

Investing in Climate Finance: Sustainable Landscapes Success Stories

Climate change, which results primarily from human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases, is having a destructive effect on our natural environment. Increasingly frequent extreme weather events, melting ice caps, and mass species extinction warn us that our ecosystems are undergoing profound changes that threaten our national security and economic system.

These impacts fall hardest on countries in the Global South. In 2024, the tropics lost a record **6.7 million hectares** of primary rainforest—more than in any year over the past two decades. Largely driven by massive fires, tropical primary forests disappeared at a rate of 18 soccer fields per minute. These forests are among the world’s most vital ecosystems, supporting livelihoods and sustaining biodiversity. As land degradation accelerates resource scarcity, international climate finance remains a critical tool to reduce human suffering, prevent conflict, and protect all of God’s creation.

We urge Congress to continue its bipartisan history and robustly fund international climate finance programs in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPs) appropriations bill. This includes at least **\$176 million** for the **Sustainable Landscapes bilateral development account**, which reduces greenhouse gas pollution from deforestation and land degradation.

The former **USAID Riake Project** in Madagascar can serve as testament of the impact this development account has **in advancing human well-being, biodiversity, and economic growth in vulnerable communities:**

- In June 2024, USAID committed \$13 million to the University of Rhode Island’s Coastal Resources Center (CRC) in **Madagascar**. The initiative, termed USAID Riake, supported marine conservation efforts and sustainable development in coastal communities, **doubling U.S. investment in Madagascar’s environmental sector.**
- In prioritizing anti-corruption efforts in coastal resource management, Project Riake countered illegal, unreported, and unregulated fisheries.
- 2026 marks the **sixth year** CRC has implemented projects in Madagascar, following successes from USAID’s Hay Tao initiative: a leadership program aimed at helping women in Madagascar’s fishing communities take on stronger roles in managing fisheries. Under expanded Riake funding, the Fisher Women Leadership Program looks to upscale.

Urge Congress to fund the Sustainable Landscapes development account no less than \$176 million to slow deforestation and protect critical carbon-storing ecosystems.

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