

**CHAPTER II**

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL BATTLEFIELD IN**

**GREENPEACE ADVOCACY AGAINST UNILEVER**

This chapter elaborates the necessary contextual framework to understand the research problem and the dynamics between Greenpeace and Unilever. It argues that Greenpeace Indonesia's advocacy strategies are shaped by its organizational character, ideological commitments, and the structural landscape it navigates in the Indonesian context that becomes Greenpeace's calculated decisions in response to the dominance of Unilever. First, it explores Greenpeace as an environmental TSM, highlighting the core foundation of its global movements and strategies. Second, it explains Greenpeace Indonesia as the main research object, specifying the organization's movement focus and key strategies in Indonesian context. Third, it uncovers the corporate and environmental movement landscape in Indonesia, particularly the growing FMCG market and environmental costs that come afterwards. Lastly, it introduces Unilever as a campaign target of Greenpeace, emphasizing on the company's market power and greenwashing practices that later become Greenpeace's core concerns.

**2.1 Greenpeace as a Transnational Environmental Actor**

**2.1.1 History and Founding Philosophy**

Greenpeace, or legally referred to Greenpeace International, is an independent global activism organization focuses on environmental causes while promoting peace. Its operations are synchronized globally with the noble vision to protect the environment. The humanity work started in the

1971, where it initially intended to fight for US nuclear testing at Amchitka Island in Alaska. A group of activist was sailing from Vancouver, Canada, with the mission of underground nuclear testing protection with the full concern on 3,000 endangered sea otters and home to precious wildlife in the island. The name “Greenpeace” was coined by joining two meaningful issues, which are the environment and the world peace. Though the attempt did not manage to stop the US bombing, the voice initiative had successfully echoed and instantly grabbed public attention. Throughout the 1970s, the organization spreading to regions and covering diverse environmental issues, such as commercial whaling, toxic waste, and environmental abuse.



Figure 2.1 Greenpeace logo  
Source: Greenpeace, n.d.

Greenpeace International was officially formed in 1979 and is based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Over the time, it has grown to a powerful transnational network with the unparalleled global presence conquer notable impacts in over 55 countries across Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific through a global network comprised of 25 independent regional organizations and a coordinating body, Greenpeace International. Unlike most movements that focus on domestic issues and operate in a more limited framework that tends to be scattered all along,

the accumulated power and influence Greenpeace has makes it play a crucial role in global environmental activism by critically assessing the international environmental setbacks and policies. The continuous effort and commitment can be reflected in its success in pushing corporations to adopt sustainable practices and policies demanded by governments and corporations. Most of their core agenda revolves around global environmental issues, covering climate and energy, biodiversity, to social and economic issues, which become the backbone of their sound activism. Greenpeace's structured framework is implemented synchronously across all of its chapters globally, where it is heavily reflected in the way they package their concerns and demands through media-based campaigns, activism symbols, and communication strategies to challenge the target entities, mainly the governments, and corporations.

Greenpeace International stood under the Netherlands laws and is registered with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. Its role within the network covering the strategic level to monitor every campaigns carried out by its regional subsidiaries to align with the global campaign direction, to serve as a legal umbrella for its regional subsidiaries and provide fundraising, HR, training, scientific, and legal support if needed, and to supervise strategical and financial performance. In managing its operation, the Greenpeace International Board consists of 5-9 people and is needed to maintain the organization's integrity and adherence to international good governance. The Board is responsible for high-level campaign strategic

decision. The regional subsidiaries, on the other hand, are assigned to execute regional campaigns that fall under the global campaign framework. Each subsidiaries has full autonomy with their own supervisory role and separate legal entities. Another significant unit is its legal unit comprises of a team of lawyers that helps with strategic litigation and defence, risk management, and advocacy to strengthen the campaign execution.

### **2.1.2 Organizational Structure and Modes of Activism**

Greenpeace operates as a transnational environmental organization with a decentralized yet coordinated structure, comprising autonomous national and regional offices under the broader oversight of Greenpeace International, headquartered in Amsterdam (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2018; Wapner, 1996; Doyle, 2011). This federated structure enables local offices to tailor campaigns to specific ecological and socio-political contexts while maintaining a unified global vision and strategy. While each office adapts its strategies to local contexts, they align with shared global campaign goals and principles, particularly nonviolence, political independence, and direct confrontation of environmental injustices (Boström & Tamm Hallström, 2010).

Greenpeace's independence from government and corporate funding is a core structural principle that enables its confrontational stance against powerful actors, including states and multinational corporations (Jordan & Tuijl, 2000). Funding is sourced exclusively from individual

supporters, allowing Greenpeace to maintain both ideological consistency and tactical autonomy (Doyle, 2011). Each national branch manages its own fundraising, advocacy, and campaign activities, fostering grassroots engagement and responsiveness to local environmental issues (Greenpeace International, 2025). The network currently spans over 40 countries with nearly 3 million supporters worldwide, reflecting its broad transnational reach and influence.

The organization's modes of activism are multifaceted, combining investigative research, public mobilization, digital advocacy, lobbying, and direct action. Investigative research is a core component, involving scientific fieldwork, satellite monitoring, and supply chain audits to gather evidence of environmental harm and corporate malpractice (Greenpeace Aotearoa, 2025). This evidence forms the foundation for public reports and exposes that challenge corporate greenwashing and governmental inaction. Greenpeace's ability to translate complex scientific data into compelling narratives and visuals is key to mobilizing public opinion and media attention. These tactics serve not only to disrupt but also to gain media attention and shape public discourse around environmental issues (Tindall, 2004).

Beyond physical protest, Greenpeace also engages in policy lobbying, legal advocacy, scientific reporting, and digital campaigning, forming a multi-pronged approach to influence both public opinion and institutional decision-making (Boström & Tamm Hallström, 2010). Direct

action remains a hallmark of Greenpeace's activism. The organization is renowned for its dramatic, non-violent interventions, such as scaling oil rigs, blockading ships, and staging large-scale protests, that physically disrupt environmentally destructive activities and generate powerful media images (DW, 2013). These actions serve to "bear witness" to environmental injustice and to force public and political confrontation with ecological crises. Greenpeace's strategic use of symbolism and spectacle amplifies its messages and creates moments of dissensus that challenge dominant narratives.

Complementing direct action, Greenpeace engages in digital campaigns and coalition-building to expand its reach and influence. Social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of campaign materials, viral mobilization, and engagement with younger demographics (Suluh Gembyeng & Zainubi, 2022). Additionally, Greenpeace collaborates with local NGOs, indigenous groups, and international bodies to build broad-based alliances that strengthen advocacy efforts and increase pressure on policymakers and corporations (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2018). This integrative approach allows Greenpeace to operate effectively across multiple scales and arenas of environmental governance. This combination of organizational independence, global-local adaptability, and media-savvy activism has positioned Greenpeace as a powerful transnational actor capable of challenging corporate and state environmental misconduct.

### **2.1.3 Framing Environmental Issues From Local to Global**

Framing plays a crucial role in Greenpeace's environmental activism, as it enables the organization to construct meaning, define problems, and mobilize collective action (Snow & Benford, 1988). Greenpeace's framing of environmental issues reflects its transnational character, linking global ecological crises to local impacts and actors. As a transnational movement, Greenpeace must constantly adjust its master frames, such as those emphasizing corporate accountability, ecological urgency, or environmental justice, to fit local socio-political contexts and resonate with specific audiences (Tarrow, 2005). The organization frames environmental degradation as a systemic problem rooted in unsustainable industrial practices, corporate greed, and political inertia (Greenpeace International, 2025). This critical framing challenges dominant economic paradigms and exposes the contradictions of "green" corporate rhetoric, particularly the phenomenon of greenwashing, where companies portray themselves as environmentally responsible while perpetuating harm (Fraser, 2017).

Globally, Greenpeace has adopted frames that depict environmental crises as urgent, systemic, and morally imperative, such as "climate emergency" or "corporate crime" narratives. Greenpeace situates issues such as climate change, deforestation, and ocean pollution within the context of planetary boundaries and intergenerational justice, thus emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the need for urgent,

systemic transformation to safeguard the Earth's life-support systems (Greenpeace International, 2025). This framing appeals to universal values and global solidarity, mobilizing international support and holding multinational corporations accountable across borders. These frames serve not only to mobilize supporters but also to pressure institutional actors by reshaping public discourse (Benford & Snow, 2000; Doyle, 2011).

At the same time, Greenpeace strategically localizes global frames to reflect region-specific environmental challenges and cultural norms, a process known as frame alignment (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). by highlighting their concrete impacts on communities, biodiversity, and livelihoods. For example, in Indonesia, Greenpeace frames plastic pollution not only as a global waste crisis but as a direct threat to coastal communities, marine ecosystems, and public health (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2023). This dual framing strategy creates a “glocal” narrative that resonates with diverse audiences and facilitates coalition-building between global activists and local stakeholders (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Moreover, Greenpeace's framing emphasizes empowerment and agency, portraying affected communities and activists as key agents of change rather than passive victims. This approach aligns with collective action framing theory, which underscores the importance of constructing shared meanings and identities to motivate participation and sustain social movements (Snow et al., 2019). By articulating clear villains (e.g., polluting corporations) and victims (e.g., communities and ecosystems),

Greenpeace crafts compelling narratives that galvanize public pressure and policy responses. By crafting frames that link ecological damage to everyday experiences, Greenpeace is able to expand its audience, gain media traction, and build sustained pressure on corporate and state actors (Johnston & Noakes, 2005).

## **2.1.4 Global Campaigns Across Regions**

### **2.1.4.1 North America and Europe**

In industrialized regions, like the United States, Canada, and Europe, Greenpeace's campaigns have focused heavily on climate change mitigation, fossil fuel phase-out, and renewable energy advocacy. These efforts emphasize systemic transformation of energy and economic system to address the climate emergency while promoting social justice. In the United States, Greenpeace USA has been a prominent advocate for the Green New Deal (GND) to oppose the new oil and coal projects while promoting a just transition to clean energy that creates green jobs and addresses environmental justice (Greenpeace International, 2024). This deal is introduced in Congress in 2019 by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey, which calls for overhauling energy, transportation, industrial, and agricultural systems to achieve net-zero emissions as soon as possible as well as proposals to clean air and water, eliminate toxic pollution, and prioritize

frontline communities disproportionately affected by environmental harms (Greenpeace USA, 2024).

Greenpeace also actively opposes new oil, coal, and gas projects, including pipelines and drilling expansions. During the 2021 Texas power crisis, Greenpeace emphasized that failures in fossil fuel infrastructure were responsible for widespread outages (Greenpeace USA, 2021). The organization collaborates with grassroots movements, like the Sunrise Movement, to mobilize public pressure on policymakers and confront climate-denying politicians (Greenpeace USA, 2021). In Canada, Greenpeace has targeted the tar sands (oil sands) industry, which is among the world's highest greenhouse gas emitters by mobilizing international pressure on financial institutions to withdraw funding from these projects (Greenpeace International, 2024). These efforts have helped elevate global scrutiny of tar sands extraction and pressured banks and insurers to reconsider their support for fossil fuel expansion. Greenpeace Canada also advocates for indigenous rights and environmental protection in regions affected by oil sands development.

Europe has seen successful Greenpeace-led efforts, such as the 2010 EU Timber Regulation, which bans illegal timber imports and requires companies to demonstrate the legality of their timber supply chains starting in 2012. This regulation has marked a

landmark step in combating deforestation globally (BBC, 2010). Greenpeace's persistent advocacy helped shape this legislation, which requires companies to verify the legality of their timber supply chains and limiting demand for illegal logging products worldwide. Beyond forests, Greenpeace Europe campaigns vigorously against fossil fuel dependency by opposing new coal and oil infrastructure projects and promoting clean energy transitions. The organization builds board coalitions with labor unions, indigenous groups, and environmental justice organizations to ensure climate policies are equitable and just (Greenpeace International, 2024).

These campaigns aired by Greenpeace prioritize systemic change through policy advocacy, financial pressure, and building broad coalitions to elevate large-scale industrial impacts and climate justice. Specifically, the organization actively include and prioritize the rights and well-being of frontline and marginalized communities that has disproportionately hit with the environmental impacts. Alliances were also built with citizen-led movements to amplify the impact and ensure inclusive climate solutions.

#### **2.1.4.2 Australia and Pacific**

In Australia and the Pacific region, Greenpeace campaigns have focused on protecting biodiversity hotspots and marine ecosystems that are under threat from industrial activities, such as

oil drilling, seismic blasting, commercial fishing, and deep-sea mining. One of its flagship in Australia is the protection of the Great Australian Bight, a globally significant marine biodiversity hotspot home to endangered species and critical breeding grounds for whales and seabirds. Greenpeace Australia Pacific has actively opposed oil drilling projects proposed by companies like Equinor and highlighted the catastrophic risks of oil spills (Greenpeace International, 2024). Scientific reports commissioned by greenpeace experts have demonstrated that a worst-case spill in the Bight would be virtually impossible to clean up and could cause damage lasting decades, with cleanup costs estimated up to AUD 118 billion (Greenpeace Australia Pacific, 2019; Steiner, 2019). Greenpeace's campaign successfully pressured the Australian Labor Party to impose a moratorium on drilling approvals until independent scientific studies are completed, which reflects strong public opposition fueled by concerns over environmental and economic impacts (Greenpeace Australia Pacific, 2019). The campaign emphasized the intrinsic ecological value of the Bight alongside its importance for sustainable tourism and fisheries to mobilize broad coalitions, including scientists, local communities, and political actors.

Greenpeace and allied environmental groups have also protested against seismic blasting off the Western Australian coast,

a method used by fossil fuel companies, like Woodside, to locate oil and gas reserves. Seismic blasting involves powerful underwater airgun blasts that can harm marine life, including microscopic zooplankton, which is the foundation of the ocean food chain, as well as whales and other marine mammals by disrupting their breeding behaviors (Conservation Council of WA, 2024). Greenpeace-led protests have drawn attention to the inadequacies of regulatory oversight and the risks posed to endangered species and therefore calls for a transition from fossil fuel toward renewable energy (Conservation Council of WA, 2024). Beyond Australia's coastline, Greenpeace works with Indigenous Pacific communities to oppose destructive industries, such as deep-sea mining. The Pacific Ocean is culturally and ecologically vital to indigenous people, who view the ocean as inseparable from their identity and livelihoods. Greenpeace supports their efforts to halt deep-sea mining, which threatens fragile underwater ecosystems and centuries-old cultural heritage (Greenpeace International, 2024). In 2024, Greenpeace Australia and Greenpeace Aotearoa (New Zealand) jointly campaigned for the ratification and implementation of the Global Ocean Treaty, which aims to establish vast marine sanctuaries on the high seas to protect marine biodiversity from industrial exploitation (Greenpeace Aotearoa, 2024).

These campaigns are based on rigorous scientific research, including ecological risk assessments and economic impact studies, to demonstrate the consequences of industrial activities that can be held reliable. Large-scale public protests, petitions, and awareness campaigns were established to engage to citizens, local communities, and stakeholders to build pressure on policymakers and corporations to take direct actions. These initiatives were also backed with legal action to block harmful projects by partnering with indigenous groups, specifically by acknowledging indigenous communities as key environmental stewards and actively involving them in the advocacy and decision-making to respect their cultural connections to land and sea.

#### **2.1.4.3 Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**

Greenpeace Middle East and North Africa (MENA) operates in a region uniquely vulnerable to climate change yet heavily dependent on fossil fuels, which later makes the environmental advocacy even more complex and urgent. The region contributes less than 5% of historic global emissions, but faces some of the world's most severe climate impacts, including extreme water scarcity and rapid warming at twice the global average (Greenpeace MENA, 2025). To that context, Greenpeace MENA's campaigns focus on climate change and renewable energy, which aims to shift entrenched economic and social

paradigms toward sustainability and equity. A flagship initiative is the Sustainable Islamic Finance for Climate Action that is launched as part of the Ummah For Earth (U4E) Alliance, which includes around 50 member organizations spanning the MENA region, Southeast Asia, Africa, and beyond (Greenpeace MENA, 2025). This campaign mobilizes faith leaders, scholars, and influencers to align Islamic financial principles with renewable energy investments and leverage the ethical and communal values rooted in Islam to foster a resilient Muslim climate justice movement.

The recently published Islamic Finance & Renewable Energy Report explores how Sharia-compliant financial instruments can accelerate the global transition to sustainable energy, thus, empowering Muslim communities to demand robust climate initiatives (Greenpeace MENA, 2025). Complementing this, Greenpeace MENA's Well-being Economy campaign challenges the dominant profit-driven economic model that prioritizes growth over people and the planet. It advocates for a green recovery post-COVID-19 outbreak, re-evaluation of fossil fuel subsidies, and policies that prioritize citizen well-being, environmental justice, and green employment opportunities (Greenpeace MENA, 2025). This campaign engages policymakers, business leaders, academics, and civil society to rethink economic frameworks and rather consider sustainability and equity in

economic planning. The organization has played a vital role in amplifying the voices of marginalized groups most affected by climate change, including women, youth, and indigenous communities.

Through initiatives, like the Climate Justice Camps and participation in COP conferences, Greenpeace MENA ensures that the region's unique challenges and perspectives are represented in global climate negotiations (Greenpeace MENA, 2025). Their advocacy contributed to putting Loss and Damage Finance, a compensation for climate impacts on vulnerable countries, on the international agenda at COP27 and COP28 to hold wealthy nations accountable for historic emissions (Greenpeace MENA, 2025). The aired campaigns leverage religious values, particularly Islamic teachings, to resonate better with local communities as a shared moral duty. It also targets systemic change by promoting sustainable finance, green economic models, and equitable climate policies. Specifically, the organization empowers vulnerable populations to participate actively in the advocacy.

#### **2.1.4.4 Southeast Asia**

Greenpeace Southeast Asia tackles some of the region's most pressing environmental challenges, notably forest destruction, hazardous waste imports, and plastic pollution (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). The campaigns are characterized by a

combination of non-violent direct action, scientific research, community engagement, and political lobbying tailored to the socio-economic realities of most developing countries in the region. A recent and urgent focus of Greenpeace Southeast Asia is the plastic pollution crisis, particularly the widespread use of plastic sachets in FMCG products. Sachets are small and single-use plastics are cheap and convenient for low- and middle-income consumers, but are highly polluting and largely non-recyclable (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). Greenpeace campaigns call on companies to phase out single-use plastics, particularly sachets, and transition towards reuse and refill systems. Cities in Southeast Asia are leading the way by piloting refill initiatives that reduce plastic waste while offering economic benefits to consumers and small businesses (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). Greenpeace also advocates for strong government policies, including national bans on sachets and the inclusion of single-use plastics in Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) frameworks, as seen in the Philippines' 2022 EPR Act (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024; Break Free From Plastic, 2024).

Greenpeace Southeast Asia also addresses the import and mismanagement of hazardous waste, which disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. The organization campaigns for stricter enforcement of international treaties, like the Basel

Convention, and improved national waste management infrastructure. It highlights the need for transparency in landfill operations and critiques waste-to-energy projects that may perpetuate pollution rather than solve it (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). In Indonesia and Malaysia, Greenpeace has been at the forefront of campaigns against illegal logging and palm oil-driven deforestation by pressing major corporations, such as Golden Agri-Resources and Wilmar to commit to zero-deforestation policies. These efforts focus on exposing the environmental and social costs of converting tropical rainforests into monoculture plantations, which threaten biodiversity, carbon stocks, and indigenous livelihoods. Greenpeace's approach includes satellite monitoring of deforestation, public reports, and direct engagement with companies to push for sustainable sourcing and transparency (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). Greenpeace's campaigns recognize the economic realities of developing countries to balance out environmental goals with community livelihoods and access to affordable consumer goods. It links environmental harm to social justice by emphasizing corporate responsibility and the need of systemic change in production and consumption. The overall campaigns actively involve local communities, grassroots organizations, and citizen scientists in

brand audits and waste monitoring to strengthen the campaign legitimacy and impact in the region.

## **2.2 Greenpeace Indonesia**

### **2.2.1 Establishment and Organizational Development**

Greenpeace Indonesia was formally established in March 2000 and begin its operations in 2005 as part of the broader Greenpeace Southeast Asia network, which itself was created to regionalize Greenpeace's global campaigns across Southeast Asia, marking the formal establishment of the organization within the country's legal framework under the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (Wikipedia, 2025). This establishment allowed for better coordination across countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, enabling shared strategies to contest environmental degradation in the region (Wikipedia, 2025). As a result, Greenpeace Indonesia inherited the core values of Greenpeace International of non-violence, independence from government and corporate funding, and a commitment to direct action (Wapner, 1996; Doyle, 2011).

This establishment came more than three decades after Greenpeace's founding in Canada in 1971, a period during which Greenpeace had evolved into a global environmental movement with a decentralized network of national and regional offices coordinated by Greenpeace International headquartered in Amsterdam (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2018). The Indonesian office was created to address the country's unique environmental challenges, including deforestation, plastic

pollution, and energy transition, while aligning with Greenpeace's global mission of environmental protection and peace (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025).

Since its inception, Greenpeace Indonesia has developed its organizational capacity by recruiting local activists, establishing donor bases, and building partnerships with grassroots communities and other civil society organizations (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025; Karirlab, 2022). The organization emphasizes independence, refusing funding from governments or corporations to maintain credibility and avoid conflicts of interest (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025). Over time, Greenpeace Indonesia has expanded its scope beyond initial forest and marine conservation to include campaigns on clean energy, water pollution, and climate justice, reflecting the evolving environmental priorities in the Indonesian context (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2006). This growth has been supported by a combination of international expertise and local knowledge, enabling Greenpeace Indonesia to operate effectively within the country's complex socio-political landscape.

Organizationally, Greenpeace Indonesia follows the federated model of Greenpeace worldwide, allowing for autonomy in campaign design and execution while contributing to coordinated global strategies (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2018). This structure facilitates responsiveness to local issues while leveraging international support and visibility. The office has also invested in capacity building for staff and

volunteers, emphasizing non-violent direct action and evidence-based advocacy as core competencies (Karirlab, 2022). The development of digital communication platforms has further enhanced Greenpeace Indonesia's ability to mobilize supporters and disseminate campaign messages widely.

From the outset, Greenpeace Indonesia faced the significant challenge of fitting international strategies into Indonesia's distinct political, social, and ecological context. The office has strengthened its legal preparedness and community engagement to safeguard its operations and expand its influence in policy dialogues (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025). This organizational evolution reflects Greenpeace Indonesia's commitment to sustaining its role as a leading environmental actor amid Indonesia's dynamic environmental governance landscape. Early efforts focused on marine conservation and deforestation, reflecting national priorities like coral reef protection and forest preservation (Khairani & Iskandar, 2022). By adapting global campaigns such as "Save the Arctic" and "Stop Asia Pulp & Paper" to local contexts, Greenpeace Indonesia began to develop a hybrid model of activism that combined direct action with legal and research-based initiatives (Sitorus & Purnama, 2023).

Over the years, Greenpeace Indonesia's evolution has been marked by increasing professionalism and capacity-building. From early volunteer-driven operations to a structured setup with communications, legal, scientific research, and campaign teams, the organization has

enhanced its ability to design strategic interventions. The establishment of specialized units, such as digital mobilization, legal advocacy, and environmental data analysis, has enabled more nuanced and targeted campaigns (Haikhal & Ciptadi, 2024).

### **2.2.2 Strategic Focus and Key Campaigns**

Building on Greenpeace's extensive global and regional environmental advocacy, Greenpeace Indonesia aligns closely with the broader campaigns executed worldwide under Greenpeace International supervision, while addressing the unique ecological and socio-political challenges of the Indonesian context. Ever since its establishment in 2005, Greenpeace Indonesia has been a key actor in promoting environmental sustainability. Greenpeace Indonesia settled its office in Jakarta and focusing on four major campaigns: (1) forest protection, (2) sustainable agriculture, (3) marine conservation, and (4) pushing for corporate accountability. These issues mirror Greenpeace's global priorities, but tailored to Indonesia's specific needs and realities (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025).

Greenpeace Indonesia's work reflects the global emphasis on climate action and fossil fuel phase-out seen in North America and Europe, as well as the Southeast Asian focus on forest conservation and plastic pollution. For instance, Greenpeace Indonesia actively campaigns against deforestation driven by palm oil expansion, which echoes the Southeast Asia's regional attempt to pressure companies, like Golden

Agri-Resources and Wilmar, to adopt zero-deforestation commitments. This aligns with global forest protection campaigns that have successfully influenced policies, such as the EU Timber Regulation to combat illegal logging. Similarly, Greenpeace Indonesia's efforts to tackle plastic pollution, particularly from FMCG sachet packaging, correspond well with Greenpeace Southeast Asia's regional plastic waste campaigns and the global push for corporate accountability and sustainable packaging solutions (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025).

In building its alignment with global and regional campaigns, Greenpeace Indonesia has intensified a broad range of recent actions addressing urgent environmental and social issues adjusting to the country's ecological challenges and socio-political landscape. In May 2025, Greenpeace International released a comprehensive investigation titled "Under The Eagle's Shadow", which exposes the extensive network of shadow companies linked to the Royal Golden Eagle (RGE)/Tanoto Group, one of Indonesia's largest pulp and palm oil conglomerates (Greenpeace International, 2025). The report revealed that from 2021 to mid-2024, these interconnected companies were responsible for approximately 68,000 hectares of deforestation, including nearly 36,000 hectares of peatland destruction. Greenpeace Indonesia's forest campaigners emphasized the need for transparency and corporate accountability which later urges brands to sever ties with RGE-linked entities and calling on the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to investigate

and potentially revoke certifications for companies involved in deforestation (Greenpeace International, 2025).

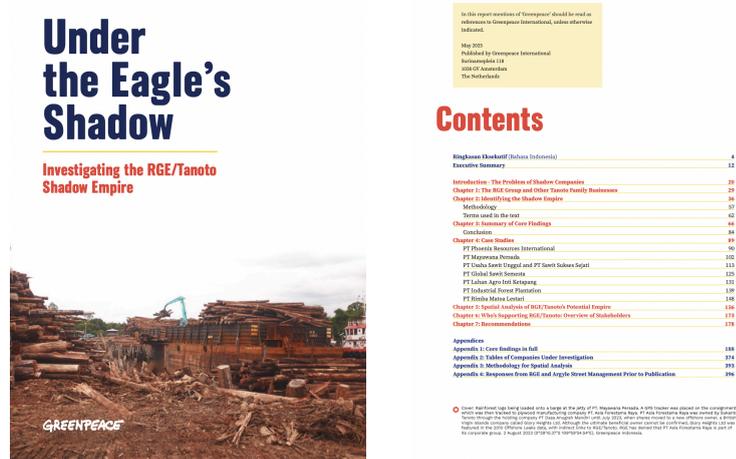


Figure 2.2 Under the Eagle's Shadow Report  
Source: Greenpeace, 2025

Greenpeace Indonesia's strategic focus is shaped by Indonesia's pressing environmental issues, particularly deforestation, plastic pollution, energy transition, and water quality. The organization prioritizes campaigns that address systemic causes of environmental harm, targeting both corporate actors and government policies that enable ecological degradation (Wikipedia Indonesia, 2006). For example, Greenpeace Indonesia has been at the forefront of exposing deforestation linked to palm oil production, pressing companies like Unilever to adopt zero-deforestation commitments and transparent supply chains (Greenpeace UK, 2024).

Much of its focus has been on protecting the rainforests of Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Papua from palm-oil driven deforestation, while also tackling issues like plastic waste and ocean pollution (Greenpeace

Southeast Asia, 2022). The forest campaign focus highlights the need of Indonesian rainforest protection from deforestation threat, especially with the government's weak commitment and regulations to stop deforestation that leads to biodiversity extinction and indigenous communities rights being taken away. The plastic waste campaign has also taken up Greenpeace Indonesia's focus, which specifically calls out the need to stop plastic dependence. The weak regulation on single-use plastic production and usage followed with the lack of social pressure have made the industry spreading aggressively. Greenpeace Indonesia pushes corporations and government contribution in catalyzing the more sustainable living.

Plastic pollution, especially from single-use sachets, constitutes a major campaign pillar. Greenpeace Indonesia's "Break Free from Plastic" campaign highlights the disproportionate impact of sachet waste on Indonesia's waterways and communities, demanding corporate accountability and regulatory reform (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2023). This campaign combines investigative research, public mobilization, and direct action to challenge the greenwashing practices of multinational corporations. Similarly, campaigns on clean energy advocate for a transition away from fossil fuels toward renewable sources, aligning with global climate goals while addressing Indonesia's energy dependency (Wikipedia Indonesia, 2006).

Key campaigns often integrate multiple tactics, including brand audits, public demonstrations, digital advocacy, and coalition-building

with local NGOs and indigenous groups (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2018). For instance, the campaign against Unilever’s plastic sachets has involved returning collected waste to corporate headquarters in symbolic protests, alongside social media campaigns and policy advocacy (Greenpeace UK, 2024). These efforts illustrate Greenpeace Indonesia’s strategic use of evidence-based exposure and symbolic direct action to amplify environmental issues and pressure stakeholders.

In April 2025, Greenpeace Indonesia organized a peaceful rally at the South Korean Embassy in Jakarta to demand the release of five greenpeace activists detained in South Korea since November 2024. These activists were part of the Rainbow Warrior “Sailing for Change: The Plastic Free Future Tour” that protested against single-use plastic production and fossil fuel-derived plastic raw materials (Tempo, 2025). The rally featured striking visual, including a giant banner depicting a “Plastic Chemicals Tanker” floating in a waste-filled ocean that symbolizes the global plastic crisis. Greenpeace Indonesia’s Zero Waste Campaigner, Ibar Akbar, emphasized the global scale of plastic pollution, citing UNEP data showing that only a fraction of the over 430 million tons of plastic produced annually is managed sustainably (Tempo, 2025).

Under capacity building initiative, Greenpeace Indonesia actively fosters grassroots environmental leadership through initiatives like the School of Environmental Activism, which trains youth and community leaders to advocate effectively for environmental protection

(Mapalamitapasa, 2025). This investment in capacity building ensures sustained local engagement and strengthens the environmental movement in Indonesia. The organization continues to push for stronger government regulations on plastic waste management and renewable energy policies by collaborating with civil society to accelerate Indonesia's sustainable development (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025). Greenpeace Indonesia is particularly known for amplifying the voices of affected community as part of a border social justice movement. It attempts to expose environmental crimes and drive systemic changes through investigative journalism, community organizing, public reports, and digital activism.

Greenpeace Indonesia has been a persistent and vocal critic of Unilever's environmental practices by challenging the company's sustainability claims and demanding greater accountability for its ecological footprint. A major point of contention is Unilever's extensive use of single-use plastic sachets, which Greenpeace identifies as a leading source of plastic pollution in Indonesia. Despite Unilever's public commitments to reduce virgin plastic use, Greenpeace has accused the company of weakening its targets, shifting from a goal of halving virgin plastic use by 2025 to modest reductions of 30% by 2026 and 40% by 2028 (Global Plastic Action Partnership, 2024; Greenpeace UK, 2023). Greenpeace argues that this backtracking undermines meaningful progress and calls on Unilever to phase out multilayered disposable packaging

entirely and pivot aggressively towards refill and reuse models (Eco-Business, 2024).

Greenpeace has criticized Unilever's reliance on "false solutions", such as chemical recycling for hard-to-recycle sachets, which the group claims do not address the root problem of plastic overproduction and waste (Global Plastic Action Partnership, 2024). The organization demands greater transparency from Unilever regarding its waste reduction roadmap and question whether pilot refill projects will be integrated into the company's core business model or remain marginal initiatives (Eco-Business, 2024). In a high-profile protest, Greenpeace activists returned thousands of pieces of Unilever-branded plastic waste to the company's Indonesian headquarters to symbolize the disconnect between Unilever's stated ambition for a "waste-free world" and the reality that nearly all of its plastic packaging remains single-use (Changemaker Asia, 2024).

Greenpeace has also targeted Unilever's palm oil supply chain, which is linked to deforestation and biodiversity loss in Indonesia's rainforests and peatlands. Activists have staged protests against suppliers, like Wilmar International, by accusing them of continuing to source palm oil from forest destroyers despite promises to clean up supply chains since 2013 (Cosmetics Business, 2024). Greenpeace highlights that Unilever, which uses approximately 1.2 million tonnes of palm oil annually, has struggled to ensure its entire supply chain is free from deforestation and

contributing to Indonesia's status as one of the world's highest greenhouse gas emitters due to forest loss (Marketing Week, 2024). While Unilever has made some progress, such commitments to regenerative agriculture and deforestation-free supply chains by 2023, Greenpeace remains skeptical about the pace and effectiveness of these effort with the ongoing destruction and the need for stronger enforcement and transparency (International Supermarket News, 2024).

Beyond environmental issues, Greenpeace accuses Unilever of greenwashing and that its sustainability rhetoric often overshadows the scale of its ecological footprint, with corporate promises failing to translate into systemic change (Greenpeace UK, 2024; International Supermarket News, 2024). The organization emphasizes that without significant reductions in plastic production and a genuine shift away from disposable packaging, Unilever's efforts will remain insufficient. Its critiques extend to Unilever's partnership with waste banks and recycling initiatives, questioning how efforts are integrated into the company's core operations and whether they genuinely address waste management challenges or merely serve as public relations measures (Eco-Business, 2024).

### **2.2.3 Communication and Mobilization in Indonesia**

Effective communication and mobilization are central to Greenpeace Indonesia's campaign success, particularly given Indonesia's diverse population and media landscape. The organization employs a multi-platform communication strategy that combines traditional media,

social media, community outreach, and cultural engagement to reach varied audiences (Suluh Gembyeng & Zainubi, 2022). Greenpeace Indonesia's communication strategy is multifaceted, prioritizing digital-first approaches via Instagram, YouTube, X (previously Twitter), and TikTok to disseminate campaign materials, engage youth, and create viral moments that amplify Greenpeace's messages (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2023). Their campaigns follow the model of alert, amplify, and engage by highlighting the issues, then magnifying the message through compelling content, and finally inviting audience participation like petitions, uploads, or offline events (Zainubi & Ciptadi, 2024). This approach allows campaigns to scale rapidly while maintaining high levels of public involvement.

Localization of global narratives is central to their communication strategy. For example, on plastic pollution, Greenpeace reframed global concerns around marine plastic down to local water pollution, waste-management failures, and public health crises—resonating more deeply with Indonesian audiences (Putri, 2023; Peluso et al., 2021). The use of Bahasa Indonesia and culturally resonant symbols (e.g., orangutan adoptions) strengthens emotional and cultural identification with the campaigns (Meigar & Firdhausiyah, 2022).

Greenpeace also strategically uses multimedia storytelling, including documentary clips, infographics, banners, and participatory media such as workshops and public events, to deepen message

engagement through both visual and interactive formats (Meigar & Firdhausiyah, 2022). These activities further enhance visibility and encourage peer-to-peer mobilization. Greenpeace Indonesia's communication approach is characterized by clear, emotive framing that connects environmental issues to everyday experiences and local cultural values. Campaigns often use storytelling, visual symbolism, and relatable narratives to foster empathy and urgency. For example, the “*Bumi Bukan Tempat Sampah*” (Earth Is Not a Dumping Ground) campaign frames plastic pollution as a violation of Indonesia's natural heritage and community well-being, resonating deeply with local audiences (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2023). This framing is constructing shared identities and moral imperatives that motivate public participation (Snow et al., 2019).

A key tactic is coalition-building, where Greenpeace partners with local NGOs, indigenous groups, artists, academic institutions, and religious organizations to co-create campaigns. This enhances grassroots legitimacy while diversifying mobilization channels beyond typical environmentalist networks (Ciptadi & Zainubi, 2024). By building such networks, Greenpeace achieves both authenticity and broader reach in public advocacy. Mobilization efforts include volunteer recruitment, community workshops, and partnerships with local organizations to build grassroots support. Greenpeace Indonesia invests in capacity building for volunteers and activists, equipping them with knowledge and tools to

advocate effectively within their communities (Karirlab, 2022). The organization also adapts its messaging to regional languages and cultural contexts, ensuring inclusivity and relevance across Indonesia's archipelago.

Moreover, Greenpeace Indonesia leverages digital innovation to overcome geographical and infrastructural challenges. Online petitions, webinars, and interactive campaigns enable broad participation despite physical distances and limited access to traditional media. This digital mobilization complements on-the-ground actions, creating a synergistic effect that enhances campaign visibility and impact (Suluh Gembyeng & Zainubi, 2022).

#### **2.2.4 Corporate and Political Engagement Challenges**

Despite its strategic strengths, Greenpeace Indonesia faces formidable challenges in engaging both corporate and political entities. Corporations adeptly use CSR initiatives and sustainability branding to dilute Greenpeace's messaging and co-opt environmental discourse to force the organization to craft counter-hegemonic narratives that call out symbolic commitments while facing ongoing green misconduct (Robinson, 2017; Santos, 2018). Corporations like Unilever wield substantial economic influence, extensive lobbying networks, and sophisticated public relations strategies that complicate accountability efforts (Greenpeace UK, 2024). Greenpeace Indonesia often confronts greenwashing, which is a practice where companies promote misleading

sustainability claims to obscure environmental harm, requiring persistent investigative work and public exposure to counteract (Chain Reaction Research, 2023).

Politically, Greenpeace operates in a regulatory environment marked by inconsistent enforcement, limited transparency, and occasional hostility toward civil society activism (Yonandi & Lie, 2025). The organization must navigate restrictive civic environments in Indonesia, including regulations on assembly, NGO funding, and litigation threats. Some campaigns encounter pushback such as lawsuit threats or being blocked from accessing critical sites, as public agencies or corporate interests deny Greenpeace recognition or presence (Ganaya, 2024; Nugroho & Angela, 2024). This restricts both their visibility and legal recourse. Government agencies sometimes prioritize economic growth over environmental protection, constraining Greenpeace's ability to influence policy effectively. Additionally, bureaucratic inertia and corruption can undermine regulatory reforms, necessitating multi-level advocacy and coalition-building to overcome institutional resistance (Ramadhona & Widiastuti, 2021).

Financial constraints also constrain campaign continuity and technological adaptation. Although Greenpeace rejects corporate funding, its reliance on grassroots donations limits resources needed for long-term legal battles, technical expertise, or extensive media production, potentially weakening campaign longevity compared to better-resourced

corporate actors (Doyle, 2011). Finally, Greenpeace faces internal tensions in balancing confrontational tactics with legitimacy. Confrontational acts like banners or protests can attract media attention but risk alienating certain stakeholders or audiences. Greenpeace walks a fine line between maintaining aggressive rhetoric and ensuring continued political space, access, and partner cooperation (Meigar & Firdhausiyah, 2022).

## **2.3 The Corporate Landscape in Greenpeace's Campaigns**

### **2.3.1 Indonesia's Consumption Patterns**

With a population exceeding 285 million, Indonesia has become the fourth most populous country globally and leading a vast consumer base in consumer goods (Worldometer, 2025). Indonesia's consumer goods market is deeply intertwined with the daily lives of its population, which endorses the rise of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) demands as the population keeps on growing year by year. This huge amount of people influences the massive consumption pattern. As the demographic profile is notably young and the country's age median taking up approximately 60% of the population under the age of 30, sustained demand for consumer goods is rising to cater to diverse daily needs (BPS, 2022; Kantar Worldpanel, 2025). This demographic profile is boosted with urbanization as another key driver, where it is projected that 71% of Indonesians will reside in urban areas by 2030 and leading to higher disposable incomes and a shift toward modern retail consumption, specifically with a

significant proportion of consumers being young and digitally savvy (UN Desa, 2018; Kantar Worldpanel, 2025).

Household expenditures on FMCG products consistently accounts for nearly 20% of total spending and essentially shows how these products being essential in everyday life regardless of economic fluctuation (NielsenIQ, 2023; Market Research Indonesia, 2025). Despite inflationary pressures and economic headwinds, such as a 7% increase in FMCG prices in 2022, Indonesian consumers maintain steady consumption patterns, particularly among middle- and lower-income groups, who often adjust its consumption option by choosing smaller pack sizes, switching brands, or prioritizing value-for-money options (Euromonitor International, 2023). Meanwhile, higher-income consumers contribute to premiumization trends by purchasing larger package sizes and health-oriented products (McKinsey, 2022).

This resilience demonstrates FMCG's inseparability from most Indonesians' daily life, as these goods fulfill fundamental needs, including food and beverages, personal care, and household essentials. Food and beverage staples lead consumer spending and becomes the most engaged FMCG categories, with the growth of snacking foods by 13% in 2024 and dairy products by 9% (Kantar Worldpanel, 2025). Beauty and personal care products is the second most engaged FMCG category and becomes a strong overall industry growth drivers, with its value sales increase by 16% in 2024, as consumers start to invest in premium and wellness-oriented

items (Kantar Worldpanel, 2025). These sales are still dominated by traditional retail channels, such as small shops and *warungs*, by holding a market share of 69% in 2024, where it reflects FMCG consumption being embedded in everyday community life (Statista, 2024).

The choice of trade channels for purchasing FMCG products in Indonesia exhibits both traditional habits and emerging modern preferences. As the second quarter of 2024, traditional trade channels, such as small shops or *warungs*, continue to dominate the FMCG market with a 69% market share (Statista, 2024). These *warungs* are intensely interlinked with Indonesians daily life, especially in rural and suburban areas, where it provides convenient and accessible supply for essential goods. Approximately 70% of *warung* sales come from FMCG products, covering cigarettes, ready-to-drink beverages, and instant snacks, which are often purchased impulsively or for immediate consumption by most consumers stopping by (Redseer, 2024).

However, despite of its dominance, Indonesia's FMCG market is also undergoing a significant shift toward digital channels. The e-commerce segment has been growing positively, with FMCG sales through online platforms experienced an increase of 32% in 2024 to reach IDR 74.8 trillion or equivalent to USD 5 billion (CNBC Indonesia, 2025). This growth is fueled by urban consumers, younger demographics, and busy households who prioritize convenience through home delivery services. The online grocery market alone is even projected to reach USD

27 billion by 2028 as more consumers adopt digital shopping for FMCG products fulfillment (Statista, 2024). Major e-commerce platforms, such as Tokopedia and Shopee, have expanded their FMCG offerings. FMCG brands have also supported this by launching dedicated eB2B platforms to better serve retailers and wholesalers digitally (Redseer, 2024). Generally, Indonesia's FMCG consumption trend is a large, diverse, and resilient consumer base, whose daily needs for essential goods need to be fulfilled by the industry through both traditional and modern trade channels.

### **2.3.2 FMCG Market Dynamics**

To cover the rising consumer goods demand in Indonesia, the FMCG industry has long existed in the country as a vital sector to fulfill the daily essential needs of its large and diverse population. Indonesia's FMCG market is known to be one of the largest and fastest-growing in Southeast Asia by being valued at over USD 100 billion, which is largely supported by a growing middle class, rapid urbanization, and shift of consumer preferences (InvestinAsia, 2024). FMCG products, such as personal care and hygiene utilities (shampoo, soap, toothpaste, sanitary pads), food and beverages (bottled water, instant noodles, tea, coffee), household products (detergent, floor cleaners, air fresheners), and anything involving daily needs, are deeply interconnected with Indonesians daily life by accounting nearly 20% of household expenditures (Market Research Indonesia, 2025). The future of the industry remains promising

in Indonesia as it has demonstrated consistent growth over the past years despite economic challenges in the country.

In 2020, the FMCG market value was estimated at approximately USD 1.2 trillion (The Jakarta Post, 2023). The market grew at a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of approximately 7.6% from 2021 to 2025, which reflects the expanding consumer reach within the country (InvestinAsia, 2024; Market Research Indonesia, 2025). In 2022, the industry's value growing by 9%, up from 5% growth in 2021, though unit sales growth was more modest at 2%, which indicates fewer products are purchased potentially due to inflation amidst the pandemic outbreak (Market Research Indonesia, 2025). By the third quarter of 2024, consumer spending on FMCG products reached IDR 208 trillion and marks a 1.1% increase YoY (Market Research Indonesia, 2025). This trend shows the industry's ability to adapt to inflationary pressures and manages to shift consumer behavior to value-seeking (Kantar, 2025). This consumption growth is supported by Indonesia's relatively stable economic expansion, with private consumption contributing approximately 57% to the country's GDP (World Bank, 2023).

Even though growth slowed down in the first quarter of 2025 due to economic and political factors, more than 80% of FMCG brands reported increased consumer reach points, which was particularly driven by significant acquisition of new buyers (Kantar, 2025). The industry's resilience has brought continuous innovation, expansion of distribution,

and responsiveness to consumer trends (Kantar, 2025; Statista, 2024). As Statista forecasted, the industry is potentially securing a CAGR of 2.52% for the broader FMCG industry in Indonesia from 2025 to 2029 as the steady growth in the market matures and digital transformation getting more apparent (Statista, 2024). On the other hand, the ongoing expansion will be driven by middle-class growth, premiumization, and increasing wellness awareness among consumers in the near future (Kantar Worldpanel, 2025). Several key players in Indonesia's FMCG market have significantly contributed to its growth, specifically with diverse product portfolios, marketing strategies, and strong distribution networks. The industry landscape is filled with diverse pool of FMCG companies that are predicted to still maintain the market in the upcoming future.

Indonesia's FMCG market growth is significantly propelled by MNCs that leverage their global expertise and extensive distribution networks to secure its consumer base. Leading MNCs, such as Unilever, Procter & Gamble (P&G), and Nestlé, play crucial roles in driving the industry's growth in Indonesia. Unilever manages a diverse range of personal care, home care, and food products and achieved a leading market share of 16.2% in 2023 through premiumization strategies and adapting to local consumer preferences (Kantar Worldpanel, 2025). The company's commitment to sustainability and digital transformation contributes to its competitive advantage in Indonesia's growing FMCG landscape. Similarly, P&G maintains a strong presence in personal and home care

categories, led by well-known brands, such as Pantene, and continues to expand its reach through omni-channel distribution (Incorp Asia, 2025). Nestlé leads the food and beverages category with strong brand presence, namely Milo and KitKat, and capitalizes Indonesia's growing demand. These MNCs benefit from Indonesia's rising middle-class, urbanization, and digital adoption as key drivers of the FMCG sector's promising growth trajectory. The competitive advantages these MNCs have enables sustained market penetration in Indonesia (Statista, 2024; Kantar Worldpanel, 2025).

### **2.3.3 The Environmental Impact of the FMCG Industry**

The rapid growth of Indonesia's FMCG market and the massive consumer demand has led to an equally massive scale of production. While economically advantageous, this expansion comes with significant environmental challenges that are not yet adequately addressed by government policies, corporate practices, or public awareness. Major issues, such as excessive plastic waste, marine pollution, and rainforest deforestation for palm oil, often encountered alongside the market growth.

#### **2.3.3.1 Packaging Waste and Production Pollution**

To fulfill the growing demand of Indonesia's large low- to middle-income consumer base, large-scale production is triggered and FMCG companies often choose to rely on sachet packaging and single-use plastics as the most accessible and affordable

options. Sachet allows consumers to buy small and affordable quantities that fit the consumers' financial capacities at the expense of generating enormous volumes of plastic waste. Indonesia is among the world's largest contributors to marine plastic pollution, with an estimated 3.2 million tons of unmanaged plastic waste generated annually and 1.3 million tons of plastic waste entering its waters monthly (UNEP, 2024; Permana & Susilowati, 2024). This plastic pollution severely threatens Indonesia's rich marine biodiversity, including the Coral Triangle, one of the world's most vital coral reef ecosystems, which supports food security and tourism (Jones, 2019). The FMCG industry is particularly a major source of this pollution, with plastic packaging accounting for at least 40% of global plastic production in the industry, particularly bottled beverages and packaged snacks (Permana & Susilowati, 2024). Although some FMCG companies have initiated efforts to reduce plastic waste, the overall plastic waste management in Indonesia still remains inadequate.

The growing waste stream is another struggle for Indonesia's waste management system. The country's waste collection and recycling infrastructure are fragmented and underdevelopment, which is evident in only 30% of plastic waste being properly managed, while the remainder accumulates in landfills, waterways, or the marine environment (KLHK RI, 2024),

Although such policies, such as the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), National Action Plan for Marine Debris Management or *Rencana Aksi Nasional Penanganan Sampah Laut* (RAN PSL), and a target to reduce marine plastic waste by 70% by 2025, exist, its enforcement is still inconsistent and public awareness on sustainable consumption and waste segregation remains limited, especially outside urban areas (UNEP, 2024; Permana & Susilowati, 2024). This gap between production scale and waste management capacity exacerbates environmental degradation and marine pollution, ultimately due to budget constraints, fragmented law enforcement, and limited public awareness that hamper effective waste management and pollution control (E3S Web of Conferences, 2024). The urgency of Indonesia's marine pollution crisis underscores the environmental cost of the FMCG sector's growth, specifically on the plastic packaging, on the irreversible consequences to its marine ecosystems and the livelihoods dependent upon them.

#### **2.3.3.2 Resource Extraction**

Massive FMCG production symmetrically demands large quantities of raw materials, including palm oil, paper, and other agricultural commodities. Indonesia's palm oil industry has been a critical contributor for many FMCG products and linked to deforestation, habitat loss, and biodiversity decline, which

contributes the most to environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions (World Bank, 2024). Forest clearing for plantations disrupts the ecosystems and threatens endangered species, while peatland drainage releases significant carbon emissions (Innova Market Insights, 2024). Manufacturing processes in the FMCG sector are energy-intensive and contribute significantly to Indonesia's industrial emissions by approximately 28% of national greenhouse gas emissions, with food and beverages manufacturing among the top emitters (Climateworks Centre, 2025). Despite the existence of energy efficiency technologies, the adoption is seemingly uneven and limiting decarbonization progress (Climateworks Centre, 2025).

The dire needs of palm oil as a key ingredient in many of FMCG products have led to vast deforestation. Indonesia witnessed the increase of deforestation in 2024 to its highest level since 2021, with the country losing 261,575 hectares of forests, which is equivalent to four time size of Jakarta (Mongabay, 2025). This marked a 1.6% increase from 2023 and government reports show a net loss of 175,400 hectares (The Jakarta Post, 2025). The shift from illegal to legal deforestation is particularly alarming, with 97% of forest loss in 2024 occurring within legal concessions (Mongabay, 2025). More than half of the forest loss in 2024, approximately 160,925 hectares affected critical habitats for

endangered species, such as orangutans, tigers, and elephants, in Borneo and Sumatra (Mongabay, 2025). For instance, about 108,100 hectares of Bornean orangutan habitat were heavily impacted by deforestation and affect their survival (Mongabay, 2025). Kalimantan accounted for nearly half of Indonesia's total deforestation in 2024, with 129,896 hectares of forest lost, increasing by 4% from 2023 (Mongabay, 2025).

## **2.4 Unilever as a Campaign Target**

### **2.4.1 History**

Unilever stands as a globally known British-Dutch multinational corporation and one of the world's consumer goods giants with its operations in over 190 countries supported by a portfolio of 400+ household brands spanning food and beverages, household cleaning, to beauty and personal care products. Its history is traced back to the late 19th century through the merger of Lever Brothers, a British soap manufacturer, and Margarine Unie, a Dutch company specializing in margarine production. In 1885, the British entrepreneur William Lever founded Lever Brothers. Lever's vision for mass-produced soap led to the creation of Sunlight soap, which was marketed with the iconic slogan "*Cleanliness is next to Godliness*" and capitalized on Victorian-era hygiene trends while relying on palm oil sourced from West African colonies under exploitative conditions (Aalbers, 2018).

The company's expansion into the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) in 1933 marked the beginning of its global presence as it leveraged colonial trade networks to secure cheap raw materials and captive markets. The pivotal moment came in 1929 with the merger of Lever Brothers and the Dutch margarine conglomerate, Margarine Unie, forming Unilever as a dual-headed Anglo-Dutch entity designed to dominate both the soap and edible fats industries (Jones, 2005). This established alliance optimizes raw material procurement and expands its footprint in essential consumer goods, particularly in hygiene and food products. This strategic structure allows Unilever to vertically integrate its operations and control everything from palm oil plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia to distribution networks across Europe and Asia.



Figure 2.3 Unilever Logo  
Source: Unilever, n.d.

During the mid-20th century, Unilever expanded aggressively into new markets by leveraging post-war economic growth and the increasing demand for packaged goods. Unilever entrenched itself in post-colonial economies, particularly in Indonesia, where it took advantage of

Soeharto's authoritarian regime back in 1967-1998. The company took benefit from monopolistic concessions, including tax holidays and exclusive rights to distribute products through military-linked conglomerates while acquiring state-owned factories at minimal cost (Robinson, 2009).

By the 1980s, Unilever had perfected its "sachet economy" model in developing nations by selling single-use packets of shampoo, detergent, and cooking oil to low-income consumers as part of their core strategy in locking millions into dependency while exacerbating plastic waste crises (Tempo, 2005). Entering the 21st century, Unilever sought to position itself as a leader in sustainable business practices as marked in 2010, where it launched the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) as it puts emphasis on sustainability in the business practices. USLP is planned as an ambitious initiative aimed at reducing Unilever's environmental footprint while enhancing social impact. The plan sets out measurable goals for sustainable sourcing, waste reduction, and community engagement. Today, Unilever operates in 190 countries, employs around 148,000 people, and owns 400+ brands across categories.

#### **2.4.2 Market Share and Business Outlook**

Unilever maintains an unparalleled presence globally and has established itself as one of the largest consumer goods corporations with an extensive brand portfolio that includes globally recognized brands, such as Dove, Sunsilk, Rexona, Lifebuoy, Lux, and Wall's. It consistently ranks

among the top three players worldwide by holding approximately 7.3% of the total market share as of 2023 (Statista, 2024), trailing only behind Procter & Gamble and Nestlé in overall market penetration.

The company's market dominance can be clearly noticed in each specific product category. In personal care, Unilever controls 14.2% of the global market, with Dove alone capturing 8.7% of the global soap and shower gel segment (Euromonitor, 2024). The home care division covers an 11.4% worldwide share led by big brands, such as Omo in detergents and Domestos in disinfectants. In the food category, the infamous ice cream brand, Magnum, has secured 18.1% of the global share (GlobalData, 2024). Regionally, Unilever remains powerful. It maintains an average 15.8% market share across all FMCG categories in Western Europe (Kantar, 2024). The United Kingdom holds loyalty to Unilever products, where one in every three households purchases a Unilever item daily, according to the UK Office for National Statistics in 2023. In India's emerging market, Unilever's subsidiary, Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), even controls a staggering 42.7% of the personal care market and 38.3% of the home care market (Economic Times India, 2024). The Indonesian market demonstrates similar patterns, with Unilever Indonesia holding 34.9% of the total FMCG market share (Reuters, 2025), including 63.2% of the shampoo segment and 58.4% of the laundry detergent market (Nielsen Indonesia, 2024).



Figure 2.4 Unilever product portfolio

Source: Unilever, n.d.

As its financial reports stated, Unilever's revenue in 2023 exceeded €60 billion, with a significant portion of it derived from emerging markets, including Indonesia, which is one of Unilever's most critical markets within Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, the company operates through PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk and its presence represents one of the most striking cases of corporate market dominance. It dominates key consumer goods sectors, specifically in personal care, food and beverages, and household products. Equipped with a strong foothold in the retail sector, the company benefits from both modern trade channels, such as supermarkets and e-commerce, and traditional trade channels, such as *warung*. The FMCG giant commands an extraordinary 34.9% market share in Indonesia (Reuters, 2025), a figure that rises to nearly 50% when considering only the personal care and home care categories (Nielsen Indonesia, 2024). This dominance is particularly remarkable given

Indonesia's status as the world's fourth most populous nation, with a rapidly growing consumer class projected to reach 140 million people by 2030 (McKinsey, 2023).

Unilever's market penetration follows distinct patterns across product categories and geographic regions in Indonesia. In the personal care category, Unilever holds a 63.2% share of the shampoo market (Lifebuoy, Clear, and Sunsilk), 58.4% share of the soap market (Lux, Lifebuoy, Dove), and 71.3% of the skin care market (Pond's and Vaseline) (Nielsen Indonesia, 2024). While, the home care division performs even more concentrated control with an 82.7% share of the laundry detergents market (Rinso and Surf), 75.9% share of the fabric conditioners market (Molto), and 68.3% share of the household cleaners market (Sunlight and Wipol) (Kantar Worldpanel, 2024).

This dominance is made possible with the "Unilever Ecosystem", an interlocking system of distribution, pricing, and consumer psychology that creates near-insurmountable barriers to competition (Nielsen, 2024; BCG, 2023), and allows the company maintains direct control over 72% of Indonesia's FMCG distribution channels through exclusive agreements with major retailers, such as Indomaret and Alfamart (Nielsen, 2024), and its army of 15,000 last-mile vendors ensures products reach the most remote *warungs* (small family-owned shops), with penetration rates of 94% in urban areas and 81% in rural villages (SMERU Research Institute, 2023).

**CATEGORY-FOCUSED ORGANISATION TO ACCELERATE GROWTH**



Figure 2.5 Unilever’s revenue distribution in 2023  
 Source: Unilever Annual Report, 2023

The near monopoly is mainly enabled by the sachet economy as the backbone of its strategy in Indonesia, where the company managed to sell nearly 4.2 billion single-use sachets annually in Indonesia (GAIA, 2023), which accounts for 92% of its shampoo sales, 88% of its detergent sales, and 76% of its cooking oil sales (Unilever Indonesia Annual Report, 2023). This sachet dominance creates captive consumption by pushing 78% of low-income households in rural parts of Indonesia to be highly reliant on Unilever’s sachet products sold at less than \$0.1. Even further, Unilever’s products undercut local competitors by 30-40% and often sell below production cost (Competition Commission, 2022). The regional market distribution reveals 64% market share in Java as its highest penetration due to dense population and distribution networks, 48% market share in Sumatra competing fairly with local brands, and 28% market

share in Eastern Indonesia becoming the lowest due to infrastructure challenges yet growing fastest at 12% CAGR (BPS Indonesia, 2024).

Unilever's market power extends beyond traditional retail as 89% market share comes from modern trade (supermarket and hypermarket), 72% market share comes from e-commerce, and 53% market share comes from traditional markets (Nielsen, 2024). This multi-channel dominance is protected by the "Unilever Tax", which is an implicit cost premium of 15-20% that competitors must overcome to gain shelf space (BCG, 2023). Unilever's brand loyalty scores are fascinating, with 92% of Indonesian consumers able to name at least three brands unprompted and 68% claiming they would rather choose Unilever products daily (Kantar, 2024).

Unilever's market dominance, hence, translates to positive financial performance, gaining \$3.2 billion annual revenue in Indonesia in 2023, 42.7% gross margins vs. 28.3% global average, and 31.2% return on invested capital (Bloomberg, 2024). Its annual revenue even comprises 1.4% of Indonesia's overall GDP (BPS Indonesia, 2024). As Indonesia's consumer class expands, Unilever is positioning itself for the next phase of growth through digital integration, partnering with Gojek and Tokopedia as well as premiumization through launching higher-end variants of core brands. This market power represents not just economic dominance, but advanced to a sophisticated systemic control, specifically in distribution monopoly.

### **2.4.3 Sustainability Narrative**

Unilever strategically frames itself as a global leader in sustainability and positions environmental responsibility and social impact at the core of its corporate identity. This framing is most prominently embodied in the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) that was launched in 2010, which set ambitious goals to decouple the company's growth from its environmental footprint while increasing its positive social contributions (Zuno Carbon, 2025). The USLP represents a comprehensive approach integrating sustainability into Unilever's business strategy, operations, and brand values. Unilever presents itself as a "purpose-led" company committed to creating a positive impact on health, environment, and livelihoods globally.

The company emphasizes a triple bottom line approach, which balances social, environmental, and economic sustainability, to appeal to increasingly conscious consumers and stakeholders (FourWeekMBA, 2024). Its public narrative highlights achievements, such as helping over a billion people improve health and hygiene, achieving zero non-hazardous waste to landfill across manufacturing sites, and sourcing 62% of agricultural raw materials sustainably by 2020 (Zuno Carbon, 2025; BSM UPF, 2024).

This narrative is reinforced by commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 7 (clean energy) and SDG 13 (climate action) (Energy Digital, 2020). Unilever's decision to frame

itself as a green company is deeply intertwined with broader global trends. The rise of Western-led climate awareness movements and progressive social values has created a normative environment where environmental responsibility is increasingly expected from corporations (Harvey, 2018; UN Sustainable Development Goals). By aligning its corporate identity with these values, Unilever gains legitimacy and social license to operate not only in Western markets, but also globally. This alignment reflects an understanding that sustainability is no longer peripheral concern but central to corporate reputation and stakeholder expectations (Unilever, 2025; Energy Digital, 2020).



Figure 2.6 Unilever Sustainable Living Plan  
Source: Unilever, 2018

Several key initiatives have been made to support the company's sustainability claims. Unilever aims to become carbon positive in its manufacturing operations by 2030, which targets a 40% reduction in CO2 emissions per tonne of production from 2008 levels by 2020, sourcing 100% renewable energy by 2030, and eliminating coal from its energy mix

(Energy Digital, 2020). These goals reflect a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the value chain. The company prioritizes sustainable sourcing of raw materials, including palm oil, tea, and paper, which aims to protect biodiversity and reduce deforestation (FourWeekMBA, 2024). By 2020, 62% of agricultural raw materials were sustainably sourced with ongoing efforts to increase the share.

Furthermore, Unilever targets cutting single-use plastics and improving packaging recyclability, alongside achieving zero non-hazardous waste to landfill across global manufacturing sites (Zuno Carbon, 2025). The company has pledged to make product formulations biodegradable by 2030 and to invest €1 billion over ten years in a Climate & Nature Fund to support landscape restoration and water stewardship (ESG, 2025). Beyond environmental goals, Unilever integrates sustainability into social dimensions by promoting fair trade, improving labor conditions, supporting smallholder farmers, and enhancing economic inclusion, especially for women (FourWeekMBA, 2024; Zuno Carbon, 2025).

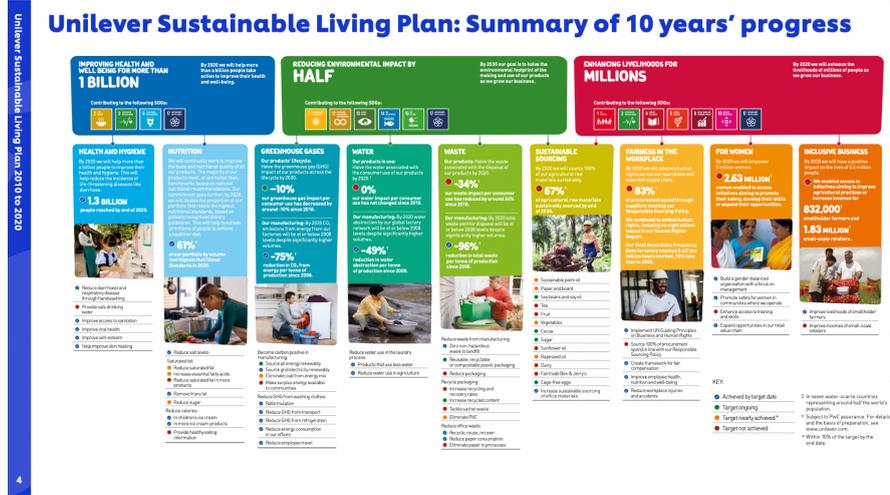


Figure 2.7 Unilever Sustainable Living Plan 2010–2020 Progress  
Source: Unilever, 2021

Unilever’s green positioning additionally add to the strategic response to evolving market dynamics. The global consumer market is increasingly driven by environmental consciousness, especially among younger and more affluent demographics who prefer products that reflect their values (FourWeekMBA, 2024). Unilever’s research shows that sustainability messaging significantly boost consumer engagement and sales, as demonstrated by campaigns such as the UAE mangrove restoration initiative, which led to a 12% increase in sales (Campaign Middle East, 2024).

By framing itself as a green company, Unilever differentiates its brands, captures market share, and fosters long-term customer loyalty in a competitive landscape. Moreover, this green framing helps Unilever manage reputational risks amid growing scrutiny over environmental impacts. Investigations by regulators, such as the UK Competition and

Markets Authority's probe into Unilever's greenwashing allegations, and activism from groups, like Greenpeace, have put pressure on the company to demonstrate genuine sustainability efforts (Greenpeace UK, 2024; CMA, 2024). Unilever mitigates public backlash and maintain investor confidence even as critics question the depth of its commitments with the support of credible green image as its reputational shield (Greenpeace UK, 2024; Caterlyst, 2023). This Unilever's sustainability narrative aligns with institutional and financial trends that increasingly reward strong Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance. By adopting green values, Unilever enhances its attractiveness to ESG-focused investors, gains access to green financing, and strengthens partnerships with governments and NGOs (Unilever, 2025).

#### **2.4.4 Allegations of Greenwashing**

Although Unilever has extensively committed to sustainability and green branding, the company has faced significant allegations of greenwashing. These allegations have been the focus of investigations by regulatory bodies, notably the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which scrutinized Unilever's environmental claims across several household and personal care brands (ESG Dive, 2023; cma, 2023). The CMA investigation raised concerns that Unilever's marketing uses vague, broad, and oftentimes misleading language regarding the environmental impact of its products.

For instance, claims about product ingredients being “natural” were found to exaggerate their actual natural content and potentially misleading consumers into believing the products are more eco-friendly than they are (CNN, 2023; The Grocer, 2023). Additionally, statements about recyclability were often unclear and failing to specify whether the entire product, just the packaging, or part of it was recyclable. Hence, confusion was made about the true environmental benefits (Retail Insight Network, 2023). Visual elements, such as the use of green leaves and other nature-related imagery, on packaging were highly criticized for creating an impression of environmental friendliness that may not be substantiated by the product’s actual lifecycle impact (Marketing Week, 2023; Independent, 2023). The use of color and imagery is a common greenwashing tactic designed to evoke positive associations with nature and sustainability without delivering commensurate environmental performance.

Greenwashing by Unilever can be understood as a strategic marketing approach that leverages selective information and appealing visuals to craft an environmentally responsible image. This includes the positive environmental attributes of a product while omitting or downplaying negative aspects, such as the use of virgin plastics or non-sustainable sourcing in other parts of the supply chain (Sustainable Agency, 2024). Terms, like “natural,” “eco-friendly,” or “biodegradable” are employed without clear definitions or certifications, which potentially mislead consumers about the true sustainability of the products (ESG

Dive, 2023). By using green colors, leaf logos, and other nature-related symbols, a subconscious association with environmental stewardship is created even when the product's overall impact remains questionable (Marketing Week, 2023).

The conduct of greenwashing practices by Unilever is particularly driven by market demand and competitive advantage. As consumers increasingly seek sustainable products, companies like Unilever are incentivized to position themselves as environmentally responsible to attract and retain customers, even if the sustainability claims are overstated (FourWeekMBA, 2024; Campaign Middle East, 2024). In a landscape where environmental regulations are evolving but not always stringent or clear, greenwashing allows companies to appear compliant and progressive without making substantive operational changes that could be costly or disruptive (Harvey, 2018; ESG Today, 2025).

Specifically, the option of greenwashing is helpful for companies that are facing intense scrutiny from regulators, NGOs, and the public, greenwashing as a tool to protect brand reputation and mitigate backlash related to environmental criticisms and activism campaigns (Greenpeace UK, 2024; CMA, 2023). Lastly, demonstrating sustainability credentials is increasingly important for attracting ESG-focused investors and accessing green financing, which makes greenwashing a financially strategic move for Unilever (Unilever, 2025).

The CMA's formal investigation into Unilever's green claims reflects a broader crackdown on greenwashing in the FMCG sector, emphasizing the need for transparency and accuracy in environmental marketing (CMA, 2023). While the investigation was eventually dropped following Unilever's commitments to improve its claims, the scrutiny highlights the challenges companies face in balancing marketing ambitions with genuine sustainability (ESG Today, 2024). Greenwashing undermines consumer trust and can slow progress toward meaningful environmental improvements by masking ongoing ecological harms behind a veneer of responsibility. It also complicates the work of environmental advocates and regulators striving to hold corporations accountable and push for systemic change.

#### **2.4.5 Unilever and Greenpeace: History of Conflict**

The conflict between Greenpeace and Unilever is longstanding, rooted in Greenpeace's persistent efforts to expose Unilever's environmental impacts, particularly in Indonesia's palm oil sector and plastic pollution crisis. Greenpeace first targeted Unilever in 2007 with the release of the report "Cooking the Climate", which revealed how palm oil suppliers connected to Unilever were driving deforestation and peatland destruction in Indonesia, fueling biodiversity loss and climate change (Greenpeace USA, 2025). This report marked the beginning of a sustained campaign to hold Unilever accountable for its role in the destruction of critical habitats in Borneo and Sumatra, linking the company to

widespread forest fires and habitat loss for endangered species such as orangutans (Greenpeace USA, 2025; Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2020).

In 2008, Greenpeace escalated its campaign by pressuring Unilever to support an immediate moratorium on the destruction of rainforests and peatlands for palm oil cultivation. Greenpeace's coordinated global actions included publishing detailed supplier investigations, mobilizing tens of thousands of emails to Unilever's CEO, and staging protests at Unilever's offices across Europe (Swarthmore, 2025). This pressure led Unilever to publicly commit to a zero-deforestation policy and to lobby other companies and governments to support the moratorium (Greenpeace International, 2009). However, Greenpeace continued to monitor Unilever's supply chains and repeatedly documented ongoing deforestation and fire hotspots linked to Unilever's suppliers, highlighting gaps between commitments and on-the-ground realities (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2019).

Beyond deforestation, Greenpeace has also confronted Unilever over its plastic pollution, especially the widespread use of single-use sachets in Indonesia. Greenpeace's 2023 report *Uncovered* exposed Unilever's complicity in the plastic crisis, revealing that despite public pledges to reduce plastic waste, Unilever remains one of the largest producers of unrecyclable plastic sachets polluting Indonesian rivers and oceans (Greenpeace International, 2023). Greenpeace Indonesia's direct actions, such as returning thousands of Unilever-branded plastic sachets to

the company's headquarters and arranging them into a giant "U" logo, symbolically challenged Unilever's greenwashing and demanded corporate accountability (Changemakr.asia, 2024). These protests have drawn significant media attention and public scrutiny, pressuring Unilever to accelerate its plastic reduction targets.

Despite these confrontations, Greenpeace's relationship with Unilever remains complex. While Greenpeace has forced Unilever to adopt more stringent environmental policies, the company continues to face criticism for insufficient implementation and ongoing environmental harm linked to its supply chains (Greenpeace UK, 2024). Greenpeace's campaigns reveal a persistent gap between Unilever's sustainability rhetoric and its operational realities, underscoring the need for continued vigilance and advocacy. This history of conflict exemplifies Greenpeace's broader strategy of combining investigative research, public mobilization, and direct action to challenge powerful corporations and expose greenwashing, particularly within the context of Indonesia's environmental governance challenges.