



FILMS 1–5:

5x5: Voices of Change from the Forests of Indonesia

2008 • 30 minutes • Directed by Paul Redman • Produced by Handcrafted Films and Gekko Studios

These five short films explore the response of Indonesian indigenous communities to the threats of deforestation, illegal logging, mining, large-scale oil palm plantations, and climate change. The films were originally broadcast in Indonesia during the 2008 United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali.

FILM 6:

Hope: Indigenous Climate Change Solutions

2015 • 7 minutes • Directed by Paul Redman • Produced by Handcrafted Films and Gekko Studios

This short film documents how the people of Sungai Utik, a Dayak Iban community in West Kalimantan, have maintained a strong traditional connection to their forests despite the efforts of companies intent on taking their land. As they mitigate the effects of climate change through sustainable forestry practices traditional to their culture and to their understanding of nature, they offer us climate solutions and instill hope for the future.





CURATOR:

Jason A. Carbine

Associate Professor,
C. Milo Connick Chair of Religious
Studies, Whittier College

“Who will stop ‘this madness’ of climate change? If not us, then who? If not now, then when?”

—Yeb Sano

A NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

This guide was written with the collaboration of students in my fall semester 2019 first-year writing seminar, “Asia and the Environment,” a course built around films in the GEJ collection. In this course, we sought to understand the relationships between natural resources, culture, power, environmental degradation, and ethnic identities, among other topics, as evident in Asia generally but specifically in Southeast Asia and China. We drew from various documentaries and used several analytical disciplines—including history, religious studies, political science, and anthropology—to help think through the impact of human activity on people, animals, and the environment as a whole. This guide emerged from our discussions, and the students in the course are acknowledged at the end of this guide.

WHY WE SELECTED THESE FILMS

Given the hundreds of millions of people around the world who depend on forests for their livelihoods and the number of people, organizations, institutions, and nation-states that are involved in resource extraction from them, the problems resulting from illegal and destructive logging are relevant to all. With the participation of students in my class at Whittier College, we chose these films for their intimate, accessible portrayal of efforts to address the issue of illegal logging in Indonesia. These six films explore the struggles indigenous and other people face, the hardships they endure, and the need for collective action and coalition building to bring about positive change and the sustainable use of forests. While specific to Indonesia, these films can be screened alongside others that address these issues in other countries in Southeast Asia and around the world.

SUGGESTED SUBJECT AREAS

Conservation	Indigenous Rights
Corruption	Law
Deforestation	Logging
Ecotourism	Poverty
Environmental Protection	Sustainability
Government	

The issues surrounding climate change, deforestation, and illegal logging can seem inordinately complex, and the human side—the personal stories—can often be forgotten.



NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thanks to traveling across Indonesia’s vast archipelago and filming extensively throughout Java, Borneo, Sulawesi, Sumatra, and West Papua, we gained unique access to the country’s forest-dwelling people. During this time, we examined closely their personal battle on the front lines of deforestation. For many, the issues surrounding climate change, deforestation, and illegal logging can seem inordinately complex, and the human side—the personal stories—can often be forgotten. But occasionally these global problems can affect one tiny area, and suddenly, in a microcosm, all the devastation and horror take on a very real human face. The communities and villages featured in this serialization have all found themselves thrust into such a position.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOCUS OF THE FILMS

This collection of films inspires deep reflection on several interconnected human and environmental issues. It examines the impact of land grabs, logging, oil palm plantations, mining, and the disregard for ecosystems that has been compromising the forests of Indonesia, threatening the survival of endangered species, and fueling climate change. In the words of local indigenous leaders, who are often opposed by governments and corrupt local officials, the destruction of the forests directly threatens their land, homes, livelihoods, and cultures as well as the region’s biodiversity. Together with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they are documenting the impact of environmental degradation and are actively seeking ways to mitigate climate change, protect the forests, defend their cultures, and bring about a just economy.

These films invite viewers to imagine what an environmentally just Indonesia—or any other country where illegal logging threatens local and indigenous peoples and cultures—can or would be like as the result of listening to the many “voices of change,” especially those of the people who live in and with the forests.

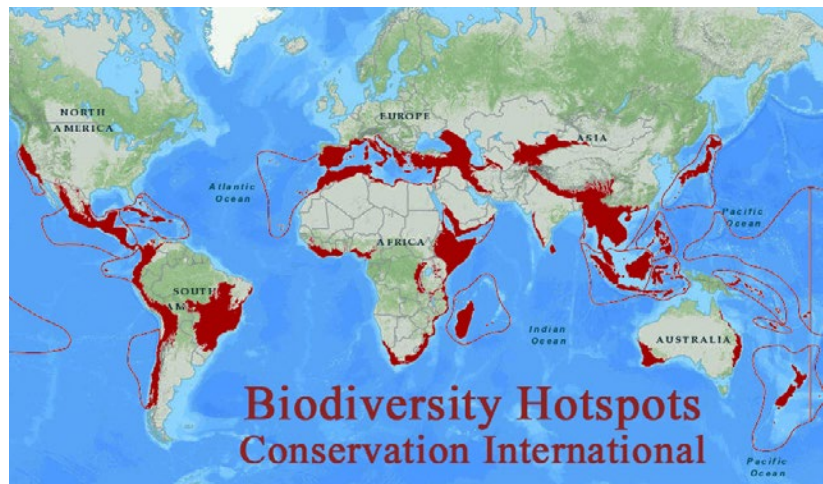


BACKGROUND

Indonesia is one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet and is home to many different human cultures (see graphic). Consistent with other places around the globe, many human-driven factors threaten this cultural and biological diversity, including growing human populations in Indonesia and in Asia generally, as well as water and marine pollution, heavy resource extraction, deforestation, and monocropping.

According to [Greenpeace](#), tropical forests are among the greatest biodiversity hot spots on Earth. Indonesia's tropical forests are the third largest in the world, where 10% to 15% of all known plants, mammals, and birds can be found. Many animal species—from orangutans and Sumatran tigers to rare birds and rhinos— can be found only in Indonesia's forests, which are increasingly threatened by extinction.

Illegal and unsustainable logging in Indonesia has been particularly harsh not only on the forests but also on the humans, animals, and other life forms that are intrinsic to forest ecosystems. As shown in these films, the forests of West Papua, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Sumatra have been greatly affected. And as with elsewhere in the world, coalitions of people, organizations, indigenous families, and extended kin networks are fighting for changes in environmental consciousness and activity, all in pursuit of a sustainable future that respects environmental and cultural diversity.





KEY LOCATIONS, PEOPLES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

The names of the individual participants are found in the credits.

Film 1: Serimuk, West Papua, Indonesia

Knasaimos people

Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), a global non-profit NGO founded in 1984

Telapak, an Indonesian association of NGO activists, business practitioners, academics, media affiliates, and leaders of indigenous peoples, fishers, and farmers



Film 2: Meratus Mountains, Kalimantan, Indonesia

Dayak Meratus people

NGO Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Adat (LPMA)

A community credit union

Kesatuan Dayak Alai, an institution for rubber farmers



Film 3: South East Sulawesi, Konawe Selatan, Sulawesi, Indonesia

Forest communities

Koperasi Hutan Jaya Lestari (KHJL), a logging cooperative

South Sulawesi Forest Network Institution (Jaringan Untuk Hutan, or JAUH)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), a council that certifies sustainable, legal logging



Film 4: West Papua, Indonesia, and Brussels (Parliament), Belgium

Indonesian civil society

EIA

Telapak

Film 5: Bukit Lawang, North Sumatra, Indonesia, Gunung Leuser National Park

Local communities

Yayasan Leuser Lestari (YLL), an NGO that seeks to protect the forests while supporting ecotourism



Film 6: Sungai Utik, West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Sungai Utik people, a Dayak Iban community

Lembaga Bela Banua Talino, an NGO established in 1993 to fight for indigenous rights



FILM SYNOPSES AND TIME FRAMES

These six short films can be accessed and screened online via the **Clips** tab located on the 5x5 screening page.

Film 1: **Knasaimos people** in Serimuk, West Papua (00:00–05:10)

The Knasaimos people, adversely affected by illegal logging, gain greater control of their land.

The illegal logging trade destroyed their livelihoods and disrupted the social structure of their villages, but a recent government enforcement action has since clamped down on the trade. The film highlights the success of the enforcement and examines how the local communities will benefit from an increased share and control of their ancestral forestland.

Since 2002, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Telapak have worked with the Knasaimos people as affiliated NGOs. Together, the two NGOs exposed the rampant illegal logging in the area, which led to the government enforcement action in 2005. This work is part of their global campaign to promote ideas and distribute information to improve forest policy in Indonesia and throughout the world. They have since been initiated into the Knasaimos tribe and continue to help them decide their future.



Film 2: **Dayak Meratus people** in the Meratus mountain area, Kalimantan, Indonesia (05:10–11:15)

The Dayak Meratus, threatened by logging, mining, and oil palm plantations, organize cooperatives and seek legal recognition of their rights to the forest.

Dayak Meratus communities have created cooperatives that protect local resources and develop business institutions. The communities rely on non-timber forest products, such as rubber, to generate sustainable livelihoods. However, the encroachment of private businesses on the local forestland for large-scale plantations, mining, and forest concessions threatens their way of life and has forced them to respond.

Since 1998, NGO Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Adat (LPMA) has helped empower the Dayak Meratus by maintaining their indigenous forests. This work assists the Dayak in managing their natural resources and restructuring indigenous institutions and community law. The Dayak have become financially self-sufficient, and with the LPMA's guidance, they are now seeking legal recognition of their traditional land rights.



Film 3: Forest communities in South East Sulawesi, Konawe Selatan, Indonesia (11:15–17:15)

Forest communities in Sulawesi have created Indonesia's first sustainable logging cooperative, but endemic corruption could undermine their success.



Local people have developed a sustainable, community-based logging cooperative, with land purchased by the community and farmed for teak. The cooperative is the first in Indonesia to achieve Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for sustainability, helping to regulate timber production and secure fair prices. However, this logging program is under continued threat by Indonesia's endemic corruption.



The South Sulawesi Forest Network Institution (Jaringan Untuk Hutan, or JAUH), a local NGO, formed a partnership with another community logging cooperative, Koperasi Hutan Jaya Lestari (KHJL). Together, they have improved forest management in the region and achieved FSC certification for the timber KHJL produces. JAUH continues to work defending the cooperative in the face of renewed pressure from the illegal-timber industry.

Film 4: Indonesian civil society, West Papua, Indonesia, and Brussels (Parliament), Belgium (17:15–23:25)

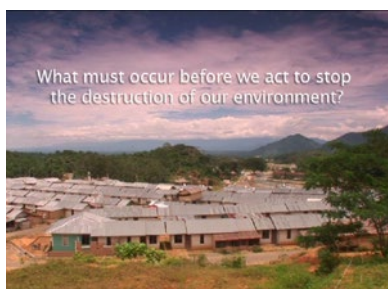
Members of Indonesian civil society travel to Brussels to urge European countries to create better laws for combating illegal timber entering the European Union (EU).



A West Papuan tribal leader accompanies the delegation and presents a speech on behalf of his community, which has suffered directly from the impact of illegal logging. These meetings and the continued work of Indonesian civil society have meant that they have now been officially recognized as an integral part of the negotiations between the EU and the Indonesian government on illegal logging.



Since 1999, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Telapak, an NGO, have been providing training to a network of grassroots NGOs in Indonesia. By using video, photography, and evidence-gathering techniques, this project has significantly enhanced the ability of local organizations and communities to ensure their voices are heard globally. Their work has also included lobbying consumer countries that import illegally harvested Indonesian timber.



Film 5: Local communities in Bukit Lawang, North Sumatra
(23:25–29:30)

Illegal logging in a national park in North Sumatra triggers devastating floods. Could voluntary controls and increased tourism help preserve the forests the community relies on?

The film is based in Bukit Lawang, where severe flooding caused more than 239 deaths in 2003. The flooding was attributed to illegal logging in the surrounding Gunung Leuser National Park. Since then, the local communities have been involved in voluntary forest governance and enforcement schemes to help curb the ongoing problem of illegal logging in the national park. And through the assistance of Yayasan Leuser Lestari (YLL), a local NGO, the people have started to recognize the importance of ecotourism in the preservation of their surrounding forests.

Medan-based YLL has worked to raise the profile of ecotourism in Bukit Lawang. Their efforts have also involved tracking court cases to determine the cause of the flooding. They regularly conduct investigations into illegal logging in order to campaign against forest destruction and land conversion.

Film 6: Hope: Indigenous Climate Change Solutions
Sungai Utik people, a Dayak Iban community in West Kalimantan, Indonesia (29:30–36:55)

The filmmakers visit a unique people, living deep in the rainforest of Indonesia, who represent a simple solution to our global climate crisis. These people have maintained a strong traditional connection to their forests despite continued pressure from companies intent on taking their land. Their forests remain intact, and their traditional values keep their community together. If we want to protect and maintain the forests, the filmmakers suggest, we need to trust and support communities like these. Now, as they tackle the impacts of climate change, the creative response of the Dayak Iban offers us hope.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Based on what you saw in the films, do you think the Indonesian government should implement stronger, centralized environmental regulations that focus on the forest encroachments of private businesses and companies, regardless of whether they are legal or illegal?
2. How can the government develop programs and regulations that enable villagers to respond to environmental disasters and help them to contest illegal logging and other destructive land uses?
3. In what ways can villages reach out to the international community to create an ethical and effective means of forest use while upholding the diversity of ecosystems?
4. How does corruption undermine the development of a just economy in Indonesia's logging industry?
5. Now that you have seen the films, do you think it is possible to develop a sustainable level of logging? Why or why not?
6. How, if at all, does foreign support help Indonesian civil society in its efforts to eliminate the illegal timber trade and to protect the rights of indigenous groups across Indonesia?
7. Film 6 begins with a portrayal of the "long house." What do you think is its significance?
8. Explain the role of NGOs in helping indigenous and local communities deal with illegal logging. Have there been any successes? If so, what are they?

The social ecology of environmental struggle and justice means the web or network of social, economic, legal, and environmental factors involved in trying to address environmental justice. Who is trying to make just change, and how? Who is resisting it, and how?

ACTIVITIES

1. Have the class look into the question of logging in Southeast Asia more generally. What is the current status of illegal logging and corruption in Indonesia and Southeast Asia?
2. Have the class develop a systematic understanding of the logging economy in Indonesia and elsewhere in connection to the government. What areas of regulation and control need improvement? Why?
3. Have the class come up with a synthetic plan to combat illegal logging and land grabs that incorporates local indigenous activism, NGO efforts, government involvement, and international support.
4. Have the class move into small groups to discuss the struggles and complications involved in creating a successful, productive NGO that benefits indigenous groups potentially facing the loss of their homes, environment, and cultures.
5. Envision your own hypothetical, justice-oriented NGO. How would you foster awareness of such matters as illegal logging and its impact on indigenous populations? Develop an action plan specific to Indonesia or to another Southeast Asian country.
6. We see in other films in the GEJ collection that “green” religions play a key role in the ways some people try to address human and environmental rights. Religion seems mostly absent in the 5x5 films and in *Hope* except for a rite of passage for Kadit, chairman of the Knasaimos tribal council, before he goes to Brussels (Film 4). Have students try to find a connection between religious traditions and local and NGO activism in fighting illegal logging in Indonesia.
7. How does the focus or message of the sixth film, *Hope: Indigenous Climate Change Solutions*, compare with the stories in the other five films? Have the students discuss as many features of a social ecology of environmental struggle and justice as possible. Who is trying to make just change, and how? Who is resisting it, and how? What might have changed in the time between the filming of 5x5 in 2008 and the filming of *Hope* in 2015? What is the situation in these communities today? (Here, a social ecology of environmental struggle and justice means the web or network of social, economic, legal, and environmental factors involved in trying to address environmental justice. This notion of environmentally oriented struggle and justice follows Darrell J. Fasching, Dell deChant, and David M. Lantigua, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics*, esp. chapter 11, which presents a “social ecology of conscience” and a “social ecology of justice” as the basis for an ethics of “the way of all the earth” [Wiley-Blackwell, 2nd Edition, 2011]. In developing their ideas, Fasching et al. build on ecofeminism and other analytical frameworks.)

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Web Links

[Telapak](#)

“Telapak is an Indonesian association of NGO activists, business practitioners, academics, media affiliates, and leaders of indigenous peoples, fishers, and farmers. Together they are working toward sustainability, sovereignty, and integrity. Their mission is to influence public policy on conservation, to establish community-driven natural resource management, and to stop the unprecedented rate of ecosystem destruction while involving the impoverished communities living in resource-rich areas.” —from their website

[Environmental Investigation Agency](#)

“EIA works to achieve tangible changes in the global economy that make local and sustainable management of the world’s natural resources possible. Working in London since 1984 and in Washington, D.C., since 1989, the Environmental Investigation Agency has identified and implemented specific solutions to the world’s most pressing environmental problems. Our campaigns to protect endangered wildlife, forests, and the global climate operate at the intersection between increasing global demand and trade and the accelerating loss of natural resources and species. EIA takes advantage of its independence and mobility to produce game-changing primary evidence and analysis of these problems and to build lasting alliances, institutions, and policies to implement solutions.” —from their website

[The Gecko Project](#)

“The Gecko Project is an investigative journalism initiative established to shine a light on the corruption driving land grabs and the destruction of tropical rainforests. It seeks to create and maintain a sense of urgency over the role of large land deals, predominantly for food production, in some of the most pressing global challenges: climate change, the collapse of biodiversity, food security, and the rights of indigenous peoples and other rural communities. We aim to achieve this through the production and promotion of in-depth, high-quality, and accessible journalism. The Gecko Project was established at Earthsight in 2017 and became an independent organization in 2019.” —from their website

2005 EIA and Telapak report, [Illegal Logging in Papua and China’s Massive Timber Theft](#)

2010 United Nations report on [forest crime and corruption in Indonesia](#)



2010 article from *The Guardian* highlighting [the role of NGOs and pressure groups in the decline of illegal logging](#)

2019 West Kalimantan [interview and photo essay with “defenders of the forest”](#)

2019 Human Rights Watch report: “When We Lost the Forest, We Lost Everything: Oil Palm Plantations and Rights Violations in Indonesia,” [summarized here](#). An extended summary of the report, including photos and videos, [is provided here](#). Click on the links for the summary [PDF](#) and the full [PDF](#).

2019 CNN report on [forest fires in Indonesia and the threat to the survival of orangutans](#). Includes videos, maps, and data visualization.

[If Not Us Then Who](#): a collection of short videos from around the world that explores the social and environmental impacts of development and the emergence of indigenous communities that are organizing to protect the land and their livelihoods.

[Hope: Indonesia](#) (2015), also listed as Hope: Indigenous Climate Change Solutions; from the If Not Us Then Who collection.

Books and Articles

Collins, Elizabeth Fuller. *Indonesia Betrayed: How Development Fails*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2007.

Gade, Anna M. *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Linkie, Matthew, Sean Sloan, Rahmad Kasia, Dedy Kiswayadi, and Wahdi Azmi. “Breaking the vicious circle of illegal logging in Indonesia.” *Conservation Biology*. August 2014, Vol. 28, Issue 4.

Richards, Daniel R. and Daniel A. Friess. “Rates and drivers of mangrove deforestation in Southeast Asia, 2000–2012.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, Vol. 113, No. 2 (January 12, 2016), pp. 344–349.

Zerner, Charles, ed. *Culture and the Question of Rights: Forests, Coasts, and Seas in Southeast Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jason Carbine would like to thank the students who helped develop ideas and content for this guide: Michelle Abarca, Hana Abdullah, Jack Budd, Kevina Collins, John Cortes, Nate Herrera, Hunter Kronberg, Chandler Nayman, Cassidy Oh, Avram Rosenzweig, Ivan Serna, Camille Sung, Lily Wentworth.