

8-part series

Indonesia - Fight for the Remaining Forest



Part 1: In the 1990s, an El Niño event triggers raging fires across Indonesia and millions of hectares of forests are lost. This prompts the Environmental Investigation Agency to explore the situation and they form a partnership with the Indonesian NGO Telapak. Through the use of video investigation, the environmental organisations uncover illegal logging occurring in national parks. Indonesian citizens are outraged and the government vows to act.

Part 2: As the partnership between the Environmental Investigation Agency and Telapak grows, the two organisations train “on the ground” video investigation and undercover techniques to other groups. But during an illegal logging investigation, undercover investigators from the Environmental Investigation Agency and Telapak posing as timber buyers are exposed.

Part 3: After their narrow escape, the Environmental Investigation Agency and Telapak work with the Indonesian government to protect Indonesia’s forests on an international level. In 2001, the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance Conference is held in Bali, and aims to address corruption, land rights and land tenure, as well as illegal trade.

Part 4: In 2003, indigenous communities in West Papua reach out to the Environmental Investigation Agency and Telapak, and tell them that their forests are being destroyed against their will. Western concerns about illegal logging grow, and

international efforts try to improve international trade regulations of Indonesia's timber products.

Part 5: More international policy is adopted by the European Union and the United States that aims to restrict imports of illegal timber and illegal timber products. However, despite these growing international efforts, corruption and weak law enforcement still affects Indonesia.

Part 6: In 2009, the Indonesian government expands its palm oil industry, and declares that 5 million hectares of forests in West Papua will be cleared and converted to palm oil. Indigenous land rights are contested, and palm oil companies are able to clear their lands with land permits that they are able to obtain through corrupt processes.

Part 7: While international efforts are successful at limiting the exports of illegal timber and timber products, threats to Indonesian forests still loom from within. The Indonesian government refuses to acknowledge the existence of indigenous customary land rights, which enables palm oil companies to clear forests in order to produce more palm oil.

Part 8: In 2020, Indonesian government statistics show that annual deforestation levels have fallen to their lowest levels since records began in 1990. Indigenous communities have reclaimed some of their customary and ancestral lands and forests, and have replanted native plants to repair the forests. Much has been accomplished to facilitate the recovery of Indonesian forests and its national parks, but bad practices still continue.

