

# Climate Disinformation in Indonesia

## Prioritising Development Over Indigenous Peoples' Vulnerability



# **Climate Disinformation in Indonesia: Prioritising Development Over Indigenous Peoples' Vulnerability**

Asia Centre

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# PREFACE

Asia Centre is pleased to present the report ***Climate Disinformation in Indonesia: Prioritising Development Over Indigenous Peoples' Vulnerability***, produced in partnership with International Media Support (IMS). This publication is part of a broader series assessing the impact of climate disinformation on Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. The series comprises one baseline study for each country and a regional report.

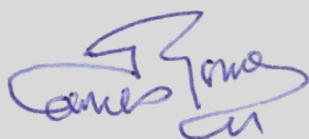
This report examines how information disorder leads to specific forms of climate disinformation, which in turn impacts IPs' ability to preserve their cultural identity. It offers focused recommendations for a variety of groups, including international bodies, INGOs, governments, and media and technology companies.

As an increasingly pressing issue in the Asia-Pacific, climate disinformation emerges from a broader rise of disinformation both online and offline. This form of information disorder uses various channels to spread false environmental narratives. Its intent is to deceive the public and distort climate discourse, which ultimately contributes to the marginalisation of IPs and the negation of their identity by excluding them from climate decision-making. Disinformation, climate change and IPs' rights have each been individually studied at national and international levels, however the impact of climate disinformation on IPs' ability to safeguard self-determination and cultural continuity remains under-researched. This project seeks to address that gap.

The spread of climate disinformation is especially alarming for IPs, who often live in the forested areas most vulnerable to climate and environmental crises. As a result, they face a disproportionate level of environmental, social and political threats. This report series directly addresses this issue by examining how disinformation circulates both online (through mass and social media) and offline (through community-level interactions). It looks at the direct consequences, such as exclusion from decision-making, criminalisation under conservation laws, forced evictions and physical violence, as well as the broader factors that allow these outcomes to occur. In doing so, the series helps us better understand how climate disinformation strips IP communities of their self-determination and cultural survival.

Asia Centre hopes that this report – and the other in the series – will use the lens of climate disinformation to provide international, national and local stakeholders with new understanding for protecting the environment and, in doing so, for securing the rights and identity of IP communities.

Sincerely,



**Dr James Gomez**  
Regional Director  
Asia Centre

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Indonesia, Indigenous Peoples (IPs) comprise an estimated 18 to 26% (50 to 70 million) of the country's 284.5 million population ([International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2025](#); [Statistics Indonesia, 2025](#)). Despite their significant demographic presence, IPs face deepening structural vulnerabilities as the government prioritises national development agendas.

To achieve ambitious economic growth targets, President Prabowo Subianto is continuing the previous administration's New Developmentalist strategy, centred on state-led industrialisation and rapid economic expansion, now reframed as a "human-centric" ([Subianto, 2026](#)) approach to development. In practice, this framing functions largely as a façade to position extractive development as necessary, by presenting it as the only pathway to national development, and benevolent, by claiming that it benefits Indigenous Peoples (IPs). However, this rhetoric obscures the ways in which such projects entrench and exacerbate their socio-cultural, environmental and climate vulnerabilities.

Climate disinformation is playing a key role in this effort by enabling the subordination of IPs' rights and interests to "national development" priorities. By positioning Indigenous practices in opposition to state-led development, climate disinformation results in the justification of IPs' marginalisation and exclusion from decision-making in their own lands and territories.

This report addresses the systemic prioritisation of development over IP vulnerability by examining the mechanisms and impacts of climate disinformation on IP communities in Indonesia. It provides three main contributions: identifying primary forms of climate disinformation, examining their specific impacts on IPs, and developing evidence-based recommendations for national, international and local stakeholders.

Key forms of climate disinformation identified in Indonesia include:

- Corporate greenwashing, involving the misleading presentation of environmental information to construct a deceptive image of corporate environmental responsibility.
- Promotion of false climate solutions, whereby government-friendly news agencies promote state-led development projects that exacerbate societal injustice and environmental violations as legitimate climate action.
- Appeals to economic growth, in which state- and corporate-led development projects are portrayed as essential to national progress, while Indigenous practices are discredited as obstacles.
- Deflecting accountability for climate change, including climate conspiracy narratives and denial of environmental commitments, to obscure responsibility and downplay environmental obligations.

Key impacts of climate disinformation on IPs in Indonesia include:

1. Exclusion from environmental decision-making, as the re-centralisation of environmental governance and manufacturing of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) marginalises IP voices.
2. Forced displacement, often justified by corporate and state actors as necessary for national development.

3. Undermining of Indigenous knowledge, marked by the erosion of cultural heritage through economic-growth narratives that stigmatise Indigenous land-use practices as outdated and ineffective.
4. Criminalisation of IPs, including the misuse of resource governance laws and Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) to target IPs and environmental defenders.

Recommendations for key stakeholders to address climate disinformation and its impacts on IPs in Indonesia:

- United Nations (UN) bodies and international human-rights mechanisms should strengthen treaty compliance, enhance engagement by Special Rapporteurs and integrate climate disinformation within human rights monitoring to support Indonesia in aligning economic development and climate action with the protection of IPs' rights.
- Relevant ministries of the Government of Indonesia should recognise the distinct identity of IPs at the constitutional level and prioritise the adoption of the IP Bill to establish a comprehensive framework for the protection and promotion of IP rights.
- International Non-governmental Organisations should submit joint reports to UN mechanisms, collaborate with local civil society organisations on community-led responses to climate disinformation, while amplifying Indigenous voices in the media.
- CSOs should document and report climate disinformation targeting IPs, engage trusted religious leaders to share accurate messages, offer culturally relevant digital literacy and FPIC training and work with INGOs and legal groups to back customary land rights and aid Indigenous defenders facing threats.
- The media sector should prioritise in-depth reporting on environment and IP issues, with a strong emphasis on constructive journalism that would create spaces for IP voices to share their voices, highlighting their traditional knowledge and practices.
- Technology companies should enforce stricter moderation policies and adjust their algorithms to limit the spread of disinformation and give visibility to Indigenous content.
- Indigenous communities should identify, document and report climate disinformation through inter-community networks and independent media platforms, supporting the dissemination of accurate climate information and strengthening Indigenous-led advocacy.

Together, these recommendations promote a more inclusive and evidence-based approach to climate governance. They emphasise the urgent need for multi-stakeholder engagement to increase transparency and the centring of IPs in the planning and implementation of national development projects in Indonesia. Adopting these recommendations is essential for all relevant stakeholders positioned to address disinformation within a context where national developmental priorities are placed above IPs' rights. Doing so will not only help mitigate the spread and impact of climate disinformation but also protect the rights, knowledge and livelihoods of IPs that face structural vulnerabilities.

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>APRIL</b>	Asia Pacific Resources International Limited
<b>CIPP</b>	Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FoLU</b>	Forestry and Other Land Use
<b>FPIC</b>	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse Gas
<b>IKN</b>	National Capital City
<b>(I)NGO</b>	International Non-governmental Organisation
<b>IP</b>	Indigenous People
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>LGBTQI+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex
<b>MHA</b>	Customary Law Community
<b>MIND ID</b>	Mining Industry Indonesia
<b>PSN</b>	National Strategic Project
<b>REDD+</b>	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
<b>RGE</b>	Royal Golden Eagle
<b>SLAPP</b>	Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation
<b>SR</b>	Special Rapporteur
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDRIP</b>	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



# 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, climate disinformation has been systematically spread by state and corporate actors to reinforce the prioritisation of rapid development and economic growth pursued by successive governments and significantly expanded under Joko Widodo's administration, a trajectory that continues today. This has served to legitimise the erasure and delegitimisation of Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) knowledge systems and environmental stewardship in the name of "development," despite the escalating climate impacts of such policies. This report examines the dynamics of climate disinformation in Indonesia and specifically its impact on IPs to address the intersecting issues of climate change, disinformation and IP marginalisation. This chapter begins by providing context on the situation of IPs, the threats posed by climate change, the digitalisation of the media and the rise of disinformation in Indonesia.

## 1.1. Methodology

The research for this report consisted of three phases: desk research, field research and review. First, desk research was conducted between August and November 2025 to examine the state of IPs, climate change, media landscape and climate disinformation in Indonesia. The research was instrumental in defining terms and themes, framing the study's scope and identifying knowledge gaps. It drew on a range of primary and secondary sources in Bahasa Indonesia (and English), including international and national legal frameworks, national development and climate strategies and reports by international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and media outlets.

Second, during the field research phase, the Asia Centre team conducted 12 online key informant interviews (KIIs) between October 2025 and January 2026 to address knowledge gaps identified in the first phase. All respondents<sup>1</sup> were Bahasa Indonesia speakers and included representatives from Indigenous communities and Indigenous CSOs as well as professionals from the media and academic sectors (see Annexe I for respondent profiles). A convening held in Bali with representatives of Indigenous communities was attended by a representative from the Asia Centre team on 29 October 2025, to gather insights into Indigenous perspectives on land issues.

Third, following desk research and interviews, a draft was sent by the Asia Centre team to IMS for an initial review on 30 November 2025. Asia Centre then conducted two focus group discussions (FGD), amongst representatives of Indigenous CSOs, on 11 December 2025 and 7 January 2026 (profile of FGD participants in Annexe 2) to validate preliminary findings and inform policy recommendations. Following the national convening on 21 January 2026 in Jakarta, Indonesia, to present and validate the key findings, Asia Centre incorporated feedback from the convening for the finalisation of the report.

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<sup>1</sup> The identities of the respondents have been anonymised due to safety and security reasons.

## Key Terms

“False information” can be understood through three interrelated concepts: **Disinformation**, **Misinformation**, and **Malinformation**. The key difference between them lies in the intent to deceive.

**Disinformation** refers to false information that is intentionally created and spread to mislead or manipulate audiences ([United Nations Development Programme, 2022](#)).

**Malinformation**, while based on real information, is shared with harmful intent, often by distorting context, exposing private data, or weaponising facts to undermine individuals or groups ([Ibid.](#))

**Misinformation**, in contrast, involves the sharing of false or misleading content without the intent to deceive; those sharing it may genuinely believe the information to be true ([Ibid.](#))

**Climate disinformation** is false content deliberately spread to mislead people about climate change and deforestation for political, financial, or ideological gain by those with vested interests in denying its reality or impacts ([UNDP, 2025](#)).

## 1.2. Background

This section examines two key elements shaping the impact of climate disinformation on IPs in Indonesia. First, it provides an overview of IP communities, including their geographical concentration, livelihoods and the persistent issues in Indonesia’s legislative framework affecting IPs’ recognition and their ancestral lands. Second, it highlights how climate change and deforestation, worsened by the state’s developmentalism focused on growth acceleration, pose significant threats to their way of life since IPs inhabit the country’s most ecologically vulnerable and forested areas.

### 1.2.1. Indigenous Peoples in Indonesia

As of 2025, Indonesia has a total population of approximately 284.5 million people ([Statistics Indonesia, 2025](#)), with IPs consisting of around 18 to 26% (50 to 70 million) of the population, belonging to over 1,000 distinct communities ([International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2025](#)). The government formally recognises 1,331 ethnic tribes<sup>2</sup> and around 718 languages ([Search for Common Ground, 2024](#)).

IPs in Indonesia typically reside on their ancestral lands and waters, sustaining themselves through communal activities that depend on forests and natural resources ([International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2024](#); [Asrawijaya, 2024](#)). IPs consider themselves as the protectors, rather than owners, of the land, the sea and the forests ([Ibid.](#); KII01). Their geographical diversity shapes distinct cultural identities, livelihoods and relationships with natural resources.

Kalimantan, located in the central-northern part of Indonesia, was identified as the region with the most Indigenous groups, for a total of 789;<sup>3</sup> followed by Sulawesi, which lies east of Kalimantan and is home to 670 Indigenous groups; and Sumatra, located in the western part of Indonesia, with 413 ([International Fund for Agricultural Development & International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2024](#)).

Different ethnic groups residing in Eastern islands, namely: Sulawesi, Maluku Islands, Nusa Tenggara Islands and Papua, showcase the traditional Melanesian cultural distinction between coastal and

<sup>2</sup> Note the use of the term “ethnic groups” rather than “Indigenous” (groups, communities, etc) as there is no official information on Indigenous groups. The conflation of the two terms overlooks the distinct cultural identities and vulnerabilities that define IPs under international standards, as will be further expanded below.

<sup>3</sup> As per the definition of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

interior communities. The former relies on fishing and trade, while the latter rely on agriculture. The islands are populated by a number of distinct groups, including the *Moluccas*, *Ambonese*, *Asmat* and *Dani* peoples (Wolters, 2025). West Papua, comprising the six provinces of Papua, Central Papua, Highland Papua, South Papua, West Papua and Southwest Papua, is identified as the largest and most ethnically diverse province, comprising more than 250 Indigenous languages and more than half of its population being of Indigenous Melanesian descent (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2019).

Western islands, namely: Sumatra, Java, Bali, Madura and the Riau Islands and Bangka Belitung Islands, can be broadly grouped into three main categories. The first group, historically Hinduised but now primarily Muslim, makes up around 60% of the national population and comprises wet-rice growers of inland Java, Madura and Bali. It includes the Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese and Balinese peoples, further divided into ethnic subgroups (McDivitt, 2026). The second group, the more deeply Islamised coastal communities, is ethnically diverse, comprising the Malays of Sumatra as well as the Makassarese and Bugis from southern Celebes. The Makassarese and Bugis include rice farmers and maritime peoples with a long-standing boat-making tradition (Ibid.). Communities within the third group, constituted of inland shifting cultivators, tend to be small and relatively isolated, reflecting considerable cultural diversity. The latter include the Toraja, Batak and Dayak communities (Ibid.).

Given the number and diversity of IPs, Indonesia has ratified several key human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (ratified in 2005), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966b) (ratified in 2006), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) (ratified in 1999) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) (ratified in 1984).

Despite these commitments, there are ongoing concerns regarding Indonesia's compliance with its international obligations. While Indonesia is a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007), it claims that the UNDRIP definition of "IPs" is inapplicable to the Indonesian context, arguing that most Indonesians are already Indigenous and therefore possess equal rights (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, nd.). For the same reason, Indonesia has not ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention No 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989).

Recommendations issued during the Universal Periodic Review processes have consistently urged Indonesia to secure the legal and practical rights of IPs and forest-dependent communities to their lands and resources (Human Rights Council, 2008; 2012; 2017; 2022). It is also important to note that Indonesia's past refusal of visits<sup>4</sup> by UN mechanisms has notably led to a scarcity of reports directly addressing the intersection of IPs' rights, climate change and climate disinformation within the country. Nevertheless, IPs' livelihoods have been mentioned in a report by the Special Rapporteur (SR) on the right to food, which highlighted the need to provide small-holder farmers, including IPs, with access and control over land, water and other natural resources to ensure their food security (United Nations General Assembly, 2018). In addition, a joint statement was released by several SRs,<sup>5</sup> expressing concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in Papua, citing abuses against Indigenous Papuans (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Among the UN Special Procedure mandate holders who have requested an official visit to the Government of Indonesia are the SR on cultural rights (2011, 2017), SR on IP rights (2014, 2016, 2024), SR on development (2023, October 2024, December 2024) and the Working Group on business and human rights (2021) (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> These included SRs (1) on the rights of IPs, (2) on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and (3) on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

These recommendations and statements align with conditions on the ground. At the national level, there are only limited levels of recognition and protection accorded to IPs. Indonesia's national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), reflects the *Pancasila* (Five Principles)<sup>6</sup>, the state's ideological basis, enshrining differences as a source of shared identity and mutual respect within the broader framework of the Indonesian nation ([Antara, 2023](#)).

In line with this philosophy, Indonesia has sought to incorporate IPs within its national law. However, its complex framework for the recognition of IPs<sup>7</sup> has fallen short of UNDRIP standards since such recognition is made conditional and subordinated to national development interests. Rather than affirming their rights and recognition, IPs are explicitly mentioned in the Constitution (1945) following the 2002 amendment in Articles 18B(2) as such: “the State recognises and respects [IPs] along with their traditional customary rights *as long as* these remain in existence and are in accordance with the societal development and the principles of the Unitary State”. Article 28I(3) further states “the cultural identities and rights of [IPs] shall be respected *in accordance with* the development of times and civilisations”.

This conditional recognition has historical roots in debates during the Dutch colonial period, when *adat* law<sup>8</sup> theory was employed by scholars and legal practitioners to oppose the colonial government-facilitated communal land appropriation by foreign companies ([Bedner & Arizona, 2019](#)). Such encroachment was justified through the doctrine that any land not actively cultivated by locals constituted “waste land” belonging to the state ([Ibid.](#)).

Following independence in 1945, this colonial state-domain logic persisted, resulting in the subordination of *adat* law to state interests oriented toward national development and the creation of a unified land law framework ([Ibid.](#)), notwithstanding the existence of multiple laws that ostensibly protect ancestral lands – which form a core component of Indigenous identity and rights. These include the Law on Basic Agrarian Principles (1960), recognising customary land rights. The provisions of the law were more recently spelt out by Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/PUU-X/2012 (2012), which officially recognises the distinct nature of customary forests and State Forests through a landmark ruling in 2013. Similarly, the Law on Environmental Protection and Management (2009), also known as “Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) Law”, affirms the participation and protection of traditional communities in environmental governance; while the Law on Villages (2014) formally recognises “customary villages” and IPs’ self-governance. Lastly, the Law on Plantations (2014) grants IPs a consultative role in land and resource management.

Yet, the subordination of IPs to development priorities is a persistent struggle in Indonesia. This enduring tension is evident in President Prabowo’s Land Reform Programme, launched in October 2024. Avowedly aimed as a poverty reduction and welfare-enhancing initiative, the programme continues to employ the “unused lands” doctrine to seize customary lands for national development (see Chapter 2.3) ([Ramadhany, 2025](#)).

Moreover, the practical implementation of customary land rights is hindered by structural and administrative barriers, such as unclear land titling procedures, overlapping claims with state forest

<sup>6</sup> The Five Principles include: (1) Belief in one God who is great and unique, (2) Just and civilised humanity, (3) Unity of Indonesia, (4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives and (5) Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

<sup>7</sup> A term used by the Indonesian government to refer to IPs is “Customary Law Communities (*Masyarakat Hukum Adat*: MHA)”. However, for consistency across this report series, and within this report’s scope, these communities will be uniformly referred to as “IPs”, despite varying terminology in other reports and legal documents as well as their official and unofficial translation. Any references to MHA are only for the purpose of denoting how the government officially categorises these communities.

<sup>8</sup> *Adat* law refers to the unwritten systems of customary rules and social norms that govern the lives of distinct Indigenous communities in Indonesia ([Bedner & Arizona, 2019](#)).

classifications and bureaucratic inertia. As a consequence, only 332,500 out of 23 million hectares of customary forests identified by the Ancestral Domain Registration Agency have been formally recognised (Jong, 2025). This has led to numerous violations of land rights in Indonesia. Between 2014 and 2024, 687 cases were recorded in Indigenous lands covering a total of 11 million hectares and resulting in the criminal persecution of 925 community members (Jong, 2024). In November 2025, Prabowo's administration pledged to recognise 1.4 million hectares of customary forests by 2029, quadrupling the current amount officially recognised (Jong, 2025). However, this pledge has been met with scepticism, due to the government's systemic prioritisation of national development interests over Indigenous vulnerabilities.

IPs' vulnerabilities in Indonesia would be significantly reduced by an IP Bill, a comprehensive piece of legislation bridging the gap between existing MHA recognition and the UNDRIP definition of IPs (KII07; 09; 12; FGD02; Arizona & Cahyadi, 2013). KII07, a representative of an environmental INGO, elaborates on this legislative dissonance:

*"The government insists that "we are all Indigenous". This is unfair toward [IPs] ... Having an IP Bill would give us a legal basis to bring their cases to court. Currently, we can only appeal to international mechanisms, because Indonesian courts claim IPs lack legal status. Recognition would give us grounds to seek justice (KII07)."*

However, any attempts to bring this legislation forward have been unsuccessful, as it has been stagnating in Parliament with no significant progress since 2003 (Asian Society of International Law, 2025). While policymakers attribute this significant delay to the difficulty of mapping customary forests, rights groups blame it on the reluctance of political elites to include IPs in the control over land and resources (Jong, 2025b).

Despite Indonesia's international and domestic commitments, the lack of legal recognition of IPs hinders real progress in the mitigation of their structural vulnerabilities. This is further exacerbated by mounting climate threats and the state's prioritisation of national development over IPs' needs and vulnerabilities, which will be further explored in the next section.

### 1.2.2. Climate Change and Deforestation in Indonesia

Identified as highly vulnerable to climate change, Indonesia is among the top third of countries globally facing substantial climate risk, particularly from widespread flooding and extreme heat (World Bank, 2021). In the last three decades, the country has experienced an average temperature increase of 0.32°C per decade, particularly in Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua (Ibid.). The nationwide minimum and maximum temperatures are projected to rise by about 1.2°C and 1.1°C, respectively, between 2040 and 2059 (Ibid.). Between 1991 and 2020, rainfall patterns shifted significantly (Ibid.), with regions such as Kalimantan, Java, Sumatra and Papua experiencing increased rainfall, while western and southern Sumatra, eastern Java, southern Sulawesi, the Maluku Islands, western Papua and Bali saw declines (As-syakur et al., 2013). These changes have contributed to a rise in hydro-meteorological disasters, which made up 92% of Indonesia's 2,342 recorded disasters in 2016, primarily consisting of floods, landslides and light tornadoes (Republic of Indonesia, 2020; European Union, 2022).

Rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns are compounded by other severe climate impacts across Indonesia. Rising sea levels will potentially lead to the loss of Indonesia's small islands and the reduction of its coastal land, particularly around Java Island and the eastern part of Indonesia, where sea levels have risen by up to 0.8 meters over the past century ([European Union, 2022](#); [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2021](#)). From 2070 to 2100, 4.2 million people are estimated to be exposed to permanent flooding ([World Bank, 2021](#)).

Climate change impacts are exacerbated by deforestation, as demonstrated in Table 1, largely due to forest encroachment. Data shows that, since 2002, Indonesia's total tree cover has decreased by 11.2%. Despite a slowdown in deforestation between 2021 and 2024, forest loss persists. The drivers of deforestation in Indonesia are identified as the large-scale oil palm plantations (23%), conversion of forests to grassland/shrubland (20%), small-scale agriculture (15%), timber plantation (14%), among others ([Austin et al., 2019](#); [Shahreen, 2022](#)). Their reliance on the environment for their livelihoods, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs makes IPs disproportionately vulnerable to climate change.

**Table 1: Tree Cover Loss in Indonesia Between 2002 and 2024<sup>9</sup>**

Year	Primary Forest Extent Remaining	Tree Cover Loss Due to Deforestation (Kha)
2002	99.7%	855
2005	98.4%	1.180
2010	95.5%	1.280
2015	92.0%	1.750
2020	89.6%	962
2024	88.5%	1.120

**Source:** [Global Forest Watch, 2025](#)

In response to climate impacts, Indonesia has signed international climate agreements and adopted national policies; yet, compliance and implementation remain weak and inconsistent. At the international level, Indonesia is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992) (ratified in 2004) and the Paris Agreement (2015) (ratified in 2016). Under the Paris Agreement's transparency commitments, Indonesia outlined its ambition to peak its national emissions by 2030 and target net-zero emissions by 2050 ([UNFCCC, 2021](#)). Despite its international commitments, Indonesia's implementation of its policies and ambitions is lagging in practice ([Institution for Essential Services Reform, 2024](#)). The country's ability to balance its economic development goals with effective climate action remains a significant and ongoing challenge ([Sulistiawati, 2024](#)).

At the national level, Indonesia has adopted several frameworks aimed at addressing climate change, including the Climate Change Sectoral Roadmap ([United Nations Development Programme, 2009](#)) and the National Action Plan Addressing Climate Change ([Republic of Indonesia, 2014](#)). Indonesia has also established multiple frameworks for forest conservation. These include the Social Forestry National Programme (2015), the National Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) Strategy 2021-2030 (2022) and the Forestry and Other Land Use Net Sink 2030 (2023),<sup>10</sup> which will be further explored in Chapter 2.2.

<sup>9</sup> Data for all three indices is available from 2002, the earliest common year, to 2024, the most recent year.

<sup>10</sup> In 2024, the functions of the former Ministry of Environment and Forestry were split, and the Ministry of Forestry was established.



Although Indonesia's national frameworks reflect a commitment to tackling climate change and promoting sustainable forest resource management, their overall effectiveness is constrained by weak enforcement mechanisms, a strong dependency on coal energy resources and the prioritisation of economic development over environmental sustainability (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2024).

Of particular note, climate change acceleration in Indonesia is exacerbated by the state's developmentalist economic model (or "developmentalism"), which refers to a state-led strategy aimed at rapid economic growth and characterised by a large government presence in industrial development and expansion (Seeth & Suryomenggolo, 2024; Gellert, 2019; Warburton, 2019).

This developmentalist economic model crystallised as a defining feature of the country's political economy under President Joko Widodo (or "Jokowi") (2014–2024) (Ibid., 2019), dubbed "New Developmentalism". Through the Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Economic Development 2011–2025 (2011), Indonesia set out several industrial plans and policies aimed at positioning the country among the top ten advanced economies in the world (Ibid.). The most prevalent feature of Jokowi's development plan has been the emphasis on industrialisation and infrastructure modernisation (Jong, 2025c; Warburton, 2019).

As part of the developmentalist agenda, Widodo signed Presidential Regulation No. 3 (2016) concerning the Acceleration of Implementation of National Strategic Projects (PSN), outlining a list of priority projects to be developed under the PSN framework, including the construction of the Nusantara Capital City (IKN) (see Chapter 3.1 and 3.3) and Rempang Eco-City Area (see Chapter 2.3). Between 2016 and 2024, 233 PSN projects were launched, with a total investment of around USD 378 billion (Jong, 2025c). Most of these state-promoted development projects are supported by state-owned or private business enterprises (Aji & Khudi, 2021). In addition, to facilitate investments, Jokowi's administration has enacted the Act No. 11 on Job Creation (or colloquially referred to as the Omnibus Law on Job Creation) (2020). The Omnibus Law amended 79 existing laws in order to streamline regulations concerning business requirements and processes and attract investments (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 2020).

After assuming the presidency in 2024, Prabowo Subianto – having close links to the Jokowi administration through dynastic and marital ties (Buehler, 2025) – built upon and expanded the New Developmentalist agenda. Though maintaining the former administration's statist developmentalism, Prabowo is branding Indonesia's new development plan as "human-centric" (Reuters, 2024). Nevertheless, social redistribution programmes under the "human-centric model" have been criticised as perpetuating the subordination of social protection to the state's development priorities, failing to address structural inequalities (Julian, 2025). Additionally, the PSN framework upheld by Prabowo has drawn criticism for bypassing regulatory processes, fast-tracking approvals, reducing oversight and granting the government authority to evict entire communities (Jong, 2025c). Key features of Prabowo's governance include the re-centralisation of political power and decision-making (Julian, 2025), as well as increasing cooperation between the military and the government to secure state-critical objectives, such as PSNs (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2025).

Indonesia's current economic model, therefore, continuing on Jokowi's legacy while aligning with the long-standing subordination of IPs' right under developmental priorities (See Section 1.2.1), contributes to the increasing marginalisation of IPs (Jong, 2024b; Seeth & Suryomenggolo, 2024), directly undermining their ability to protect their natural environment and preserve their traditional way of life (KII01; 04; 07; 08; 09; 10). In part, the PSN framework, which prioritises ease of investment over social and environmental safeguards, is leading to development-induced displacement and resettlement, which consequently bring increased landlessness, joblessness and poverty among local communities (Aji & Khudi, 2021), as expressed by KII01:

*“What worries me is that economic pressure keeps increasing. Investors are expanding fast, and the government often prioritises short-term economic growth over sustainability. If we don’t act quickly to strengthen Indigenous rights and recognition, we might lose more forests – and along with them, cultures that cannot be replaced (KII09).”*

Furthermore, these dynamics are compounded by climate disinformation, which has been rising alongside Indonesia’s increasing digitalisation of the media sector, explored in the following section.

### 1.3. Indonesia’s Digitalisation and the Rise of Disinformation

This section delves into the main factors driving the rise of climate disinformation in Indonesia. First, it analyses the nation’s digital transformation, which has reshaped the media landscape and created an environment conducive to the spread of disinformation. Then, it explores deeper underlying causes that intensify this spread, ultimately contributing to the circulation of climate disinformation that adversely affects IPs in the country.

#### 1.3.1. The Digitalisation of the Media Sector

The widespread accessibility of the internet in the 2010s has profoundly reshaped Indonesia’s media landscape, leading to the fast-paced digitalisation of traditional media outlets accompanied by the rapid rise of social media and instant messaging platforms.

Nearly 100% of the Indonesian population understands Bahasa Indonesia ([Statistics Indonesia, 2020](#)), which is required by law to be used in mass media for public announcements and advertisements distributed in Indonesia. Alongside this, there exists a range of English-language and local-language news sources.

**Table 2:** Major Indonesian Digital Media Outlets and Their Primary Publishing Languages

Detik	Published in Bahasa Indonesia
Kompas Online	Published in Bahasa Indonesia
Tribunnews	Published in Bahasa Indonesia
TVOne News Online	Published in Bahasa Indonesia
Liputan 6	Published in Bahasa Indonesia
Metro TV News Online	Published in Bahasa Indonesia, with content also available in English and Mandarin Chinese
Kumparan	Published in Bahasa Indonesia
Tempo	Published predominantly in Bahasa Indonesia, with content also available in English
Seputar Indonesia	Published in Bahasa Indonesia

Source: [Steele, 2024](#)

Indonesia's media landscape is expansive, with 3,886 online media outlets (77.43%), 549 radio stations (10.94%), 527 newspapers (10.50%), 47 local television channels (0.95%) and 10 national television channels (0.2%) ([Reporters without Borders, 2025](#)). The landscape is largely dominated by conglomerates owned by private companies ([Masduki et al., 2023](#)). Around three-quarters of the coverage area, audience share and advertising revenue are controlled by three major companies, namely: MNC Group, Emtek and Visi Media Asia ([Ibid.](#)).

Traditional mass media is experiencing a drop in popularity driven by digital disruption, shrinking ad revenues and shifting consumer behaviours ([Jakarta Globe, 2025](#)). Only 57% of the population relies on television for news ([Newman et al., 2022](#)). Print media has the smallest audience among other media, reaching only 17% of the population ([Ibid.](#)). This environment has led to the shutting down of major traditional media outlets, including *Koran Tempo* (2020), *Suara Pembaruan* (2021), *Harian Republika* (2022), and *Koran SINDO* (2023) for print closures and to the complete digitalisation of the *Jakarta Globe*, which ceased its print edition in 2015 ([Jakarta Globe, 2025](#)). TV Stations like *TV7*, *TPI*, *VH1 Indonesia* and *Bloomberg TV* have also had to shut down or carry out mass layoffs ([Ibid.](#)).

The rapid adoption of the Internet (Table 3), social media (Table 4)<sup>11</sup> and instant messaging applications have driven this digital transformation.

**Table 3:** Internet Penetration Index in Indonesia from 2000 to 2024<sup>12</sup>

2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2024
1%	4%	11%	22%	54%	73%

Source: World Bank ([2023](#))

**Table 4:** Social Media Penetration in Indonesia from 2015 to 2025<sup>13</sup>

Year	Social Media Penetration	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok	X	Linkedin
2015	28%	14%	7%	–	11%	7%
2020	59%	82%	79%	25%	56%	35%
2022	68.9%	81.3%	84.8%	63.1%	58.3%	29.4%
2025	50.2%	83%	84.6%	77.4%	50.3%	26.4%

Source: Kemp ([2015](#); [2020](#); [2022](#); [2025](#))

<sup>11</sup> The gap between 73% Internet penetration (2024) and 50.2% social media penetration (2025) reflects broader Internet use beyond social media, along with differences in user behaviour, age groups, and data collection methods.

<sup>12</sup> Data for 2024 is the most recent.

<sup>13</sup> Social media usage statistics in Indonesia first became available in 2015. “–” refers to the fact that the platform had not been created during the survey year.

Among instant messaging platforms, WhatsApp is the most widely used, with 91.7% of Internet users reporting to use it, followed by Telegram (61.6%), Messenger (50.5%) and LINE (19.3%) (Kemp, 2025). Regarding the sources of information, urban populations primarily get their news from online and social media sources, with 60% of Indonesians reporting getting news from social platforms in 2022 (Newman et al., 2024). 63.5% relied on social media as the main source of climate crisis information (Kurnia et al., 2024). 34% share news via messaging apps and social media, with WhatsApp being used by 46% of those who reported using social media to share news, followed by YouTube (41%), Facebook (35%), Instagram (29%), TikTok (29%) and X (12%) (Newman et al., 2024).

There is a significant geographical divide that strongly affects the way in which Indonesians access news. High internet penetration primarily concentrates in urban areas, leaving rural and remote Indonesians, particularly IPs, susceptible to being cut off from internet access (Widianingsih et al., 2023).

There is also a significant generational divide influencing the way in which Indonesians access news. Older users (aged 55 and above) still heavily rely on traditional media, particularly on TV, for news consumption; while younger users (40% of Indonesians are below 25) prefer social media (Leake, 2025; Park et al., 2025).

There are varying levels of trust in news sources among the population across platforms. Social media garnered the highest trust at 30.8%, while online media lagged significantly behind at 9.7%. Both print media and radio registered minimal trust, at just 1% each (Ghifari, 2023). While 43.5% of the population reports trusting television information (Ibid.).

Indonesia's swift digital transformation opens up new opportunities for new sectors and communities, including IPs. Digital platforms have helped Indigenous activists raise awareness about environmental degradation and human rights (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2024). A key example is the 2024 #AllEyesonPapua campaign, which spotlighted the devastating impacts of deforestation for oil palm plantations on Awyu customary forests and their populations (Jong, 2024c; BBC, 2024). Similarly, the 2016 Youth Act Campaign, initiated by a Dayak activist and filmmaker, mobilised Indigenous youth to demand climate justice and engage in climate action, directly addressing the recurring forest fires and haze in Kalimantan since 1997 (Green Policy Platform, nd.).

While representing an opportunity to amplify Indigenous voices, digitalisation also creates an enabling environment for the dissemination of climate disinformation.

### 1.3.2. The Rise of Disinformation

With the rise of digitalisation, online disinformation has become a significant issue in Indonesia. In 2024 alone, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology's Digital Application Directorate detected a total of 1,923 pieces of general fake content (Merdeka, 2025). Between 2018 and 2023, a total of 11,642 hoax contents were identified, with health-related misinformation being the most prevalent, accounting for 2,357 cases (Putra et al., 2024). Political disinformation is also a major concern: during the election period from July 2023 to March 2024, 3,235 election-related fake contents were detected (Antara, 2024).

To tackle disinformation, Kominfo has implemented several initiatives and training programmes. These include the National Digital Literacy Movement in 2018, aimed at empowering the public to critically evaluate and verify digital content (International Telecommunication Union, n.d.). A "Kominfo Monitoring Unit" was also established in 2018 to monitor hoax and disinformation circulating on the digital space (The Jakarta Post, 2023). Ahead of the 2024 elections, Kominfo initiated several hoax

immunity training, including the “#Fighting Misinformation for a Healthy Pemilu” workshops ([Antara, 2022](#)) and established a social media monitoring task force, composed of several government agencies, tasked with monitoring social media and ordering the removal of hoaxes and divisive content ([Freedom House, 2024](#)).

In terms of independent monitoring mechanisms, several initiatives have been implemented, such as Malindo (Indonesia Anti-Defamation Community), CekFakta (supported by Tempo) and Project Multatuli. These independent initiatives combat disinformation through fact-checking, media literacy programmes and community engagement. Malindo and CekFakta seek to empower citizens and journalists to critically assess information ([CekFakta, n.d.](#); [International Fact-Checking Network, 2021](#)), while Project Multatuli focuses on empowering underrepresented groups by amplifying their voices ([Project Multatuli, n.d.](#)).

Nevertheless, these initiatives have proven insufficient, since fact-checking organisations face different challenges based on their affiliations. First, government and media-affiliated outlets often face constraints and complaints of biases due to their editorial interests ([Rahmawan et al., 2022](#)). For instance, Kominfo has been reported to block and remove online content labelled as “negative”, a vague term used to encompass material considered defamatory or in violation of social or moral norms ([Freedom House, 2024](#)), alongside perceptions of state-sanctioned intimidation targeting critics and dissenting voices ([Idris, 2022](#)). Second, while independent fact-checking initiatives are generally freer to report critically and without political constraints, they tend to lack the resources and infrastructures to effectively distribute their content to the public ([Rahmawan et al., 2022](#); 04; 07; 08).

In addition to these obstacles, independent reporting faces its own set of challenges. First, like independent fact-checking efforts, independent reporting initiatives are often fragmented and underfunded, struggling to compete with mainstream media bubbles and audiences (KII04; 07; 08). This underscores the concentration of ownership in the Indonesian media landscape ([Masduki et al., 2023](#)). Second, the isolated location of many customary areas makes it difficult for reporters and mainstream media to reach Indigenous communities, thus complicating the collection and spread of accurate climate information (KII12). This disinformation has significant implications also for IPs, who are susceptible to a stark digital divide ([Conflict Resolution Unit, 2025](#)) and face heightened vulnerability to the dissemination of climate disinformation (KII12).

Moreover, independent fact-checking and reporting are undermined by the limited freedom within the country’s media landscape. In 2024, Indonesia scored 49 out of 100<sup>14</sup> in the Freedom on the Net score ([Freedom House, 2024](#)). Declining press freedom is reflected in the World Press Freedom Index, as the country scored 44.13<sup>15</sup> out of 100 and ranked 127th out of 180 countries ([Reporters Without Borders, 2024](#)). In Indonesia, journalists investigating sensitive issues are frequently subjected to various forms of harassment, including arrest, criminal prosecution, physical violence and digital attacks by the police or ultra-conservative armed forces ([Freedom House, 2024](#); [Reporters Without Borders, 2025](#)).

Online harassment towards climate and human rights activists is also common in the Indonesian media landscape, with many actors relying on the spread of disinformation to undermine their reputation and credibility ([Skopelity, 2025](#)). Coordinated malinformation campaigns often target activists and IPs by questioning their integrity and framing them as threats to national security or development, labelling them as “foreign agents,” “troublemakers” or “anti-development” (KII01; 02; 03; 04; 09; 10; FGD01). KII02, representative of a women’s empowerment CSO, reflects on this dynamic:

<sup>14</sup> In this index, 0 means least free and 100 means most free.

<sup>15</sup> In this index, 0 means an absolute lack of media freedom and 100 means total media freedom.

*“On the political side, with Prabowo, we expect the space for freedom of expression to shrink even more. Some journalists are already worried. The government might use the pretext of “stability” or “national development” to suppress criticism, especially about environmental damage caused by big projects (KII02).”*

KII02’s experience underscores how Indonesia’s digital transformation has expanded tools for activism, while simultaneously bringing about new challenges. Indonesia’s model of developmentalism, focused on state-led rapid economic growth and industrial expansion, shapes how environmental issues are framed. In this context, climate disinformation is crafted to support the developmentalist agenda, justifying environmentally harmful projects by excluding Indigenous perspectives from mainstream discourse (KII01; 02; 04; 05; 06; 08; 09; FGD01).

This chapter has demonstrated how the prioritisation of national development, alongside false narratives surrounding its purported benefits, has been a long-standing narrative in Indonesia. It highlights how these narratives are reinforced and amplified through the digitalisation of the media sector, contributing to the spread of climate disinformation that legitimises environmentally harmful development practices. The following chapter will examine key forms of climate disinformation that support the national development agenda despite its adverse impacts on IPs. These concepts will form the analytical framework for the impact assessment presented in Chapter 3.



## 2. Forms of Climate Disinformation

This chapter identifies four key forms of climate disinformation in Indonesia: corporate greenwashing, promotion of false climate solutions, appeals to economic progress and deflecting accountability for climate change, which comprises climate conspiracy narratives and denial of environmental responsibilities and commitments. The first three examples demonstrate climate delayism,<sup>16</sup> while the last falls under climate denialism.<sup>17</sup>

All three forms of information disorder – mis- dis- and malinformation – are relevant to the Indonesian context. Disinformation and malinformation are actively used to shape narratives and overwhelm the information environment surrounding climate change with distortions and selective truths. Misinformation, on the other hand, is benign in its intention to deceive and its impact on climate narratives is negligible compared to the dissemination of disinformation and malinformation. In this context, the report, in Chapter 2, focuses on disinformation and malinformation – both of which are deliberately crafted to mislead or harm their intended audience. Their defining feature lies in their deceptive intent, which not only distorts facts but also undermines public trust, disrupts informed decision-making and can incite social or political harm.

### 2.1. Corporate Greenwashing

The first form of climate disinformation, under the delayism approach, consists of corporate greenwashing. Greenwashing<sup>18</sup> has the potential to hinder genuine climate solutions by promoting a false sense of environmental progress. Two approaches to greenwashing in Indonesia are particularly prevalent. First, companies engage in surface-level sustainability campaigns and influencer partnerships to present a green façade and divert public attention from their unsustainable practices. Second, the media misleadingly portrays environmentally and ethically harmful projects as sustainable, omitting their negative impacts on the environment and affected communities.

The first case of greenwashing is exemplified by the practice carried out by RGE, an industrial group specialising in resource-based manufacturing. On paper, the company positions itself as a promoter of sustainable development, emphasising conservation and restoration efforts (*Royal Golden Eagle, n.d.*). In 2015, the RGE pledged to a “zero deforestation” policy, which was promoted by the news platform Eco-Business through its article “... RGE finally commits to zero deforestation” (*Shah, 2015*).

However, RGE’s subsidiaries have been driving up deforestation nationally, showing how RGE’s commitments are only aimed at creating a “green” façade, while the company continues to fuel deforestation through hidden subsidiaries and off-the-books supply chains (*Alecci, 2024*). For instance, RGE’s palm oil plantations have caused massive deforestation via the clearance of over 1,475 hectares of natural forest between 2016 and 2023 (*Rainforest Action Network, 2024*).

One subsidiary, Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL), ranked as the second-largest pulp and paper mill company in the world (*Environmental Paper Network, 2013*), showcases RGE’s use of corporate social responsibility programmes, with sustainability campaigns and influencer partnerships creating a false image of accountability (KII04). APRIL brands itself as a green company, publicising its

<sup>16</sup> Climate delayism refers to information that misleads the public and hinders the implementation of effective climate action (*Lamb et al., 2020*), rather opting towards small-scaled and surface-level solutions and “delays” climate action.

<sup>17</sup> Climate denialism is the rejection of information concerning the existence, source, victims, perpetrators, impacts and/or the solution to address climate change (*Sethi, 2024*).

<sup>18</sup> Greenwashing refers to deceptive practices involving untrue or misleading assertions about environmental benefits (*Lindwall, 2023*).

forest restoration efforts, including a “restoration project” on the heavily degraded peatlands of the Kampar Peninsula in Riau, Sumatra (*Ibid.*). These efforts are promoted through social media campaigns, using hashtags such as #APRIL2030 (referring to the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) and #RestorasiEkosistemRiau (Riau Ecosystem Restoration) (APRIL, 2024; 2024b). The use of hashtags is intended to maintain the company’s relevance and appearance of responsiveness to climate issues, while misleading the public about the true extent of their environmental efforts, in a clear example of corporate greenwashing.

The company further advances its greenwashing tactics by inviting environmental influencers to participate in eco-tours, spreading – often through social media – a skewed and biased perception of its environmental initiatives. This is exemplified by a 2024 LinkedIn post framed as a travel narrative, presenting APRIL’s Restorasi Ekosistem Riau project as both environmentally and socially responsible (Puspita, 2024). The project – a private sector-driven collaborative environmental initiative – aims to restore and protect ecologically significant high conservation value areas on Indonesia’s Kampar Peninsula and Padang Island in Riau Province, Sumatra (Restorasi Ekosistem Riau, n.d.). However, as early as 2013, the project had been accused of greenwashing, as the company engaged in illegal logging despite the suspension of all exploitation activities (Parker, 2013). Nevertheless, the project’s expansion in 2021 was praised by the media with articles titled “APRIL Group: Land restored via [Restorasi Ekosistem Riau] increases by 12,000 hectares”<sup>19</sup> (Antara, 2022b) and “[Restorasi Ekosistem Riau] records remarkable progress in conservation of Sumatra’s largest peat swamp forest” (Lukman, 2022).

While its greenwashing practices were ongoing, the RGE Group’s pulp sector supply chain and associated shadow companies are also responsible for deforestation, for example, on the island of Borneo (Environmental Paper Network, 2023; Greenpeace, 2025). RGE is allegedly constructing a new pulp mill on the island of Tarakan in North Kalimantan, expected to consume the equivalent of about 100,000 truckloads of wood annually (Jong, 2023). Meanwhile, 637,933 hectares of natural forest – located within seven timber and plantation concessions across Kalimantan and Papua – are at risk of being cleared to supply raw materials for the new mill (Jong, 2023; Environmental Paper Network, 2023).

Additionally, APRIL’s subsidiaries (also part of the RGE Group’s subsidiary chain), PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper, were found clearing 675 hectares of swamp-forest on thick peat, including areas customarily owned by local communities, community-owned palm oil plantations and young forest stands in Pulau Padang Village, Singingi District, Riau Province, in the island of Sumatra (Environmental Paper Network, 2020). PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper was also found violating Indonesian regulations by reconstructing old canals to drain the newly cleared areas (*Ibid.*). These activities not only increase deforestation (Parker, 2013), harming both the environment and local livelihoods, but also show the company’s disregard for its environmental commitments.

All in all, these allegations against the RGE Group and APRIL highlight how their so-called “green” initiatives reflect a greenwashing strategy – promoting environmental conservation on the surface, while in reality, engaging in serious environmental violations and jeopardising IPs’ livelihoods.

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<sup>19</sup> Translated from its original “APRIL Group: Lahan yang direstorasi melalui RER bertambah 12.000 hektare” in Bahasa Indonesia.



The second example of corporate greenwashing involves Mining Industry Indonesia (MIND ID), a state-owned Indonesian mining industry holding company. The company positions itself as a sustainable mining entity, emphasising that its mining activities aim to not only optimise the benefits of mine and coal resources but also maintain environmental sustainability and social welfare of the communities in its operation areas (MIND ID, 2025). Their mining activities are often described in the media with positive light, such as “MIND ID: Mining natural resources for a sustainable future”<sup>20</sup> (CNBC Indonesia, 2025), “Mining innovation for prosperity: Synergy of industry and society for a sustainable environment”<sup>21</sup> (Antara, 2025) and “MIND ID targets 21.4 percent emission reduction by 2030”<sup>22</sup> (Antara, 2025b), as well as in English news articles such as “Indonesia's MIND ID commits to sustainable mining practices” (Antara, 2024b). These accounts uncritically accentuate the company’s green image, particularly in environmental sustainability and protection.

However, the company PT Freeport Indonesia, a subsidiary of the MIND ID conglomerate, has carried out intensive, environmentally destructive mining operations at the Grasberg Mine, a site that in the Amungme community’s worldview represents the sacred head of their ancestral mother (Eichhorn, 2022). Strong international pressures on PT Freeport followed the massive human rights violations, including forced displacement and intensive resource plundering (Lembaga Peduli Masyarakat Wilaya Mimika Timur Jauh, 2022).

Another round of greenwashing followed as a result. PT Freeport decided to institute the One Percent Trust Fund, aimed at destinating 1% of the company’s annual revenue to Environmental Education Programmes (PT Freeport, n.d.). The outreach programme aims to assist employees and the local population to become more ecologically aware (Ibid.). Freeport’s One Percent Trust Fund is part of a broader campaign conducted by MIND ID. News articles such as “MIND ID provides education about “sustainable” lifestyle through Sustainibox” (Antara, 2025c), “MIND ID improves the capacity and skills of local communities” (Dunia Energi, 2025) and “MIND ID strengthens women empowerment in the mining industry” (Indonesia Business Post, 2025c) showcase how MIND ID has been framing its extractive operations as contributing to economic development and supporting economic growth, to promote a positive image of the company.

Collectively, these news articles showcase companies’ deliberate decontextualisation of their operations, highlighting their green efforts to divert attention from their unsustainable practices. This enables corporate actors to project a responsible image, delaying effective climate action.

<sup>20</sup> Translated from its original “MIND ID: Menambang Sumber Daya Alam untuk Masa Depan Berkelanjutan” in Bahasa Indonesia.

<sup>21</sup> Translated from its original “Inovasi Pertambangan untuk Kesejahteraan: Sinergi Industri dan Masyarakat untuk Lingkungan yang Berkelanjutan” in Bahasa Indonesia.

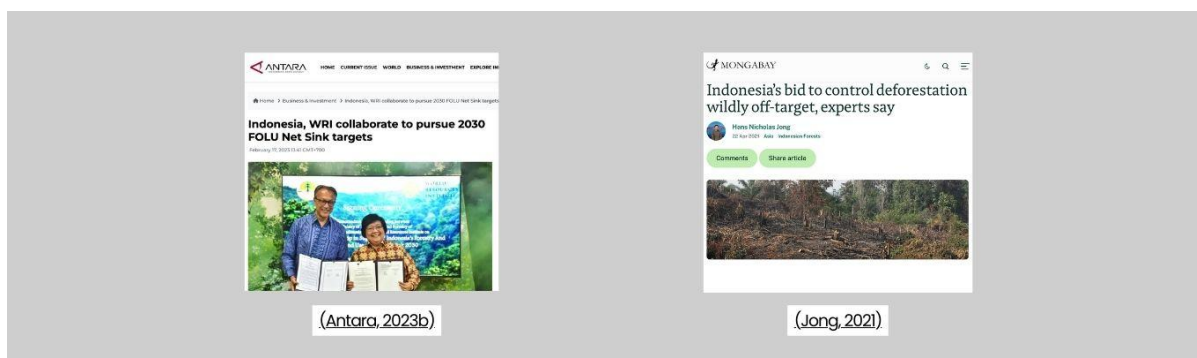
<sup>22</sup> Translated from its original “MIND ID targetkan penurunan emisi 21,4 persen pada 2030” in Bahasa Indonesia.

## 2.2. Promotion of False Climate Solutions

The second form of climate disinformation is the promotion of false climate solutions through media channels, falling under climate delayism. The “falsity” of climate solutions refers to the impact of such proposed initiatives in creating or exacerbating environmental violations and, in many cases, perpetuating societal injustices (Global Witness, 2022). In Indonesia, authorities and government-friendly news agencies have been promoting government-led false climate solutions, focusing on climate change mitigation efforts while omitting their environmental and human rights impacts. This section explores examples from two sectors.

First, reforestation initiatives misrepresent how stated goals are achieved and, to that end, key definitions are strategically manipulated. This has been clear in the Forestry and Other Land Use (FoLU) Net Sink<sup>23</sup> 2030 project (Jong, 2021). By reducing deforestation and increasing reforestation, it aims to reverse the carbon footprint of the FoLU sector, making sequestration exceed emissions, hoping to achieve a reduction of up to 140 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030 (Antara, 2023b; Antara, 2023c). This is promoted as part of the country’s Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (UNFCCC, 2022), to reduce 358 million tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 (Antara, 2023d).

These initiatives have been uncritically promoted by Indonesian media outlets with titles such as “Indonesia applies nature-based solutions in combating climate change” (Antara, 2024d). However, environmental experts assess them as unrealistic, primarily due to the prevailing rate of deforestation and regulatory frameworks that continue to authorise considerable forest clearance for agricultural and economic development purposes (Jong, 2021).



In the same way, the national Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programme also relied on exaggerated metrics, misleading the public regarding its actual environmental impact. REDD+ projects in Indonesia are part of a national approach with sub-national implementation, where 11 pivot provinces developed their own strategies and action plans (Asian Forest Cooperation Organisation, n.d.).

One of the largest projects is the Katingan Mentaya Project in Central Kalimantan, covering 149,800 hectares of peatland conservation initiative (Permian Global, 2023). The Katingan Mentaya Project is alleged to have claimed carbon credits three times higher than the amount it is likely to absorb, potentially discrediting the net-zero projects (Kanematsu & Inshibashi, 2021). It is estimated that the project would prevent 7.45 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually over 60 years, issuing credits equivalent to 30 million tons and earning an estimated USD 210 million since 2017 (Ibid.).

<sup>23</sup> Forests absorbing more carbon from the atmosphere than they emit are deemed as carbon sinks.

These claims are echoed by media articles, “Tens of thousands of hectares of village forests restored by local communities in Katingan, Central Kalimantan”<sup>24</sup> (Suhartadi, 2022), “The Katingan Mentaya Project contributes to achieving all 17 SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] in Indonesia”<sup>25</sup> (Gatra, 2023), and lastly “Katingan Mentaya Project launches its SDG Impact Report”<sup>26</sup> (Antara, 2023f). However, the overestimation of carbon credits throughout the project, justified through exaggerated deforestation risks, allowed the Katingan Mentaya Project to simultaneously make a profit and protect its reputation (Kanematsu & Inshibashi, 2021).

To note, the Katingan Mentaya Project has also been accused of violating local communities’ land rights by restricting them from accessing lands and forests that had been designated as protected areas (Lang, 2024). Compounding this issue is the fact that, in 2014, after agreeing with the local government to receive five hectares of land for cultivation following the project’s implementation, Dayak communities in Central Kalimantan were never granted this land (Greenpeace, 2020).

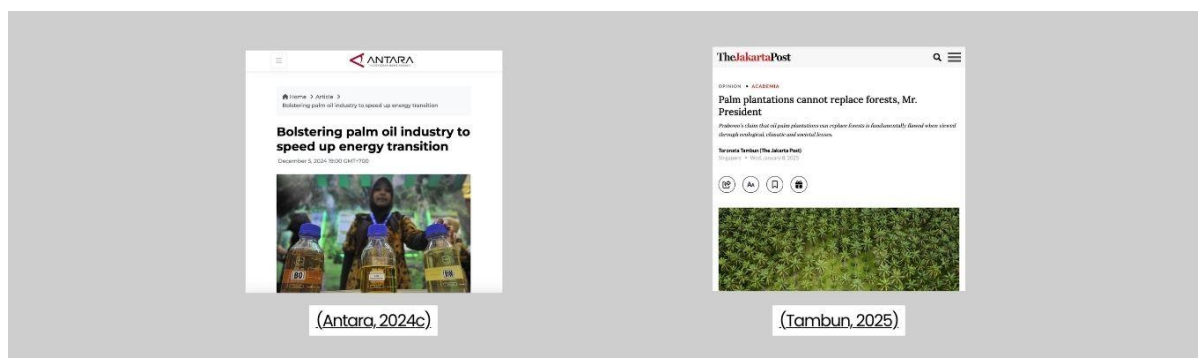
Another one of the world’s largest REDD+ peat swamp forest projects is the Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve Project, located in Central Kalimantan (Rimba Raya, n.d.). The project has been accused of engaging in carbon trading activities outside its licensed area, violating its agreement with Tanjung Puting National Park (Saptakee, 2024), which led to a year-long legal process (Ibid.) that halted the operations. However, the project has since resumed, and its impacts on the environment and the local communities recur. Footage of burned forests within the project area reveals ongoing forest fires and logging activities, underscoring the persistence of deforestation despite the project’s stated commitments to prevent such illicit activities (Lang, 2024). Local communities are also restricted from accessing the forests, which proves counterproductive, as it prevents them from carrying out forest patrols (Ibid.).

Such practices of promoting false climate solutions continue under Prabowo. In December 2024, the president urged the massive expansion of palm oil plantations for their role in Indonesia’s economic development, stating that these plantations are also beneficial for absorbing carbon dioxide (Jakarta Post, 2025). This narrative is controversial since palm oil plantations are considered the major driver of deforestation, as they have led to the conversion of natural forests into monoculture plantations, causing the loss of biodiversity (Ibid.). In its article “Palm plantations cannot replace forests, Mr President,” The Jakarta Post (2025) highlights how the narrative endorsed by Prabowo that treats all “green cover” as equal relies on a manipulated definition of reforestation. However, government-friendly news outlets such as Antara often disseminate information regarding the benefits of palm oil plantations, focusing on economic development (2024c) and energy transition (2024d). Mainstream media omits the negative environmental and human rights impacts, spanning from the exacerbation of extreme weather events caused by the disruption of local ecosystems, and the loss of livelihoods and cultural identities tied to those environments (Tambun, 2025).

<sup>24</sup> Translated from its original “Puluhan Ribu Hektar Hutan Desa Direstorasi oleh Warga di Katingan, Kalimantan Tengah” in Bahasa Indonesia.

<sup>25</sup> Translated from its original “Katingan Mentaya Project Berkontribusi pada Pencapaian 17 SDG di Indonesia” in Bahasa Indonesia.

<sup>26</sup> Translated from its original “Katingan Mentaya Project meluncurkan laporan SDG Impact Report” in Bahasa Indonesia.



Secondly, these practices can be observed in the energy sector via Indonesia's Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan (CIPP) (2023), which serves as a strategic roadmap for the country's decarbonisation and energy transition efforts under the Just Energy Transition Partnership valued at USD 20 billion in funds (*Ibid.*). Under CIPP, Indonesia aims to cap emissions at 250 million metric tons of carbon dioxide by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions in the electricity sector by 2050 (*Ibid.*). Similar to the previous examples, the plan was announced and promoted through state-owned news agency Antara (2023d), which highlighted Indonesia's commitments to energy transition in collaboration with international partners, with a strong emphasis on the country's development goals.

The CIPP emphasises achieving decarbonisation through energy transition; yet, it fails to address the major challenges to reach the goal of decarbonisation: the conservation of Indonesia's wetlands (Novita et al., 2022) and peatlands (Terzano et al., 2023). Indonesia is home to 25.9 million hectares of wetlands (Kompas, 2024) and 24 million hectares of peatland – which are located mostly in Sumatra, the islands of Borneo and Indonesian New Guinea (Jong, 2023b) – equivalent to approximately 36% of the tropical peatlands worldwide (United Nations Office for Project Services, 2020). However, scientific studies show that of all the peatlands in need of conservation in Indonesia, only 15.6% are currently protected (Terzano et al., 2023). Furthermore, the goal of net-zero is estimated to be impossible to achieve, as emissions from captive power plants – private power plants built to directly supply industrial facilities – are excluded from Indonesia's emissions cap (Jong, 2023c).

Altogether, these instances showcase the uncritical circulation, by government officials and state-friendly media outlets, of narratives that portray in a favourable light the government's climate change mitigation effort, overlooking the negative impacts of its operations, including the exacerbation of societal injustices and environmental violations.

### 2.3. Appeals to Economic Progress

The third type of climate disinformation within the delayism approach involves the spread of narratives that appeal to national progress, framing state-led “modern” development as the only effective way to reach economic security. This constitutes a form of climate disinformation since it relies on a narrow definition of “progress” to delegitimise sustainable Indigenous land stewardship and legitimise large-scale industrial projects under the guise of “modern” development.

Appeals to economic progress employ partial definitions of “development”, “progress” and “well-being”, promoting the narrative that economic growth is the primary requirement for improving living standards, while neglecting the importance of civil and political rights – especially those of IPs. The use of abstract promises of national economic growth appeals to urban populations, justifying, in their eyes, the suppression of traditional practices, presented as “anti-economic progress” for not meeting state-defined productivity standards (KII03; 04; 06; 08; 09; FGD01; 02; Covey, 2021). This deliberate delegitimisation of Indigenous land stewardship elevates state- and corporate-led development



projects as the only means to improve national well-being, leading to the vilification of IPs as “enemies of progress” that threaten collective prosperity by refusing to assimilate with modernity (FGD01).

*“Indigenous peoples are often labelled as anti-development and anti-economic progress. In reality, we also need development, but we know where it is appropriate and where it is not (KII03).*

*Development is about creating balance, integrating local wisdom with modern planning tools, not replacing one with the other (KII10).”*

This was even more stark in the New Developmentalist model under President Widodo which focused on infrastructure construction and growth acceleration that sidelined socio-cultural and ecological dimensions of development, perceived as a constraint to economic growth (Az-Zahra & Guntur, 2025). This dynamic has evolved under Prabowo’s governance, which appeals to the people’s basic need satisfaction, avowedly focusing on freedom from hunger, poverty, suffering and disease (Subianto, 2026), to push for “modern” development projects that disregard Indigenous rights.

In doing so, discourses concerning Indigenous knowledge and practices have assumed a patronising form that depicts IP communities as “backward” and unable to efficiently manage their lands or recognise the benefits of development (Eichhorn, 2022).

*“The media often brings in “experts” from outside who say “this land is empty” or “this project is safe”. For [IPs] who have lived on that land for generations, this is the ultimate disinformation. It denies our lived reality and knowledge. When we try to speak up, we are told that we do not “understand the science”. So it’s not just about wrong facts; it’s about whose knowledge is considered “true” (FGD01).”*

The seizure by the state of “unused” Indigenous lands for Indonesia’s Land Reform Programme<sup>27</sup> exemplifies how appeals to economic progress operate. In 2025, the Indonesian Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning stated that any certified land that is not being used productively in terms of economic activity or development for longer than two years will be declared “unused” and added to Indonesia’s Land Reform Programme (Ramadhany, 2025).<sup>28</sup> This statement appeals to the general public by highlighting the benefits that the Land Reform Programme will bring to the nation’s economic growth, trickling down and spreading “development” among the general public. The initiative is promoted by Antara as a “means to pursue public welfare improvement” that will “enhance the living standards of Indonesian people” (2024e). In the piece “Govt protects productive agricultural land from land conversion threat”, Antara emphasises the role of the government, communities and other stakeholders in “maintaining productive agricultural land” (2025e).

<sup>27</sup> This programme is facilitated by Government Regulation on Control of Neglected Areas and Lands (2021) contained in the Omnibus Law on Job Creation (2020).

<sup>28</sup> Note that this follows the colonial era practice of waste land seizure.

However, the Land Reform Programme has been demonstrated to disproportionately impact small-holder farmers and local communities (Jong, 2025d). While officially recognised “MHA territories” are technically excluded from the “unused lands” classification, the fact that the majority of Indigenous territories are not officially recognised as such (See Section 1.2.1), puts them at risk of being seized on the grounds of “inefficiency” (Jong, 2024d). In this process, appeals to economic growth manifest in portraying Indigenous territories as “empty lands” or “unproductive forests”, to present them as obstacles to national development (Samperante, 2025).

The Land Reform Programme also showcases how, while reporting on state-promoted development projects, mainstream media uncritically diffuse official claims without questioning whether the so-called “unused lands” are in fact under Indigenous stewardship (Samperante, 2025; KII04). Meanwhile, the socio-economic impacts of these projects on affected communities are overlooked by mainstream media; for instance, information regarding how land-clearance will deprive IPs of their medicinal plants and food sources is often omitted (FGD01).

Another case that further explores how appealing to economic growth operates is the construction of the Rempang Eco-City Area. The implementation of this PSN (2023), publicised as Indonesia’s new economic growth engine (Renaldi, 2023) through titles such as “Rempang Island, a new engine to accelerate the national economy” (The Jakarta Post, 2024), required the seizure of 17,000 hectares of customary Indigenous lands. However, this information was largely omitted by mainstream media outlets, which only focused on the positive narratives like the potential of the PSN to become the world’s second-largest glass and solar panel manufacturing hub, accelerating economic growth and contributing to national well-being by generating over 300,000 jobs (Nindita & Feng, 2025).

The head of public relations of Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority, the authority for the Eco-City project, responded to the concerns arising from the eviction of local communities, declaring that upon completion of the construction phase, they will adopt a more positive outlook towards the project (Antara, 2025d). The same sentiment is also conveyed by another statement by the Chairman of BP Batam, who praised the company’s efforts to educate residents who are currently not willing to relocate (The Jakarta Post, 2024). These statements underscore the narrative that IPs oppose the Rempang Eco City project only because they are unable to recognise its benefits, delegitimising their stewardship by depicting them as “anti-progress”.



Smallholder farmers’ intercropping has also been portrayed as “unproductive” and juxtaposed with large-scale palm oil plantations in Papua, despite the former’s importance for local livelihoods and environmental sustainability in the province (Csevár and Rugarli, 2025). In order to promote palm oil plantations in Papua, mainstream media appeals to economic growth, highlighting their role in economic development and energy transition (see Chapter 2.2). This rhetoric reinforces the contrast between IPs’ perceived “inefficient” land use and the State’s “productive” management.

Of particular note, such appeals rely on and perpetuate Papuans' historical discrimination as "uncivilised". Originating from colonial dynamics, such narratives are currently used to legitimise the government's massive and unconsensual intervention in the region, as well as Papuans' systemic marginalisation from contemporary society (Stott, 2011; Pramudyantini & Perkasa, 2024; Grbeša, 2024). To this day, Indonesia positions itself as the only entity capable of pursuing national economic growth, portraying these initiatives as beneficial in raising Papuans' "primitive" living standards (Baskoro et al., 2024; Novianti et al., 2023). Benny Wenda, Chairman of the Liberation Movement for West Papua, denounced how the racism that depicts Papuans as "monkeys" is used to justify the occupation of Papuan territories with palm oil and rice plantations (United Liberation Movement for West Papua, 2024).

All in all, appeals to economic progress instrumentalise a deliberately narrow definition of "progress" to sway the public's perception of state-led development, presenting the government-corporate nexus as the only viable pathway able to bring collective well-being to the Indonesian people. Amounting to malinformation, these portrayals are one-sided, as they only present the positive impacts of capitalist development, omitting its negative environmental and social consequences. The "modern" development narrative is presented as incompatible and fundamentally opposed to IPs' stewardship, which is portrayed as an "obstacle to development" that would hinder Indonesia's economic growth due to its intrinsic "backwardness."

## 2.4. Deflecting Accountability for Contributing to Climate Change

The fourth form of climate disinformation, first under the denialism approach, is the deflection of accountability in contributing to climate change. This deflection manifests in two ways. Firstly, climate conspiracy narratives (relying on the spread of disinformation) are used to reject accountability for climate change and cast it onto marginalised groups. Secondly, disinformation is employed to deny climate change or previous climate commitments and responsibilities.

Being the top country with the highest share of climate change deniers, hosting 18% of total global climate change deniers by one estimate (Salma, 2024) despite only accounting for 3% of the world's population, Indonesia's digital space is a fertile ground for the proliferation of both climate conspiracy and denial narratives.

### 2.4.1. Climate Conspiracy Narratives

The first form of climate denial narratives involves spreading climate-related messages using conspiracy theory narratives, effectively presenting misleading or distorted information in a parodic or deceptive manner. Climate conspiracy theories enable government institutions and corporations to deflect and redress the blame for climate change, effectively avoiding accountability. First, climate change is interpreted through a religious lens and blamed on sinners. Second, environmental activism is portrayed as an "anti-Indonesia" foreign-funded movement.

Firstly, Indonesia is home to the biggest Muslim population worldwide, with 87.4% of its population identifying as Muslim (Central Intelligence Agency, 2025). Indonesia's governance and teachings are significantly influenced by religion (Saragih & Fitrianti, 2023). This influence extends to explanations of climate change, as religious leaders are some of the most trusted climate messengers among Indonesian Muslims (Jakarta Post, 2024). A 2024 survey of 2,401 respondents revealed that 21.5% strongly agreed and 11% strongly concurred that sinful behaviours and religious non-adherence are factors contributing to Indonesia's climate crisis, highlighting how religious interpretations of climate change can shape climate conspiracy narratives (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2024).

Amidst the 2014 volcanic eruptions of Mount Sinabung in North Sumatra and Mount Kelud in East Java, an opinion piece by an Islamic teacher was published in the online Islamic newspaper *Republika*. In the piece, he connected sins with natural disasters, positing that phenomena such as earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions were sent by God (Muhajir, 2023). A similar incident occurred after the Cianjur earthquake in November 2022, as the cause of the natural disaster in the country has sparked a debate (Ibid.). The leader of the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia<sup>29</sup> branch in Malang openly linked the Cianjur earthquake to the widespread occurrence of sexually-related sins committed by gender and sexual minority communities (Ibid.).

These religious explanations of climate change often circulate within social media discussions. By recasting blame onto marginalised communities, they enable the government to deflect accountability for contributing to climate change. This hinders genuine climate adaptation strategies, disproportionately affecting IPs due to their reliance on the natural environment and their heightened vulnerabilities.

Secondly, climate conspiracy theories portray environmental activism – especially NGOs and media outlets that are notoriously critical of the government – as a “foreign agenda” that seeks to obstruct Indonesia’s economic growth and development (Jong, 2025e; FGD01). These conspiracy theories are generally spread online by anonymous or little-known public figures (Tenggara Strategics, 2025).

*“When they can’t attack the [environmentalist and/or IP] movement directly, they attack people’s personal lives, their families or their integrity. I myself have been targeted with accusations of being a “foreign agent” ... One of our women leaders was deeply affected by false content posted on YouTube. That video questioned her identity and loyalty, which damaged trust within her community (KII01).*

Such claims are legitimised politically at the topmost levels. For example, President Prabowo’s administration has endorsed narratives around foreign-funded NGOs seeking to manipulate Indonesians and foster division to undermine the country’s economic growth (Al Mayadeen, 2025). The same narrative was employed to delegitimise the mounting criticism against the nickel mining expansion in Raja Ampat, West Papua. In June 2025, Bahlil Lahadalia, then Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, claimed that the Indonesian government would continue investing in the nickel industry, despite the attempts of foreign smear campaigns to hamper Indonesia’s growth (Jong, 2025e).

Another example of how climate conspiracy theories frame climate change discourse as a tool of foreign economic interests is the circulation of a Facebook post claiming that climate change was the result of a conspiracy involving the High-frequency Active Auroral Research Programme, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, Project Blue Beam, and a carbon emissions agreement with the World Economic Forum (Komdigi, 2024). The individual who uploaded the post shared a screenshot from the American Enterprise Institute’s website, featuring a joint letter from 500 experts to the UN, asserting that climate change is not real (Kompas, 2024b). This case reflects the belief, shared by 25% of respondents to a 2024 survey, that scientists studying climate change are influenced by elites (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2024).

<sup>29</sup> A Sunni Islamic organisation in Indonesia, aiming at Islamic proselytising.

Climate conspiracy theories, circulated by citizens, as well as religious and government institutions, enable actors to redress the blame for climate change (Rothschild & Keefer, 2023). This creates an environment in which it becomes challenging to distinguish between real climate information and conspiracy theories, undermining public trust towards scientists and institutions (Tam & Chan, 2023). This hinders genuine climate adaptation strategies, disproportionately affecting IPs, whose close dependence on natural ecosystems heightens their exposure to climate-related risks.

### 2.4.2. Denial of Environmental Responsibilities and Commitments

The second form of climate disinformation that enables state and corporate actors to deflect accountability consists of the denial of environmental responsibilities and commitments. First, these narratives rely on the denial of previous environmental commitments and pledges. Second, state and corporate actors deny climate change evidence to deflect blame.

The rejection of climate change evidence is especially harmful in Indonesia, given the country's heightened climate vulnerability and climate change denialism. Research shows that 3% of the respondents of a survey conducted by YouGov (2020) denied climate change and 18% denied the link between climate change and human activities.

First, during the November 2021 COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, former President Widodo signed the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use (2021), committing Indonesia to reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. The declaration, endorsed by Indonesia, expressed the commitment to "fight climate change, deliver resilient and inclusive growth and halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation" and to make sure that national policies do not "drive deforestation" (UN, 2021). However, on the very same day, the government, via state-owned news agency Antara, denied its pledge and responsibility, effectively retracting its 2030 deforestation commitment by asserting it had never made such a promise and that halting rainforest clearing is an unfair demand (Antara, 2021; Jong, 2021b).

Second, misalignments between the degree of environmental damage declared by the government and that shown by satellite imagery showcase how scientific evidence is rejected to avoid accountability for contributing to climate change. Notably, in 2019, satellite imagery revealed 3.11 million hectares of land burnt (Gaveau et al., 2021), including 137,000 hectares of forests (compared to the government's claim of 70,000 hectares) and 0.96 million hectares of peatland (versus the government's claim of 0.64 million hectares) (Gaveau et al., 2021; Jong, 2021c). This independent analysis demonstrated the discrepancy of data between the government and civil society actors when different methodologies were employed (Jong, 2021c). It was also mentioned that the government was reluctant to accept different analysis methodologies and data sets (Ibid.). It is also notable that the co-author of this analysis – Gaveau – was deported by the government one month after the publication (Rochmyaningsih, 2020), suggesting the government's attempt to control the narrative around deforestation and deny its severity.



(Antara, 2023g)



(Jong, 2025f)

Private companies also reject the evidence brought by local communities of the environmental destruction caused by their industrial activities, shifting the blame onto external actors or climate change to evade accountability.

This is seen practised by nickel mining companies. Proliferated in Indonesia in recent years, the country's nickel extraction has increased by 158% between 2017 and 2023 ([Tunncliffe, n.d.](#)). Mining operations in small islands, such as Wawonii, Kabaena, Obi and Gebe have disrupted IPs' livelihoods by polluting the environment and by enabling land grabbing ([Mulya et al., 2024](#)). For example, since the arrival of the nickel mining company PT Gema Kreasi Perdana, inhabitants of Wawonii reported increased pollution of the island's water, which has become muddy and unfit for daily use ([Ibid.](#)). However, when confronted about their impact on Wawonii Island, the company deflected accountability for the pollution, attributing muddy water to natural causes such as heavy rainfall, rather than industrial activities ([Ibid.](#)). The company also claims to have contributed to restoring the water quality to a level that allows use for residents' daily activities ([Indonesia Business Post, 2025b](#)). However, the reality reported by Wawonii Island's inhabitants is very different, as the water available in the villages remains turbid and dark brown despite the absence of heavy rainfall ([Mulya et al., 2024](#)).

In Indonesia, the denial of environmental commitments and responsibilities is perpetuated both by government institutions and private corporations. These instances show how conspiracy theories and denial narratives, shaped by political and economic interests, effectively undermine climate action. These narratives not only distort public understanding of climate change but also serve to deflect accountability from both state and corporate actors.

These four forms of climate disinformation, namely: corporate greenwashing, false climate solutions, appeals to economic progress and deflecting accountability for climate change, illustrate how climate narratives in Indonesia are often shaped by deliberately selective information that favours state and corporate interests. These issues showcase how official messaging often masks the environmental and social impacts of development projects. The impacts of these communication strategies on IPs are further explored in Chapter 3.



### 3. The Impacts on Indigenous Peoples

Based on the key forms of climate disinformation identified in Chapter 2, this chapter examines four distinct yet intertwined impacts of climate disinformation on IPs in Indonesia: exclusion from environmental decision-making, forced displacement, the undermining of Indigenous knowledge and the criminalisation of IPs. Jointly, these impacts reinforce the prioritisation of national development over IPs' socio-cultural vulnerabilities in Indonesia, a dynamic underscored by the state's failure to provide full legal recognition.

#### 3.1. Exclusion from Environmental Decision-making

The first impact of climate disinformation is the exclusion of IPs from decision-making in policies and projects that concern their own lands and livelihoods. This serves “developmentalist” purposes, enabling the government-corporate nexus to appropriate Indigenous resources and encroach on their lands with “modern” development projects. Climate disinformation contributes to this by enabling two key mechanisms, the re-centralisation of resource governance and the overriding of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).<sup>30</sup>

##### 3.1.1. Re-centralisation

The first way climate disinformation has been used in Indonesia is to legitimise the encroachment of the central government through “re-centralisation” ([East Asia Forum, 2025](#)). Appeals to economic growth that juxtapose Indigenous stewardship with the government's “efficient” use of natural resources pave the way for the re-centralisation of environmental governance at the national level. This process effectively excludes Indigenous institutions and local governments from decision-making, supporting the state-led developmentalist agenda.

In particular, there has been a reversal of the decentralisation efforts undertaken over the past three decades following the collapse of the authoritarian “New Order” regime in the late 1990s ([Prasojo, 2025](#)). Efforts to decentralise have partly benefitted IPs by facilitating the inclusion of their voices, as local governments are closer to the population ([Tyson, 2010](#)) and are able to better cater to regional differences and realities ([Tjiptoherijanto, 2018](#)). For instance, in matters of forestry, mining, and fishing, among others, the licensing duty used to reside within local governments ([Hariri et al., 2020](#)), better positioned to address Indigenous needs and vulnerabilities.

To note, progress in terms of recognition of IPs and their stewardship is different throughout the country, with regions such as Bali (KII 05, 06) and South Sorong (KII09, 10) presenting relatively high recognition and cooperation between regional governments and Indigenous leaders. For instance, in 2024, the local Government of Sorong Selatan Regency officially recognised IPs and 40,342.556 hectares of customary territories pertaining to four sub-tribes through a Regent Decree ([Human Rights Monitor, 2024](#)). These regional differences are likely to increase ([University of Melbourne, 2022](#)) with the implementation of Indonesia's New Criminal Code (2023). Of particular interest for IPs is Article 2, which recognises “living law” (*adat*) as a basis for criminal responsibility.

However, for IPs, this recognition is deeply ambiguous and potentially precarious, as the Code provides no clear or consistent mechanism to ensure that customary law is applied in ways that genuinely reflect

<sup>30</sup> This refers to the principle that ensures IPs have the right to give or withhold consent to projects or activities that may affect their lands, territories or resources, guaranteed in UNDRIP and the International Labour Organization Convention No 169.

Indigenous norms rather than state or corporate interests (Butt, 2023). While, in principle, the recognition of *adat* could strengthen Indigenous legal authority and protect community-based governance systems, in practice it risks either being rendered ineffective if local governments fail to codify *adat* in regional regulations, or being distorted if judges or lawmakers selectively define or invent “living law” without meaningful participation from Indigenous communities themselves (University of Melbourne, 2022). It therefore remains to be seen whether the living law provisions will function as tools for advancing Indigenous justice and autonomy, or instead reproduce long-standing patterns of marginalisation by subordinating Indigenous law to uncertain state discretion.

Concurrently with the avowed *adat* revival, the Indonesian state has systematically replaced Indigenous institutions with state institutions that pursue developmentalist priorities. A clear example of this re-centralisation consists of the shift of fisheries licensing authority introduced by the Omnibus Law (2020). Prior to its enactment, the fisheries licensing regime in Indonesia was governed by the Law on Fisheries (2004), which maintained a partially decentralised structure. Under the previous legislation, the central government had control over large-scale fisheries, provincial governments were in charge of regulating medium-scale fisheries and small fisheries were managed by district or municipal governments, which are closer to local communities. However, the Omnibus Law re-centralised decision-making powers, including approval, evaluation and revocation of business licences, under the central government, in particular the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. This initiative was promoted by the government through appeals to economic growth via a December 2020 press release titled “Job Creation Law encourages accelerated business growth and investment” (Ministry for Economic Affairs, 2020). Mainstream media echoed this narrative through the articles “Job Creation Law supports economic recovery in Indonesia: World Bank” (Antara, 2020) and “Regarding the Job Creation Law, [Centre for Strategic and International Studies]: this is a breath of fresh air for economic reform” (Ubaidillah, 2020).

This raised questions over the organs and mechanisms involved in the monitoring and supervision of fisheries (Juwana, 2020). Key questions revolve around how these new centralised systems will account for Indigenous practices and how the state’s development interests will influence decision-making. Ineffective monitoring and supervision would increase the appeal of illegal fishing due to lower risks, which are likely to worsen local marine ecosystems’ conditions and deeply affect coastal communities as a consequence (Ibid.). For instance, the mangrove area in Youtefa Bay, Papua, is central to the daily lives and traditional activities of the Enggros Village residents (Koral, 2022). The livelihoods of this community are seriously threatened by the increasing water pollution caused by large-scale development projects, which is endangering the health of the mangrove forests and fisheries (Ibid.). The Omnibus Law, legitimised through appeals to economic growth which centre on rapid economic development, has resulted in the exclusion of local communities, like the Enggros, from the administration of local fisheries and mangrove habitats, effectively decreasing their ability to defend local ecosystems and adapt to climate change (Ibid.).

Another law that supports the re-centralisation of environmental decision-making is the Law on Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Their Ecosystems (2024), which replaced the previous Conservation Law (1990). Under the current law, the government established preservation areas for biodiversity protection, many coinciding with IPs’ customary territories, with minimal involvement of IP communities (Jong, 2025g; TheJakartaPost, 2025). Only two out of thirty parliamentary meetings to deliberate on the law were open to the public, and none of the IPs’ contributions were included in the enacted draft of the law (Jong, 2025g; UNDP, 2025b). As a result, “biodiversity protection” has been used to justify the re-centralisation of power at the expense of Indigenous communities, which are exposed to land-grabs (Tempo, 2024; Jong, 2025g).

The “re-centralisation” of environmental decision-making through laws such as the Omnibus Law (2020) and the new Conservation Law (2024) underscores the belief that the IPs’ way to manage and handle natural resources, including fisheries and conservation areas, is less productive and effective than the government’s, thus justifying their exclusion from environmental decision-making. This legislative shift appears to be part of a broader trend toward re-centralised environmental governance in Indonesia, a trajectory that is likely to continue under the Prabowo administration.

### 3.1.2. Overriding of FPIC

The second way in which climate disinformation is used to subvert IPs’ decision-making is to justify the overriding of FPIC processes. False climate solutions are coupled with appeals to economic growth, justifying the overriding of FPIC on “unused” Indigenous lands (see Chapter 2.3). This results in the lack of or performative inclusion of IPs in environmental decision-making. Many IPs reported being ignored or left out entirely from the consultation process of new projects and laws concerning their territories (KII03; Jong, 2025g) or not being able to withdraw their consent at any point (KII07).

For instance, the Mandalika Urban Development & Tourism Project, funded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and carried out by state-owned Indonesian Tourism Development Corporation, exemplifies this dynamic (Jong, 2023d). Turned into a Special Economic Zone in 2018 by the Widodo administration, the Mandalika region is envisioned as a world-class tourism destination intended to ease the tourism burden on Bali (Renaldi, 2023). This represents a false climate solution because it uses the rhetoric of sustainable development and infrastructure investment to legitimise dispossession and minimal consultation, while simultaneously failing to provide environmental benefits. This project was marred by numerous concerns from IPs and CSOs for violating FPIC rights in three main ways, namely: inadequate definition of FPIC, the deployment of police personnel during consultations and false promises of relocation. Firstly, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank’s standards call for FPIC (consultation) rather than FPIC (consent), falling short of best international FPIC practices (*Ibid.*).

Secondly, the *Sasak* communities of Ebunut and Ujunt, located in areas designated for the Mandalika project, were invited to attend a “socialisation forum” surveilled by police and unidentified civilians, where they were instructed to evacuate their lands and houses (Mongabay, 2023d). Due to the inadequate FPIC policy, this was enough to greenlight the project, as only the consultation, and not the consent, of affected communities was required (*Ibid.*).

Lastly, Indonesian Tourism Development Corporation fell short of its promise to relocate the 150 displaced families and to fairly compensate them, as only 79 households reported receiving IDR 3 million (USD 192) in cash (*Ibid.*). This is not uncommon, as companies or local leaders often spread misleading information to justify their projects, promising prosperity, roads, schools and jobs (KII09; FGD01; 02). This violates the “Informed” component of FPIC and constitutes a form of climate disinformation, as local communities are provided with false information designed to coerce them into consenting to development projects that they would otherwise oppose.

KII09, a representative of an environmental INGO, expands on the use of false promises to deceive Indigenous communities into consenting to development projects on their ancestral lands:

*“At first, the community believes the promises. But once the forest is cleared and the company begins operations, most locals lose access to their land and resources. The few jobs offered are temporary and poorly paid. By the time people realise the truth, it’s too late, the forest and with it their way of life, is gone (KII09).*

*IPs are told that [the projects] ... will bring “modernity” and “ease” for them so they don’t have to work as hard. But in reality, it just adds to their burden because they lose their autonomy over food. The information given to them is always sweet but never the full truth about the long-term impacts (FGD01).”*

The land acquisition process for the establishment of the Nusantara Capital City Project (IKN) also illustrates this concern, entailing the relocation of Indonesia’s capital from Jakarta to Nusantara within the country’s developmentalist agenda. This initiative, promoted through appeals to economic progress, specifically aims to “redistribute” development across the archipelago and accelerate Indonesia’s progress towards achieving the “developed” country status by 2045 (Mark & Masron, 2025). Additionally, through its Biodiversity Management Master Plan, IKN has been promoted as a project that would increase biodiversity resilience and ensure long-term environmental health and sustainability through high efficiency, energy conservation and zero carbon emissions (Deputy for Environment and Natural Resources of the Nusantara Capital Authority, 2024; Primayulita, 2024; Winn, 2025). The construction process of IKN has been described by Antara as “collaborative, transparent and oriented towards achieving national development targets” (2025f). Other news outlets promoted the project with titles such as “International media praises IKN’s progress, government strengthens the establishment of legislative and judicial ecosystem” (Gerbang Kaltim, 2025) and “Tree-planting in IKN Nusantara to support green city concept” (Antara, 2025). Despite combining an “ecological” façade with appeals to economic growth, the IKN project is linked to widespread environmental and human rights violations.

The city, whose second construction phase began in April 2025 (Antara, 2025g), is being built on a piece of a 256,000-hectare land in Eastern Kalimantan, 105,000 of which are overlapping with the customary territories of 51 IP communities, which will be deeply affected by the project, yet were not involved in the decision-making process (Madani, 2024). For the construction of the new capital, the government has categorised large portions of customary land as unclaimed, following the narrative that labels customary territories as “unused” or “inefficiently-used” lands, to undermine Indigenous land stewardship and justify IPs’ exclusion from the administration of their own ancestral territories (Jong, 2024d; Primayulita, 2024).

The land acquisition process for IKN was characterised by FPIC violations, with IPs reporting intimidation, coercion, lack of transparency and of official recognition (Gayatri & Suryani, 2024; Primayulita, 2024). Article 37 of the IKN Law (2022) addresses community participation in managing the new capital without specifying whether Indigenous communities have a formal and designated role within the governmental institutions of the IKN (Gayatri & Suryani, 2024). Indigenous institutions are, once again, not integrated within the new capital governance structure (Ibid.). As part of the project, territories previously administered according to Indigenous knowledge systems that prioritise long-term sustainability, non-intensive agriculture and conservation, will be transformed into industrialised areas, residential zones and government facilities for the new “eco-city” (Syaban & Appiah-Opoku, 2024). This underscores the narrative that the government uses lands and resources more efficiently than IPs, being better able to identify development needs and priorities. Consequently, these conditions result in the

effective exclusion of IPs from the administration and management of their ancestral lands, without adequate compensation (UNDP, 2025b).

*“Because IPs are not ... recognised as [equal] subjects, when companies enter for mining, palm oil or timber projects, these communities are excluded from consultations. Displacement follows, and then criminalisation, since there is no equal power in negotiation (KII07).”*

Moreover, while IP communities as a whole are marginalised and excluded from environmental decision-making, this is especially true for Indigenous women, who face additional barriers to political participation due to gender-based discrimination ([UN News, 2025](#)). A 2020 research conducted by the Indigenous Women’s Association of the Archipelago found that 67.4% of the 1,116 surveyed Indigenous women had never been involved in any kind of decision-making process on land and natural resources management ([Yunitasari & Yusvitasari, 2024](#)). Indigenous women from Desa Mekar Jaya reported never having heard of FPIC, as only the men were consulted regarding the institution of industrial-scale palm oil plantations, despite the fact that they would be working in the plantations together with the men ([Tagliarino et al., 2016](#)). The lack of engagement with representatives of all community members fails to address potential risks or consequences specific to, in this case, Indigenous women ([Women’s Earth & Climate Action Network, 2025](#)).

When their FPIC rights are violated, IPs also struggle to access grievance mechanisms, further exacerbating their structural vulnerabilities. For instance, while designed ostensibly to help rural communities handle violations of its standards, including FPIC standards, Indigenous communities struggle to access mechanisms like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil’s conflict resolution mechanism ([Forest Peoples Programme, 2025](#)). Such mechanisms also have little to no guarantee of compensation, due to time and cost constraints, making them unfair and ineffective in providing a meaningful remedy for rural communities’ grievances (KII07; [Afrizal et al., 2022](#)). Additionally, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil’s conflict resolution process has been found to be biased towards corporate interests ([Afrizal et al., 2022](#)). This is not uncommon in grievance mechanisms facilitated by third parties, as the latter are often financed or administered by the companies themselves (KII07).

All in all, through appeals to economic growth, climate disinformation has crafted the perception that only the state is truly able to identify development priorities and manage natural resources, legitimising IPs’ exclusion from environmental decision-making ([Asrinaldi, 2022](#); [Siagian, 2021](#)). Despite positive steps towards greater recognition of IP rights and inclusion in local-level decision-making, IP voices are still largely marginalised or included mostly in performative ways. IPs’ exclusion from environmental decision-making affects many dimensions of community life, including displacement, socio-cultural aspects and heritage loss, thus exacerbating their socio-cultural vulnerabilities in favour of state-led development.

### 3.2. Forced Displacement

The second impact of climate disinformation, and a tangible effect of the exclusion from environmental decision-making, is forced displacement. First, government-led displacement is presented as a necessity for the implementation of large-scale development operations through appeals to economic progress and false climate solutions. The framing of opposition as extremism via climate conspiracy narratives also fosters this process. Second, greenwashing strategies are employed by companies to

justify forced displacement. In these instances, climate disinformation facilitates the “reclamation” of Indigenous lands and resources by state and corporate actors, exacerbating IPs’ structural vulnerabilities under the guise of national development.

In Indonesia, IPs encounter forced displacement due to the subversion of legislative frameworks aimed at protecting Indigenous land tenure rights. These include a 2013 landmark Constitutional Court ruling, which declared that IPs’ forests are not state-owned (See Section 1.2.1). Nevertheless, this ruling is rendered ineffective by complex and time-consuming procedures for IPs to assert their rights over their land ([Tenure Facility, 2025](#); [Karakoro, 2021](#)). Simultaneously, Indonesia has increasingly adopted seemingly “progressive” legal frameworks and legislations that are presented as promoting social justice, but their real-world implementation often falls short of these promises, prioritising state control and economic growth, and enabling developmentalist policies that increase social and ecological injustices ([Risnandar & Zaenudin, 2025](#)).

Under this “progressive” façade, legislative frameworks such as the Omnibus Law (2020) and the new Criminal Procedure Code (2023) are often exploited by state and non-state actors to justify forced displacement and land rights violations (*Ibid.*). The latter law fails to explicitly recognise IPs and to address their distinct rights or legal safeguards ([Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, 2025](#); [Mustika, 2025](#)). Meanwhile, progress towards the Indigenous Peoples Bill, which would represent an important step towards the recognition of customary tenure, is also slow and insufficient ([Asian Society of International Law, 2025](#); [Jong, 2025b](#)).

### 3.2.1. State-led Displacement

Firstly, the Indonesian government instrumentalises the law to support the conflation of environmental protection with land acquisition, pushing the developmentalist agenda via false climate solutions and framing opposition to such projects as extremism via climate conspiracy narratives.

Presidential Regulation on Forest Area Regulation (2025) exemplifies the use of false climate solutions and climate conspiracy narratives to advance developmentalist policies. Under this law, President Prabowo has established a military task force to force-claim so-called illegally occupied forest areas across the country ([Jong, 2025d](#)). The initiative seeks to crack down on 3.7 million hectares of illegal oil palm plantations and 1,063 illegal mining operations ([Bernadette & Widianto, 2025](#)). However, in its practical implementation, the task force makes no distinction between large-scale corporate activities and those of local communities, laying the groundwork for the forced eviction of IPs ([Jong, 2025d](#)). By July 2025, the task force had already acquired 15,000ha of land in Aceh province, targeting local communities’ durian and candlenut crops, rather than taking action against major companies operating in the same area ([Jong, 2025h](#)). This has led to the displacement of Indigenous and local communities, whose lands have been transferred into the state-owned company PT Agrinas Palma Nusantara ([Indonesia Business Post, 2025](#)). Another case includes the forced displacement of around 40,000 people, among whom are also IPs, in Tesso Nilo national park in Riau province ([Jong, 2025h](#)). These instances showcase how IPs’ structural vulnerability is exacerbated by new national legislations that continue to prioritise economic growth and national development over Indigenous rights, using the “environment” as a façade.

This is also the case for a PSN for the creation of a Food and Energy Development Zone in Merauke, South Papua. In a November 2023 media statement, then President Widodo announced the launch of Project Merauke with the declared purpose of contributing to the country’s sustainability by increasing renewable energy production ([Indonesia Business Post, 2024](#); [Rumbiak, 2024](#)). The PSN comprises three initiatives: (1) sugarcane and bioethanol plantation; (2) agricultural land optimisation and (3) new rice fields creation, which in total require more than 2 million hectares of land area ([Yayasan Pusaka](#)

Bentala Rakyat, 2024). Consultation processes with local communities for PSN Merauke were either lacking altogether or largely performative, not reflecting the communities' concerns.

The government issued business permits for land and forest use for the three initiatives without prior consultation with Indigenous communities (Jong, 2025c). The sugarcane and bioethanol plantation project will occupy more than 500,000 hectares, 316,463 of which are located in the customary area of the Yei customary law community (Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024). Similarly, the new rice fields also fall within customary areas, in particular of the *Malind*, *Maklew*, *Khimaima* and *Yei* communities, affecting more than 50,000 IPs (Ibid.). These operations are also contributing to deforestation and the destruction of peatland ecosystems, which are rich in biodiversity and are fundamental for many aspects of Indigenous life (Ibid.).

In Merauke and other large-scale PSNs, forced displacement in the name of state-endorsed development projects has been enabled by climate conspiracy narratives, which legitimise the securitisation and militarisation of Indigenous lands. This practice is especially common in Papua, where, between 2018 and 2020, the Indonesian government deployed over 21,370 troops to fight "Armed Criminal Groups", an intentionally vague term that identifies people or groups carrying out confrontational activities (Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development, 2020). In this case, the government endorses climate conspiracy narratives that delegitimise IPs' land stewardship, labelling those who oppose its operations in West Papua as terrorists (Minority Rights Group, 2021; KII02). The militarisation of Indigenous territories in West Papua for "national security" has led to the displacement of numerous families and the consequent disruption of traditional livelihoods and knowledge systems (Minority Rights Group, 2021).

*"The government promotes [PSN Merauke] as a positive programme for food security, but it ignores Indigenous rights and the displacement it causes, along with severe environmental impacts. Military forces are involved, and it severely impacts Indigenous communities' security and livelihoods (KII06)."*

PSN Merauke has drawn significant criticism regarding both its human rights violations and its failure potential. Nine UN SRs co-signed letters addressed to the Indonesian government raising concerns around the use of military force on IP communities in Merauke, leading to forced displacement and evictions (Jong, 2025i; Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024). Moreover, doubts about its viability stem from the prior failure of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate, which is seen as serving as a front for establishing oil palm and pulpwood plantations in the same region (Jong, 2024e).

### 3.2.2. Corporate-led Displacement

Second, corporations present a positive environmental façade through greenwashing narratives that conceal, downplay and evade accountability for displacing IPs.

For instance, APRIL, a subsidiary of RGE in Indonesia, introduced its Sustainable Forest Management Policy, which outlines the company's sustainable development commitments, including respecting the consent of IP communities and recognising their rights to customary land (Environmental Paper Network, 2019). However, 72 villages and communities in Riau are engaged in conflicts with APRIL's affiliates or suppliers, with 59 of these cases specifically related to land conflicts, including

deforestation, displacement of communities relying on forest-based livelihoods and the overriding of customary land rights ([Environmental Paper Network, 2019](#)).

Among the numerous companies that operate under APRIL and RGE Group, PT Toba Pulp Lestari has long been involved in conflicts with IP communities, in particular with the *Batak Toba* people from the Pargamanan-Bintang Maria community in North Sumatra, as its pulpwood concession areas significantly overlap 40% of their customary forests ([Coca and Simangunsong, 2023](#); [Rainforest Action Network, 2024b](#)). One third of its concession is dedicated to pulpwood plantations, while the remaining two-thirds are prepared for future conversion ([Rainforest Action Network, 2024b](#)). Evidence shows that at least 306 hectares of natural forest were cleared within PT Toba Pulp Lestari's concessions after December 2020 ([Rainforest Action Network, 2024c](#)). The company's deforestation resulted in the degradation of local ecosystems and the destruction of traditional livelihoods. Local communities have fought for over 20 years to have their customary territories recognised, while the company was able to quickly secure government licenses for pulp plantations, displacing local communities ([Rainforest Action Network, 2017](#)). Despite being confronted with these facts, the company continues to reject any accountability, claiming that forest loss was caused by communities' clearing activities rather than its own ([Rainforest Action Network, 2024c](#)). The company's claims of sustainability and partnership with local communities are thus contradicted by a clear record of deforestation and forced displacement.

Another company of RGE Group is PT Mayawana Persada – an industrial timber plantation company ([Rainforest Action Network, 2024d](#)). PT Mayawana Persada primarily operates in West Kalimantan, where its activities directly infringe upon the *Dayak* IP communities of Kualan Hilir of their rights to their customary lands ([Environmental Paper Network, 2023](#)). In 2010, the company was granted a land concession of 136,710 hectares ([Greenpeace, 2025](#)), and the company cleared over 5,000 hectares of natural rainforest in 2021 and forcibly evicted communities from their ancestral lands ([Environmental Paper Network, 2023](#)). The following year, in 2022, it cleared an additional 6,700 hectares of forest ([Aid Environment, 2023](#)). The company was documented in June 2023 using bulldozers as a means of evicting the *Dayak* community from their land ([LinkarBorneo, 2023](#)). 13 IP community members were arrested for resisting the bulldozers ([Environmental Paper Network, 2023](#)).

The company's concession also covers an area called Sabar Bubu Hill, which was declared as Tonah Colap Torun Pusaka's customary forest in 2002, years before the company was granted land concessions ([Indonesian Forum for the Environment, 2024](#); [Greenpeace, 2025](#)). In June 2023, the company allegedly deforested the Tonah Colap Torun Pusaka customary forest owned by IP communities of Benua Kualan Hilir ([Indonesian Forum for the Environment, 2024](#)).

These instances of forced displacement and environmental destruction exacerbate IPs socio-cultural vulnerabilities in the name of state-led development. They showcase how land acquisition is justified through the promotion of false climate solutions, climate conspiracy narratives and corporate greenwashing, which legitimise large-scale development projects despite the effects on the environment and local communities. In both corporate and government-led displacement, climate disinformation allows actors to present a sustainable image to the public while systematically violating IPs' land rights.

### 3.3. Undermining of Indigenous Knowledge

The third impact is the fact that IPs are subjected to systemic delegitimisation of their intergenerational knowledge, which is inherently tied to ancestral lands, forests and rivers (KII10). This marginalisation is reinforced by Indonesia's state-centric developmentalism, which exacerbates IPs' socio-cultural vulnerabilities by undermining cultural heritage preservation, community pride and cohesion. First, Indigenous practices and institutions, vital for cultural identity, livelihoods and climate adaptation, are



presented as obstacles to national development through appeals to economic growth that undermine Indigenous traditional stewardship. Second, such appeals coupled with false climate solutions also enable the promotion of PSNs as “national interest”, justifying forced displacement and ecological destruction.

Firstly, climate disinformation is employed to undermine Indigenous practices and institutions that pursue the preservation of local ecosystems and minimise environmental degradation, as intergenerational Indigenous knowledge systems draw upon generations of sustainable hunting, gathering and farming techniques (Asrawijaya, 2024). Indigenous knowledge has been undermined via the delegitimisation of Indigenous land stewardship, as appeals to economic progress construct state-led initiatives as inherently “modern” and “efficient” (Salamanca, 2019). KII10, a representative of an environmental INGO, expands on the mutual reinforcement between Indigenous conservation and sustainable development:

*“We try to show that recognising Indigenous rights is not against development, it’s actually part of sustainable development ... We want to move from a zero-sum mindset – where development means destroying forests – toward a win-win approach, where development and conservation go hand in hand (KII10).”*

Climate disinformation has led to the ban of swidden agriculture<sup>31</sup> and *Sasi*,<sup>32</sup> traditional practices to maintain the availability of natural resources. Swidden agriculture in particular has been stigmatised as a driver of deforestation and climate change (Ibid.; Asrawijaya, 2024), despite scientific evidence pointing to the fact that the biggest contributors to deforestation are industrial plantations and not swidden agriculture practices (UNFCCC, 2015).

*Sasi* has also been significantly abandoned as a result of the undermining of Indigenous land stewardship through appeals to economic progress, despite representing an important aspect of Indigenous cultural heritage that fosters community cohesion by teaching younger generations cooperation and mutual respect (Matitaputty, 2021). The most significant *Sasi* abandonments are recorded on islands that are closest to large regional urban centres, where Indigenous communities were forced to abandon traditional – and more sustainable – practices and rather adopt destructive fishing practices, such as pearl farming, to earn their livelihoods (Adiastuti et al., 2019). The abandonment of *Sasi* practices represents a loss of Indigenous ecological knowledge and natural resources, as scientific evidence shows that the villages that still practice *Sasi* statistically tend to have better marine resource conditions than those that do not (Ibid.) – though they also face decreasing monetary benefits.

The entry of palm oil company PT Agri Cipta Persada in Muting Village, South Papua Province, in 2017, showcases how the abandonment of *Sasi*, deemed “obsolete” compared to palm oil plantations, has fostered conflict and division among local communities. Some Indigenous leaders erected warning signs indicating that the lands should not be occupied by the company, as part of the traditional *Sasi* rituals of alternating harvest and rest, used to maintain the long-term sustainability of land and

<sup>31</sup> Swidden agriculture consists of the controlled burning of small patches of land to allow the natural regeneration of the soil over time (Alam et al., 2023).

<sup>32</sup> *Sasi* is a customary institution that administers land and water resources (WWF, 2019). It alternates periods of harvest and rest, and determines fishing limits according to natural resources regeneration and breeding patterns (Az-Zahra & Guntur, 2025).

resources (Gobay et al., 2017). This assertion of land ownership was disputed among local communities, with those who supported PT Agri Cipta Persada destroying the *Sasi* prohibition signs and accusing those who rejected palm oil plantations of being anti-development and anti-prosperity (Ibid.).

Yet, it must be noted that the support among some Indigenous residents reflects not a rejection of environmental stewardship per se, but the structural marginalisation of customary practices like *Sasi*, which have been rendered economically “unviable” under rising cash-based living costs, limited state support and development narratives that equate prosperity solely with extractive industries. This case, therefore, demonstrates how climate disinformation, via the portrayal of Indigenous knowledge as “outdated” and “anti-development” leads to the erosion of community stewardship and traditional practices. The abandonment of these practices has devastating effects on numerous aspects of Indigenous life, including their livelihoods, cultural expression, climate change adaptation and community resilience, thus exacerbating their socio-cultural vulnerabilities.

Secondly, Indigenous knowledge is undermined as a consequence of climate disinformation-enabled environmental destruction, which disrupts knowledge transmission, cutting new generations off from the environment in which their communities have lived for generations (Gayatri & Suryani, 2024; Samdhana Institute, 2019). The struggle for land strongly affects the preservation of Indigenous cultures, languages and traditions (KII01; 04; 07; 08; 09; 10).

Despite being promoted as a symbol of unity that reflects Indonesia’s cultural diversity and richness (Nusantara, n.d.), the IKN project raises these concerns. Following Indonesia’s state-centric developmentalism, IKN prioritises a homogenised national identity over local differences, thereby threatening local cultures and knowledge systems (Hernawan, 2023; Jong, 2025g). This new capital project – especially its “green” components that have been identified as a false climate solution – is in fact linked to widespread environmental and human rights violations. Still, its “ecological” façade has been used to justify the displacement of local communities (see Section 3.2.1), undermining key aspects of community resilience, including traditional livelihoods, medicine and craft production, which rely on the natural resources of ancestral lands (Gayatri & Suryani, 2024).

*“National media often just quote the officials. For example, when they talk about “Green City” or “Forest City” for IKN. On TV, it looks very green, very sophisticated. But we, as Indigenous journalists, show the other side: whose forest is being “re-greened”? It’s our customary land. What happens to the medicinal plants that our mothers used to pick there? They are gone, replaced by industrial trees that are “neat” but don’t serve the ecosystem or the community (FGD01).”*

Another case that exemplifies the impacts of disinformation-enabled environmental destruction on Indigenous knowledge consists of the case of PSN Lambo-Mbay Dam and the *Rendu* community in Nagekeo Regency, Central Java. Presented through appeals to economic growth, the construction of Lambo-Mbay Dam was described by Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka as a project that would benefit the economic development of local communities by supporting agricultural irrigation and flood control (Indonesian National Police, 2025). Despite this, the Lambo-Mbay Dam is already threatening the *Rendu* community’s food security and local traditions, which rely on their ancestral lands (Rumpia, 2024). The ancestral knowledge of the *Rendu* community is specific to the ecosystem that they have

inhabited for generations, including planting drought-tolerant cassava and sorghum crops for food security, and using all parts of local palm fruit and bamboo for sugar, crafts and house components (*Ibid.*). However, the construction of the Dam is disrupting their relationship with nature, leading to the loss of water sources and elements used for traditional crafts, such as cotton and natural dyes (*Ibid.*). In addition, parts of the project area include ancestral graves, further exacerbating perceptions of cultural neglect and disrespect (*Ibid.*).

In these cases and more, Indigenous women are particularly affected by the loss of traditional knowledge, since they hold knowledge on the forest and its resources and act as intergenerational mediators, transmitting values from the elders to the youth (*Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 2023*). However, Indigenous women's leadership is often underestimated, due to the discourse that portrays them only as victims (KII01; 02), refusing to acknowledge their frontline role in community resilience and heritage preservation (*Thiên, 2025*).

These examples highlight how, in an effort to legitimise developmentalist priorities, climate disinformation endangers Indigenous knowledge systems, undermining, as a consequence, communities' cultural pride and unity. This poses a great threat to Indigenous communities' climate adaptation and survival, exacerbating their socio-cultural vulnerabilities.

### 3.4. Criminalisation of IPs

Lastly, the criminalisation of IPs in Indonesia is a pervasive strategy to suppress their resistance against land grabbing and environmental destruction. This tactic is facilitated by climate disinformation that justifies IPs' criminalisation by overmagnifying or decontextualising information from its original context. This section presents two dynamics: the misuse of resource governance laws and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). The use of these laws contributes to the creation of a repressive environment in which IP rights are not recognised and their resistance – including efforts to highlight grievances from the above three forms of impacts – is reframed as a threat to the national developmental agenda.

In Indonesia, criminalisation is enabled by the government's refusal to officially recognise IPs, making their legal claims (including over their customary lands) disputable (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara & Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2017*). As a result, between 2014 and 2024, 687 land conflicts covering a total of 11 million hectares of Indigenous land were recorded, resulting in the criminal persecution of 925 community members (*Jong, 2024*). In this context, criminalisation is not limited to the instrumentalisation of laws to crack down on opposition; it also encompasses intimidation, abduction and arbitrary detention of IPs and environmental defenders (*International Federation for Human Rights, 2022*). The IP Bill would represent a turning point in the recognition of customary tenure, thereby limiting the legal mechanisms through which IPs are criminalised, but progress has been insufficient (*Asian Society of International Law, 2025*). KII12, a representative of an Indigenous CSO, expands on this:

*“This Indigenous Peoples Bill is what should protect us from many issues, including land seizures, criminalisation, and everything else. But as it stands, we are not protected. Without this law, authorities are free to criminalise our customary leaders. And because we have no legal protection, we cannot do anything. All we can do is hope that this law will finally be passed. (KII12).”*

### 3.4.1. The Misuse of Resource Governance Laws

The first tactic is the misuse of resource governance laws, including the Omnibus Law (2020) and the Conservation Law (2024), that frame community resistance as unlawful or obstructive through the portrayal of defenders as extremists (see Section 2.4.1). Often framed as necessary for national development through appeals to economic progress, these laws are disproportionately and selectively enforced against Indigenous communities whose livelihoods are closely tied to their ancestral territories, thus amplifying their structural vulnerabilities.

The Omnibus Law (2020) stipulated to simplify the licensing and land acquisition process for national development projects (UN Trade and Development, 2025), shifting the power balance between the state and local communities established by the Basic Agrarian Law (1960) by increasing the government’s spatial management authority (Damayanti et al., 2025). It also supports the government’s re-centralisation efforts.

Amongst the many controversial measures introduced is the establishment of a Land Bank with the duty of managing the land controlled by the government and allocating it to support national development priorities defined by authorities. The acquisition mechanisms of the Land Bank are still unclear, but in the absence of binding FPIC, this puts at risk IPs’ customary land rights, likely leading to increased criminalisation of those who resist displacement (Damayanti et al., 2025). Promoted as a measure to enhance collective well-being and sustainable development through climate disinformation, in reality, the Omnibus Law further marginalises IPs from environmental governance.

The Omnibus Law also stipulates the establishment of the Nationally Strategic Area Zoning Plan to identify and manage national areas with particular economic, environmental, socio-cultural and security value. Numerous strategic areas overlap with customary lands that have been inhabited for centuries by Indigenous communities through customary-based land tenure (Damayanti et al., 2025). Since the Law does not recognise customary-based land tenure, Indigenous communities living in strategic areas have been criminalised for their permanence on those territories (Fair Planet, 2024).

The case of PT Toba Pulp Lestari, a subsidiary within the RGE group, illustrates this dynamic. At least 12 IP communities resisting the company’s operations in North Sumatra reported intimidation in 2023 alone, and between 2015 and 2022, 75 Indigenous community members were criminalised for defending their territories against the company (Ibid.; Rainforest Action Network, 2025). The case of Sorbatua Siallagan, an Indigenous elder from Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, illustrates how criminalisation operates through the instrumentalisation of the Omnibus Law. In 2022, he was sentenced to two years in prison and fined IDR 1 billion (approximately USD 60,000) for allegedly occupying and damaging the concession forest of the company, which coincided with the *Ompu Umbak Siallagan* community’s customary land since before the independence (KII12; Sinambela, 2025; Simanjuntak, 2024). The prosecutor accused Sorbatua Siallagan of violating Article 50 of the Omnibus Law (Sinambela, 2025), but during an appeal at the Medan High Court, the Indigenous elder was finally

acquitted (KII12). While there was an acquittal in this case, oftentimes, Indigenous leaders have been arrested or jailed on dubious charges of “illegal occupation” or “trespassing” within their own customary lands (KII12; Karokaro, 2020; Baffoni, 2024).

Other laws that are commonly used to criminalise IPs for their permanence on their customary territories are the amended Conservation Law No.5 (1990) and the new Conservation Law (2024). Through the latter, the government established new conservation areas which overlap with customary territories (Jong, 2025g), justifying land grabs and leading to the criminalisation of Indigenous communities (Tempo, 2024). For instance, an Indigenous farmer from the island of Flores in Eastern Indonesia was arrested twice in 2013 and 2023 for building a house on a territory that was designated as a nature park, despite having been his family’s ancestral land since 1932 (Jong, 2025g). While the verdict that found him guilty of violating the Conservation Act (1990) was overturned in a 2024 decision by the Supreme Court, it reflects a deeper issue in Indonesia’s conservation regime, and how it is used to criminalise, rather than enhance, Indigenous conservation efforts (Ibid.).

*“That’s how corporate and state interests collaborate to get land for industrial projects. The media and public discourse don’t see it as [Indigenous Peoples’] right to defend their land. They don’t question why our legal system is so unfair (KII04)”*

### 3.4.2. Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP)

The second form relies on corporations’ use of climate conspiracy narratives to criminalise IPs’ advocacy efforts through SLAPPs. Climate conspiracy narratives deliberately frame activism as extremism, magnifying minor or non-threatening actions and instrumentalising them to criminalise IPs, while also diverting attention from companies’ environmental degradation.

SLAPPs’ goal is to divert the targets’ efforts and resources from their advocacy work to the court case, thus representing an effective tool for the obstruction of public advocacy efforts (Sulistiawati & Zain, 2025). Regardless of the appeal’s outcome, therefore, SLAPPs continue to perpetuate fear among targets and community members, straining them financially and emotionally and discouraging them from defending their right to a clean environment (Sulistiawati & Zain, 2025).

The use of SLAPPs has been a regular feature in environmental activism in Indonesia, despite provisions in Article 66 of the Law on Environmental Protection and Management (2009), also known as “Anti-SLAPP Law”, which stipulates that anyone who fights for the right to a good and healthy environment would not be sued, whether from criminal or civil lawsuits. However, Indonesia’s Anti-SLAPP frameworks do not explicitly account for or address disinformation, weakening courts’ ability to recognise and punish such instances (Jong, 2021d).

IPs and defenders also face substantial challenges when accessing Anti-SLAPP mechanisms. First, the law does not clearly define who qualifies as an “environmental rights defender”. Second, it requires that the actions subject to SLAPP be legally grounded, thus excluding spontaneous community actions (Ibid.). These gaps result in inconsistent judicial interpretations of the Anti-SLAPP Law, undermining the effective protection of human rights defenders and exacerbating IPs’ vulnerability to criminalisation (Ibid.).

The intimidating nature of SLAPPs is exemplified by a 2020 case of 6 villagers charged with “abuse of position” and “document falsification” for attending a meeting held to plan a class-action lawsuit against the company PT Bangka Asindo Agri for polluting the air in Sumatra (Jong, 2021d). The accusations targeting the villagers for allegedly impersonating officials were founded on the grounds that the villagers (ex-neighbourhood unit chiefs) were no longer serving as unit heads by the time the meeting was held (Ibid.). The villagers were found guilty and sentenced to a month in prison, but the decision was later overturned by the Panel of Judges at the Appellate Court in 2021 under the Anti-SLAPP Law (Indonesian Center for Environmental Law, 2021). While the right of the defendants to fight for a good and healthy environment was recognised by the Appellate Court (Sulistiawati & Zain, 2025), this case exemplifies how climate conspiracy narratives magnify minor details and extrapolate them from their original context, delegitimising IPs and environmental defenders and diverting attention from the real issue of corporate pollution.

Another allegation often used by corporations to criminalise environmental defenders is “defamation”. That was the case for human rights activists Fatia Maulidiyanti and Haris Azhar, who voiced their concerns on the detrimental effects on human rights of mining operations in Papua involving former Minister Luhut Pandjaitan (Human Rights Monitor, 2024). In September 2023, the activists were accused of “defamation” for pointing out the link between the increasing militarisation in West Papua and the mining businesses in the province (Ibid.). Mining operations are promoted as national development priorities, and those who criticise their negative environmental and human rights impacts are often discredited through climate conspiracy narratives, which accuse them of being part of foreign-funded smear campaigns seeking to hamper Indonesia’s growth (Jong, 2025e). While eventually dismissed of all charges in January 2024, the process, seeking to stall their advocacy work, took an emotional and economic toll on the activists (Frontline Defenders, n.d.). This case serves to concretise the not uncommon use of defamation allegations to criminalise environmental and human rights activists. Numerous IPs reported being targeted by SLAPPs, accusing them of damaging the reputations of people and companies that engage in unsustainable practices (KII01).

In a different case, 27 farmers from the Maba Sangaji village, located in North Maluku, were arrested in May 2025 for protesting against deforestation, water pollution and displacement brought by nickel-mining company PT Position (Indonesia Business Post, 2025d). Eleven of them were charged with “extortion”, “carrying sharp weapons” and “obstructing mining activities” and accused of being “preman”, members of Indonesian organised crime groups (Asian Human Rights Defenders, 2025). The “sharp weapons” that the farmers were accused of carrying consisted of blades, which they were carrying for agricultural purposes (Jong, 2025j). However, their presence during the protests was used to substantiate the misleading narrative that depicted the incident as a case of “premanism”. The deliberate distortion of information regarding the peaceful intent of the farmers exemplifies how SLAPPs rely on climate conspiracy narratives to present IPs in a threatening way.

*“If you look at how Indigenous People in Papua are represented in national media, it’s often from a state security perspective, not from the perspective of their rights or voices ... The same story can sound very different depending on how it’s framed – for example, “forest encroachment” versus “defending ancestral land” (KII02).”*

These examples highlight the systemic targeting of Indigenous leaders in a coordinated strategy involving private corporations and state authorities (Human Rights Monitor, 2025). To note, a number of these cases may be addressed by the provisions in the new Criminal Code (2023), particularly Article 2, which formally recognises “living law” (*adat*) as a basis for criminal responsibility.

However, beyond the issues that may arise from the Code’s ambiguous enforcement mechanisms, which may give rise to different regional interpretations (See Section 3.1.2), a number of provisions may also be used to criminalise IPs’ opposition. In particular, Article 433 updates the penalties for online and offline defamation, which is often instrumentalised to target environmental activists (Butt, 2023). Article 188 criminalises the spread of teachings that conflict with *Pancasila*, whose vagueness may be instrumentalised to persecute IPs on the grounds of being “obstacles to social development” (*Ibid.*). Altogether, these provisions risk reinforcing existing patterns of criminalisation by providing new legal grounds for the criminalisation of Indigenous opposition and environmental activism.

Appeals to economic progress and false climate solutions are used to promote development projects as beneficial, covering up their detrimental effects under a developmentalist rhetoric. This, coupled with climate conspiracy narratives, allows authorities to frame any resistance to such projects as a form of extremism, enabling the criminalisation of IPs and environmental defenders in Indonesia. Criminalisation not only removes community leaders from the struggle but also generates a climate of fear, making collective resistance more difficult to sustain.

Altogether, Chapter 3 has explored four impacts of climate disinformation on IPs in Indonesia, namely: exclusion from environmental decision-making, forced displacement, undermining of Indigenous knowledge, and criminalisation. These dynamics exacerbate IPs’ structural vulnerabilities, reinforcing structural marginalisation that stems from Indonesia’s prioritisation of state-led developmentalism. Recommendations to address these impacts are explored in Chapter 4.

## 4. Recommendations

This chapter provides a set of evidence-based recommendations to combat the growing issue of climate disinformation in Indonesia, specifically focusing on its amplified effect on IPs' vulnerabilities. Based on the report's findings, these recommendations are designed to foster a more inclusive and knowledge-based climate governance. They are aimed at key stakeholders crucial for effectively countering disinformation, safeguarding IP vulnerabilities and ensuring IPs' active and meaningful involvement in climate action.

### **The United Nations and International Human Rights Mechanisms should:**

- Seek timely reporting and compliance with international treaties and agreements signed by Indonesia, especially the ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention No 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.
- Integrate climate disinformation into the mandates of UN Special Procedures, including Special Rapporteurs on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, on the rights of IPs and on the right to development, and the Working Group on Business and Human Rights.
- Provide coordinate guidance, technical assistance and accountability frameworks that help Indonesia to pursue economic development while ensuring its climate actions respect and protect the rights, knowledge systems and land stewardship of IPs.
- Convene regional consultations on climate disinformation and Indigenous rights, bringing together UN bodies, Indigenous representatives and civil society actors to identify cross-border patterns, share best practices and inform global human rights standards with context-specific insights.

### **The Relevant Ministries of the Government of Indonesia should:**

- Invite UN Special Procedures to increase visits to Indonesia and cover issues around Indigenous rights and climate disinformation.
- At the constitutional level, recognise the distinct identity of IPs following UNDRIP standards, as opposed to conflating them with various ethnic groups and with the term MHA.
- Prioritise the adoption of the IP Bill to establish a comprehensive framework for the protection and promotion of IP rights.
- Simplify the official recognition of customary territories to provide Indigenous communities with timely and accessible legal protection against encroachment by development projects.
- Decentralise environmental governance by empowering local governments with greater decision-making and oversight authority, ensuring that they integrate Indigenous institutions and ecological knowledge into environmental decision-making.
- Abolish the Omnibus Law to reverse the re-centralisation of decision-making and the prioritisation of business interests over Indigenous land rights.



- Clarify and strengthen the New Criminal Code to ensure it protects IPs rather than corporate interests and is implemented consistently across regions.
- Strengthen existing legal protections for freedom of expression, especially the “Anti-SLAPP Law” to prosecute the unfair use of Strategic Lawsuits.
- Prioritise adopting an Amnesty Law that clears human rights defenders of criminal charges.
- Introduce binding FPIC requirements for all projects, including those of “national interest” as well as clearly define FPIC, stressing the importance of each of its components, its continuous nature and the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including Indigenous women.
- Establish accessible and impartial grievance mechanisms to settle disputes between local communities and private companies. Ensure that such mechanisms are culturally-sensitive and knowledgeable about Indigenous cultures to provide timely and fair compensation to affected communities.
- Integrate a curriculum on climate disinformation into existing disinformation-related initiatives and training programmes.
- Ensure the safety of IPs and journalists reporting on deforestation by providing safe channels to report threats or attacks and rapid response mechanisms.

#### **INGOs should:**

- Submit reports to UN human rights mechanisms highlighting how climate disinformation enables the systematic violation of FPIC, land dispossession and the criminalisation of IPs.
- Support movement-building by facilitating safe and free convenings, cross-community dialogue and alliance formation among IP groups, environmental defender and civil society actors, to foster collective resistance against shared threats of displacement and criminalisation.
- Provide funding and technical support to give visibility to Indigenous media and promote community-led storytelling, rights-respecting narratives in national and international discourse.
- Facilitate qualified legal support, rights-based legal empowerment and sustained advocacy for IPs facing harassment, prosecution or criminalisation related to environmental or land rights activism from legal aid groups and Indigenous rights organisations.
- Support journalists who are targeted by disinformation campaigns, including access to legal, technical and mental health resources, as well as training on digital safety.

#### **Civil Society Organisations should:**

- Identify, document and report climate disinformation cases affecting IPs (and other actors) and share findings with national and international partners such as INGOs and the media sector.
- Partner with INGOs and the media to conduct digital literacy workshops to empowering the public to critically evaluate and verify digital content, especially tackling climate disinformation.

- Collaborate with INGOs, legal aid organisations and Indigenous rights groups to provide legal assistance to IPs who are experiencing harassment, prosecution or criminalisation due to their environmental or land rights advocacy.
- Collaborate with INGOs and the media sector to identify and dismantle narratives that portray environmental activists as “foreign-funded agents”, “anti-development” or “preman”.
- Conduct culturally and linguistically appropriate training to help IP communities recognise, question and counter disinformation and violations of FPIC during consultations.
- Create spaces for Indigenous women to share and promote traditional ecological knowledge, presenting Indigenous voices as authoritative sources and emphasising their resilience and agency as opposed to “obstacles to development”.
- Support existing community profiling, participatory mapping and capacity building efforts to facilitate IP communities and customary territories’ legal recognition.
- Involve religious leaders in environmental talks to amplify the reach of the truthful climate messages via trusted climate sources among the Muslim population.

#### **The Media Sector should:**

- Proactively investigate and expose cases of climate disinformation and malinformation affecting IPs and other vulnerable communities.
- Uphold ethical journalism standards and support independent verification of state and corporate climate initiatives, while ensuring journalists have open access to data, consultations and affected communities to report accurately and without state interference.
- Verify independently and report the facts underlying allegations against IPs, rather than merely reporting the accusations, explicitly calling out SLAPPs to avoid contributing to IPs’ criminalisation.
- Develop content that accompanies facts with an explanation of the tactics and narratives that are commonly used to mislead the audience about climate and Indigenous issues, to build awareness and resilience among the local population.
- Contextualise “green projects” by providing audience with companies’ social and environmental track record, helping readers assess the credibility of new sustainability claims.
- Investigate corporate partnerships, funding sources, and public relations strategies that support eco-tourism and influencer campaigns, making the interests behind the narratives transparent.
- Prioritise on-the-ground reporting in remote Indigenous territories to overcome the information vacuum caused by geographical isolation and limited digital connectivity.
- Invest and train IP journalists to co-create content with, ensuring ethical co-production of stories that foster trust and accurately share their knowledge and concerns, countering narratives that portray them as obstacles to national development or powerless victims.

- Introduce Indigenous women's knowledge, perspectives and experiences in media coverage, providing them space to voice struggles arising from the intersection of Indigeneity, gender, and socio-economic factors.

#### **Technology Companies should:**

- Collaborate with INGOs to provide subsidised digital tools and training for Indigenous communities' digital literacy, strengthening their exposure to reliable information and their presence in online climate discussions.
- Invest in connectivity initiatives in rural and Indigenous areas to enable access to diverse and credible information sources.
- Enforce stricter moderation policies against climate disinformation and racism against IPs, including climate conspiracy theories, false claims promoting harmful environmental projects, and content that delegitimises Indigenous knowledge.
- Regularly publish transparency reports detailing rationale for detection, removal and enforcement actions against climate disinformation.
- Proactively adjust algorithms to limit the spread of climate disinformation and highlight credible and diverse sources, including Indigenous-led media and community information channels.

#### **Indigenous Communities should:**

- Implement targeted capacity-building initiatives and training programmes focused on identifying and countering climate disinformation; training programmes should be led by trusted local CSOs/NGOs and delivered in Indigenous languages.
- Collaborate proactively with independent media disseminating accurate Indigenous climate information and rights violations to counter misleading narratives.
- Collaborate proactively with technology companies and the media sector to implement robust digital literacy training programmes.
- Build community-based monitoring networks to identify, document and report climate disinformation and tokenistic consultations, documenting FPIC violations to create evidence for land rights advocacy.
- Participate in existing intra-community knowledge-sharing initiatives to share accurate climate information and strengthen advocacy networks.
- Utilise digital storytelling to bring global visibility to local realities, documenting everyday practices to preserve Indigenous knowledge and educate urban communities.
- Employ social media to create a real-time record for environmental and rights advocacy.
- Foster Indigenous women's participation in consultations and discussion forums to include their voices in the environmental decision-making process as primary keepers of biodiversity knowledge.

## 5. Conclusion

While generally a direct continuation of Jokowi's policies, there have been efforts by the Prabowo administration to "reimagine" development through a more people-centric approach (Buehler, 2025). Nevertheless, this empty rhetoric continues to perpetuate the systemic subordination of IPs' vulnerabilities towards the promotion of so-called national development priorities (East Asia Forum, 2025), especially those driven by PSNs – large-scale development initiatives to accelerate economic growth and improve public welfare – whose environmental and socio-economic harm is often so deliberately concealed (Bizindo, 2024).

These challenges are compounded by the Indonesian government's failure to legally recognise the Indigeneity of IPs in accordance with international human rights standards. In fact, the most important piece of legislation that would provide comprehensive legal recognition to IPs has been stalled in Parliament with no significant progress since 2003 (Asian Society of International Law, 2025). This is indicative of the unwillingness of the government-corporate nexus to include IPs in the decision-making process over land and resources, thereby enabling the continued imposition of developmentalist policies (Jong, 2025b).

This report has introduced the role of climate disinformation towards this goal. In Chapter 2, four main forms of climate disinformation were identified, namely: corporate greenwashing, promotion of false climate solutions, appeals to economic growth and deflecting accountability for climate change. Climate disinformation has been deliberately employed to promote an Indonesian state-centric developmentalist narrative, which promotes national development priorities following re-centralisation and homogeneity. This narrative relies on the juxtaposition of "modern" development with Indigenous stewardship, presenting the two as incompatible and fundamentally opposed, legitimising large scale investments by the government and private sector.

Chapter 3 then identified four main impacts of climate disinformation on IPs. First, the exclusion of IPs from environmental decision-making through the re-centralisation of resource governance and the overriding of FPIC processes, which are either absent or performative. Second, IPs are forcibly displaced by state actors and corporations for the implementation of large-scale development operations, which are portrayed as necessary for national development. Third, Indigenous knowledge is undermined by appeals to economic growth, which stigmatises traditional practices, as well as by disinformation-enabled displacement. Lastly, IP and their advocates are routinely criminalised through the misuse of resource governance laws and SLAPPs, which rely on the portrayal of activists as security threats.

While these findings form the core of the report, the research has also surfaced three key insights that extend beyond the immediate evidence. The first consists of the understanding of climate disinformation as a deliberate strategy to shape the idea that Indigenous communities are "obstacles to development", incapable of identifying and representing their own needs and priorities. In the Indonesian context, disinformation is used to legitimise PSNs and large-scale industrial projects in the name of development. Disinformation thus enables the stigmatisation of voices that challenge the dominant developmentalist discourse, eroding public trust in legitimate opposition and shrinking the space for IPs and civil society to defend their rights.

Second, a key form of climate disinformation targeting IPs is malinformation, which goes beyond outright fabrication. Since the public is increasingly aware of climate change, Indigenous rights and corporate misconduct, outright falsehoods are losing their persuasiveness. Instead, this manipulation strategy blurs the line between fact and falsehood, creating seemingly credible narratives that undermine the

legitimacy of Indigenous voices. Ultimately, malinformation reinforces the damaging idea that IPs are hindrances rather than essential partners in tackling environmental crises.

Third, is the crucial need for multi-stakeholder action, and in particular the key role of independent media and constructive journalism, for the identification and documentation of disinformation strategies and the provision of accurate and reliable reporting. In the Indonesian case, the media landscape is largely dominated by conglomerates closely tied with the government. When independent outlets depart from the official narrative, they often face pressures, intimidation and harassment, limiting their capacity to conduct autonomous research. So there is a need to call for increased independent and ethical research on climate (dis)information, to critically examine official narratives and amplify IPs' voices.

Overall, amending climate governance in Indonesia necessitates addressing the underlying power structures that exacerbate socio-cultural vulnerabilities among IPs. Effective climate disinformation efforts must dismantle the legal, economic and media systems that facilitate the spread of political and economic narratives targeting IPs. Together, these insights point to the urgent need for a reimagined approach to climate governance, one grounded in justice, plurality and the full recognition of Indigenous self-determination.

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## Annexe I: List of Respondents

Interview Code	Respondent's Background	Date of KII
KII01	Representative of Women Empowerment CSO	15/10/2025
KII02	Representative of Media INGO	16/10/2025
KII03	Representative of Indigenous CSO	16/10/2025
KII04	Representative of Independent Media Organisation	17/10/2025
KII05	Representative of Indigenous CSO	29/10/2025
KII06	Representative of Indigenous CSO	29/10/2025
KII07	Representative of Environmental INGO	30/10/2025
KII08	Representative of Media INGO	03/11/2025
KII09	Representative of Environmental INGO	05/11/2025
KII10	Representative of Environmental INGO	05/11/2025
KII11	Representative of Media INGO	06/11/2025
KII12	Representative of Indigenous CSO	20/11/2025

## Annexe 2: List of Participants of Focus Group Discussion

Interview Code	Respondent's Background	Date of FDG
FGD01.1	Representative of IP Organisation	11/12/2025
FGD01.2	Representative of IP Organisation	11/12/2025
FGD01.3	Representative of IP Organisation	11/12/2025
FGD01.4	Representative of IP Organisation	11/12/2025
FGD02.1	Representative of IP Community and Local Media	07/01/2026
FGD02.2	Representative of IP Youth Organisation	07/01/2026
FGD02.3	IP Women Media Representative	07/01/2026
FGD02.4	IP Women Media Representative	07/01/2026



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