



# THE LIVING PHARMACY PROJECT

Traditional knowledge and medicinal plant use is deeply rooted in all indigenous cultures in the Amazon, but tends to be held by elders and medicine men and women. As indigenous communities face escalating threats from illegal deforestation, violence, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is at risk of losing their irreplaceable knowledge.

Forest Trends has been working with Yawanawa and Suruí indigenous communities since 2014 to establish “Living Pharmacies.” By building medicinal plant gardens in their villages, communities can reclaim and maintain a resource critical to their health and cultural identity. Each Living Pharmacy is a place where elders can pass their traditions on to the next generation and share potentially lifesaving skills. Elders' forest wisdom is the cornerstone of community health and wellness. Reviving traditional knowledge of medicinal plants has never been this urgent.

Medicine men and women travel into the forest with apprentices to teach them medicinal plant identification and harvesting.

Older tribe members teach younger generations how to grow these plants for home and medicinal use.

These efforts make plants easily accessible for health treatments. This reduces community reliance on pharmaceutical drugs and lengthy trips to clinics and hospitals.

The Yawanawa people have knowledge of **over 2,000 medicinal plants**, and as a result, have never had a death by snake bite in their history.

Tribes are beginning to educate outsiders on the therapeutic uses for plant species found in the Amazon, too.

The Yawanawa catalogued **21 medicinal plants** for treating snakebites and created a poster in their own language. They are used often and **every household in nine villages has a copy.**

**Dozens of medicinal plant species** have been cultivated in village gardens.

**Suruí community members now have a relationship with the Federal University of São Paulo**, which has already led to cultural exchange and a visit to the Olawatawa Medicinal Plants Center by 10 university students for the first time in 2018.

**“We have to educate ourselves to know how to use our medicines from our forest. I decided to be part of this project as a way to value our culture and strengthen us again, as it was in the past.”**

**- Naraiamat Suruí, young Suruí Leader**



The Living Pharmacies project is part of a partnership between Forest Trends' Communities & Territorial Governance Initiative and the IKEA Foundation. The “Our Forest, Our Home” program focuses on increasing access to medicinal plants, and investing in climate-resilient agroforestry systems to generate sustainable income, improve food security, promote traditional healthcare, and provide education suited to the needs of Yawanawa and Suruí communities in the Brazilian Amazon.

Learn more at [www.forest-trends.org](http://www.forest-trends.org).