

Draft version: This document represents a working draft of Forests of the World's Strategy 2026–2030. Shared for feedback ahead of the General Assembly. Content and wording are subject to further refinement.

Forests Matter – for People, Nature and Climate

Forests are the foundation of all life on Earth.

Billions of people depend directly on the many ecosystem services forests provide, and the vast majority of Earth's plants and animals rely on the habitats in and around forests. At the same time, forests are the planet's largest land-based carbon sink, storing more carbon than any other ecosystem.

Yet forests continue to disappear at an alarming rate. In 2024, the world lost a record 30 million hectares of tree cover – including 6.7 million hectares of tropical primary forests, rich in biodiversity and vital for carbon storage (Global Forest Watch).

The main drivers of deforestation and degradation are deeply interconnected and vary from place to place. At their roots lie unsustainable global economic systems – including industrial food production, extractive industries and unequal power structures – often reinforced by undemocratic governance and a shrinking civic space.

As forests fall, they fuel two of our time's most pressing crises; climate change and the loss of species, often referred to as the sixth mass extinction. In addition, the people of the forests – Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities – are among the poorest and most marginalised in the world and feel the impact of deforestation first and hardest. This adds a third global crisis of inequality to the mix of collateral damage of deforestation.

Scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC AR6 of 2023) shows that forest-based adaptation and prevention of the conversion of natural ecosystems are among the most cost-effective and immediately feasible ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Forests of the World works to create lasting impact on the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequality – by conserving and restoring some of the world's most vital and vulnerable forests. This is done in close collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, forest dependent communities and our local partners at the forest frontline.

Our Vision and Mission

Vision: A World with a Rich Forest Nature

Mission:

- We work to conserve, restore and protect biodiverse forest landscapes where nature and people coexist.
- We collaborate with Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities to strengthen rights, livelihoods and local leadership.
- We engage people to act for forests, sustainable livelihoods and rights.

Hotspots

To ensure an impact in the nexus of the three global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and inequality, we primarily work in forest areas that meet the established criteria for being a biodiversity hotspot as well as a biogeographic area in which there is a potential for conservation by collaborations with local guardians:

- Where forests are exceptionally rich in endemic species
- Where forests are under threat from human activities and in danger of disappearing
- Where there is a feasibility of engaging and supporting Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities as guardians of the forest

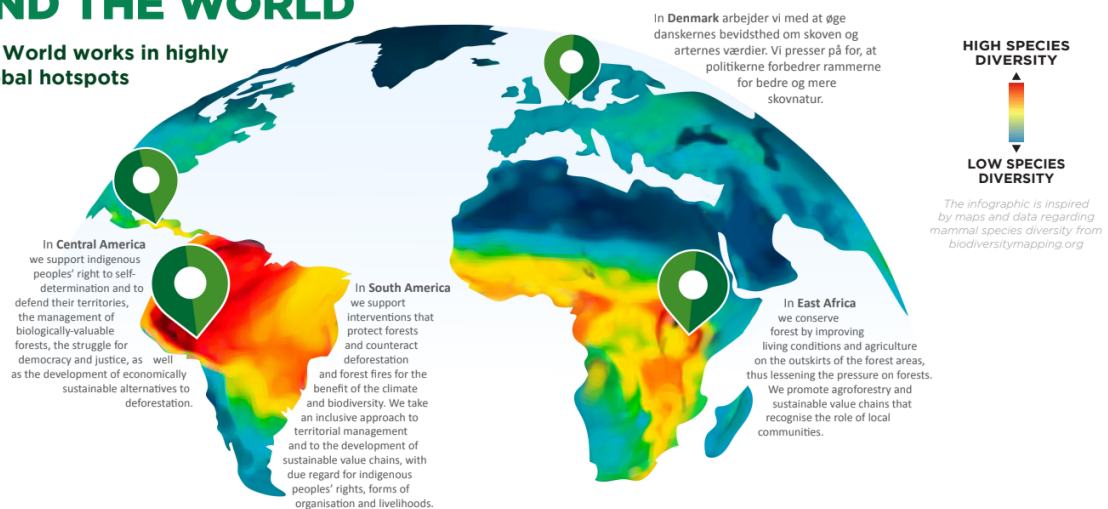
Concretely, we work in hotspots across the East African Rift Valley Ecosystem, the Southamerican Amazon and Cerrado and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. In all these places, we work in close local collaborations, as these ensure the greatest possible support and sustainability for forest conservation initiatives.

Acknowledging our roots as a Danish-based civil society organisation, we complement our tropical forest work with a commitment to increase the biodiversity effect of policies in Denmark, in particular with regard to wild forest nature.

Furthermore, we appreciate the legitimacy provided by our members to push for political change of both local and global legal frameworks in Denmark as well as in global forest policy fora.

FORESTS OF THE WORLD AROUND THE WORLD

Forests of the World works in highly
biodiverse global hotspots



Stop Deforestation

Forests of the World identify three strategic solutions to tackle the root causes that enable the drivers of deforestation:

1. Governance and management of forest territories and areas must be well-functioning,
2. Livelihoods of local people must be sustainable,
3. The rights of the forests themselves as well as their peoples and their communities must be enforced or improved.

These three strategic solutions constitute a mix of hands-on activities and approaches tailor-made for the local context and demanded by our local partners.

Governance and Management

Many tropical forests are vulnerable due to insufficient or illegitimate governance and management systems that allow political or economic elites to exploit resources unsustainably – often at the expense of local communities, biodiversity, and long-term ecosystem stability.

We promote a forest landscape approach that considers forests in relation to other land uses, production activities, water resources and communities, shaped by ecological, social, economic and political interactions. Strengthening legitimate governance and decision-making systems that are accountable and recognized as fair by Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities, respecting their rights and knowledge, is

central to our landscape approach. This entails promoting forest management that answers a triple bottom line of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Concretely, we engage multiple stakeholders to balance diverse interests sustainably. Further, we strengthen local capacities to implement effective management practices, including forest monitoring, fire prevention, watershed protection, and restoration of ecological corridors.

Livelihoods that Last

Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities rely on forest resources for their livelihoods.

These livelihoods are under pressure which can lead to unsustainable practices, adding to deforestation and degradation driven by agricultural expansion, timber extraction, and mining. Local production practices often face barriers such as unfair value chains that trap small-scale producers in cycles of poverty, inequality and dependency on unsustainable use of forest resources.

We support Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities in developing resilient and sustainable livelihoods. We promote climate-smart production systems that enhance productivity for food security, strengthen resilience to climate change and reduce emissions or increase carbon sequestration – thereby reducing pressure on forest ecosystems.

Concretely, we strengthen local capacities to realise the value of standing forests and forest-adjacent areas — supporting sustainable use, local entrepreneurship, and the adoption of proven techniques that merge natural forest regeneration, local knowledge, and high-value and diversified crops through successional agroforestry.

We also support transparent and accountable producer organisations, strengthen value chains and promote more direct and responsible trade.

Concretely, we engage commercial partners to facilitate fair and sustainable market opportunities for forest-based and adjacent producers.

Rights for Forests and Peoples

Forest conservation is strengthened by law and recognition of rights for both forests and the people in and around them. However, too often these rights are violated, environmental legislation is not enforced and the shrinking of civic space obstructs the work of environmental rights defenders, often putting their lives at risk. When the hard-earned rights for forests and forest people are violated, the forests are disappearing or degraded. When biodiversity has no place in existing forest laws, nature can never regenerate and bounce back.

We work to protect the rights of forests themselves and of Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities. This helps rightsholders claim their rights and hold duty-bearers accountable. We promote legal and legitimate frameworks that protect both people and forests, ensuring that forest conservation and equity go hand in hand.

Concretely, we support Indigenous Peoples collective rights to auto-determination, self-governance, consultation, and participation aiming to achieve free, prior, informed consent. The approach can be twofold, where rightholders either demand duty-bearers to enforce legislation and fulfill their rights, or advocate for the adoption of new or more adequate regulatory frameworks. The latter also applies to our aim specifically in Denmark. Our support and work for rights entails strengthening capacities on representation, leadership, advocacy, campaigning, network, and alliance building.

Drivers of Sustainability

Forest conservation is an ongoing effort and is not suited for project modalities. Although we insist on long-term initiatives in our target areas, forest conservation will only be sustainable when local actors have the capacities and resources to take ownership of the continued efforts for protecting the forest. Therefore, we will both foster and utilise strong partnerships and engagement as catalyst drivers of the initiatives needed.

Empowering Partnerships

Forests of the World works through partnerships that strengthen local leadership and organisational capacity in favour of forest conservation. We primarily collaborate with Indigenous Peoples, forest dependent communities and Civil Society Organisations, building on their own determination of needs, knowledge and priorities. Our partnerships are grounded in trust, fairness, shared accountability, mutual learning – recognising and addressing power imbalances – to promote genuine local ownership and leadership.

We also unite these partners with actors across other sectors: Governments, academia and commercial partners, to combine knowledge and resources for greater impact. Strong, transparent, and inclusive organisations are the best defence against inequality and shrinking civic space. By supporting local change agents to lead and sustain action among multiple stakeholders, we help ensure that the fight for forests, livelihoods, and rights continues and multiplies beyond our direct involvement.

People Make the Difference

Forests of the World mobilises people to act for the forests – from Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities to our members, students, specialists, companies, the general public, and decision-makers. Sustainable change depends on collective

engagement that supports legitimate governance, responsible management, sustainable livelihoods and rights.

We engage people not only to raise awareness but to enable action. We directly facilitate a platform for engagement of the Danish public and national and international partners. We inspire individuals and institutions to change practices, influence decisions, and strengthen movements for forest conservation. Our engagement seeks not just more voices, but the right ones — informed, committed and connected across age, gender, ethnicity, and place.

Youth is a key focus as future leaders and digital change-makers. By empowering them to learn, innovate, and take ownership, we help ensure long-term commitment to sustainable development.

By fostering engagement built on knowledge and shared responsibility, we create lasting support and collective action that amplifies the global impact for forests and people.

Forests of the World

Rooted in Forty Years of Action

Forests of the World builds on a more than 40 years' of history since her foundation in 1983 under the name *Regnskovsgruppen Nepenthes*. The founders were volunteer-based biology students from the University of Aarhus in Denmark. Although many both contextual and internal changes have happened along the way, the organisation is still based on the backbone of evidence-based knowledge and the engagement of volunteers to leverage our work – nationally, internationally and globally.

We strive to increase the support of the Danish public and authorities to global rights-based forest conservation. This requires a focused effort to increase awareness of our cause. We are enhancing our capacities to document, learn and systematically engage based on the knowledge we and our partners produce.

Working Close to the Forests

We are convinced that forests are best conserved when people close to them work for their conservation. We continue our journey to increase localisation of our activities through strengthened local leadership.

Within our organisation, we are committed to continuously adapt and strengthen decentralisation in two ways: Geographically, to increase our presence close to our partners, and in decision-making, to increase the effectiveness of our joint efforts.

Investing in Change

Achieving long-lasting impact in a contentious world requires a robust diversified economy. Increasing our impact requires not only investing in monitoring, learning and knowledge-based outreach – it also requires increased funding from known and new sources.

Our members and their contributions form the core foundation of our operation. We aim to grow this base and complement it with additional private funding from foundations, commercial sponsorships, crowdfunding and from our webshop. This requires increased awareness of our brand and cause.

We will also seek to further consolidate our partnership with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and engage with other European and multilateral funding mechanisms in order to maximise our impact in the forests.

We recognise that all funds are entrusted to us by individuals and institutions that believe in us and our mission. We are committed to honouring this trust by ensuring we make the most of it.

Our Compass Always Points to the Forest

Our compass guides how we work. It reminds us who we are and keeps us true to our values in everything we do – from partnerships and programmes to daily decisions.

1. We put the forest above all	We believe the forest has a value in itself. Forest must be related to all we do for the climate, biodiversity, equality, governance, management, livelihoods, and rights.
2. We are one among many	We believe we are one species among others in the natural world. We belong to the world, the world does not belong to us.
3. We recognise our privileges	We do not take our privileges for granted. We will handle privileges accordingly and try to put them at disposal for others, where they can open doors or provide access to something needed, promoting non-discrimination.
4. We keep our feet on the ground	We might live far from the forest, but we all know it by heart. We understand the local context and retain close connections

	to forest and peoples.
5. We respect local knowledge	Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities have valuable knowledge and cosmovision. We will learn from them and recognise that formal education is not exhaustive.
6. We see the forest, not just the trees	The threats to forests often originate beyond the forest itself, and planting more trees alone cannot solve them. We dare to address the root causes driving deforestation.