

The negative consequences of deforestation

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



Earth without forests is a picture that most of human-kind presently could not conceive. Forests cover much of the planet's land area. They are extremely important to humans and the natural world. However, deforestation has been consuming our forests. Deforestation brings about a lot of unexpected effects on the earth and results in many negative consequences. " If the current rate of deforestation continues, the world's rain forests will vanish within 100 years-causing unknown effects on global climate and eliminating the majority of plant and animal species on the planet," according to NASA's Earth Observatory.

Deforestation increases the greenhouse effect and accelerates global warming. It also causes erosion, and the silting of lakes or rivers is caused by soil erosion. The same source claims that deforestation is very hard to be stopped because " the causes of deforestation are very complex. " There are several reasons why this current trend exists. Deforestation occurs in many ways. People destroy or degrade forests because, for them, the benefits seem to outweigh the costs. Underlying causes include such issues as poverty, unequal land ownership, women's status, education and the explosive growth of the population.

Immediate causes are often concerned with a search for land and resources, including both commercial timber and fuelwood. One of the main indirect causes of deforestation is poverty, particularly poverty in rural areas.

Although poverty is not a " principal cause" of deforestation, it is a living condition that the majority of people in this world must endure. While greed and power can be the motivations of some groups in society that deforest, survival and the desire to escape from poverty is what drives most people.

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Poverty is not only the socioeconomic environment that limits people's economic options, damages health but also reduces income generating opportunities. It is an underlying condition that facilitates deforestation. There is some evidence from the industrialized countries of the North that suggests as societies become more economically secure they reach a point where the economic development pressures that drive deforestation are replaced by a growing environmental concern and a greater appreciation of environmental values.

However, for most developing countries that point is off in the far distant future. Most tropical countries are very poor by U. S standards, and farming is a basic way of life for a large part of the population. According to NASA's article, in Brazil, for example, " the average annual earnings per person is U. S. \$5400, compared to \$26, 980 per person in the United States (World Bank, 1998)", and in Bolivia, " which holds part of the Amazon rain forest, the average earnings per person is \$800. " The rural poor have very few options.

There are few prospects of off-farm employment in either the urban centers or the rural areas. Illiteracy further limits the options of many because they do not have the basic tools needed to pursue other economic alternatives to subsistence farming. With few alternatives available to them, the rural poor consider forests as a short-term solution to their economic problems.

Deforestation happens as a result of poverty. More important than that, commercial logging is considered as the major direct cause of deforestation.

NASA's Earth Observatory asserts that " logging can occur selectively-where only the economically valuable species are cut or by clearcutting, where all

the trees are cut. " The forces of large global markets for wood and wood products drive the scale of logging activities. Logging in the tropics does not in any way resemble scientific forestry and is often characterized by a " cut-and-get-out" mentality in logging companies. Forestry uses science and management skills to manipulate the natural vegetation to favor the long term production of a selected number of goods and services.

In contrast, most tropical logging involves the short term exploitation of only industrial wood products with no eye to the future of the forests. The intensity of logging in Asia's forests is much higher than in the forests found in America or Europe. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates: " About half the land area of South America and Europe is covered by forest, but only one-sixth of Asia's land is forested. " And " a study in Indonesia found that when only 3% of the trees were cut, a logging operation damaged 49% of the trees in the forest," as the article from NASA has noted.

In addition, at the national level, governments sell logging concessions to raise money for projects, to pay international debt, or to develop industry. The logging companies seek to harvest the forest and make profit from the sales of pulp and valuable hardwoods such as mahogany. They use heavy machinery, such as bulldozers, road graders, and log skidders, to remove cut trees and build roads, " which is just as damaging to a forest overall as the chainsaws are to the individual trees," according to the same source from NASA. Logging is done because of profits.

Not only individual lumberjacks but also logging companies seek material advantage. Therefore, any country that does not have a suitable forest

management will gain a higher level of deforestation by commercial logging. As we have seen, the causes of deforestation are very complex. Knowing the main indirect and direct causes help us improve our understanding of the causes and also the effects of climatic and environmental change, so that we may become more effective and efficient managers of our natural resources, as well as mitigate potential impacts from natural disasters.