facility. "GBFF Council approves ambitious work program that advances global biodiversity goals."

<https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/news/gbff-council-approves-ambitious-work-program-advances-global-biodiversity-goals>

<sup>19</sup> COP30 Presidency "Over USD 5.5 billion Announced for Tropical Forest Forever Facility as 53 Countries Endorse TFFF" Nov 6, 2025.

<https://cop30.br/en/news-about-cop30/over-usd-5-5-billion-announced-for-tropical-forest-forever-facility-as-53-countries-endorse-the-historic-tfff-launch-declaration>

responsible have no deforestation policy whatsoever.<sup>20</sup> These companies provide \$8.9 trillion to the deforestation economy, and *they aren't even pretending*.

**4. Mandatory recognition and enforcement of Indigenous land rights.** All signatory countries must be required to formally recognize, demarcate, and actively defend Indigenous territories from invasion by extractive industries, criminal networks, agricultural expansion, and speculative land acquisition. The evidence is unambiguous: where Indigenous land rights are secured and enforced, forests survive. Where they are not, forests do not. This is not a human rights ask separate from the climate agenda — it *is* the climate agenda.

Health In Harmony stands ready to share further evidence and technical expertise in support of the Forest Roadmap process. The tools exist. The communities are ready. What has been missing is the political will and the financial architecture to match the urgency of this crisis. The Roadmap process is an opportunity to change that.

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<sup>20</sup> Global Canopy. *Forest 500 – Finance Report: Deforestation is a Bad Investment*. 2025.  
<https://forest500.org/publications/forest-500-finance-report-deforestation-is-a-bad-investment/>