

# THE WORLD IS LOSING ITS FORESTS. COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION CAN HELP.



**For over a century, conservation has largely been defined by protected areas,** which involve setting aside land for nature, then minimizing human impact and use as much as possible. This has been a remarkable global undertaking, and in some respects, a success – there are just over 238,000 protected areas across 244 countries and territories, making up almost 15% of the land on Earth.<sup>1,2</sup>

**However, traditional protected area strategies are not enough.** Biodiversity continues to plummet. Places suitable for new protected areas are becoming scarce. Many existing parks are only parks on paper: they lack resources for enforcement and suffer from illegal mining, logging, and agricultural expansion. The environmental movement itself has historically been at odds with local communities, barring and removing them from their traditionally occupied lands and banning them from activities they depend on for their livelihoods.

**An alternative model, community-led conservation,** trusts that local people who have been stewards of their lands for millennia can be effective guardians when they have the resources and tools to do so. Community-led conservation often relies on traditional or indigenous knowledge of the landscape. New research shows that this model can be *more* effective than conservation approaches that exclude people from nature completely.



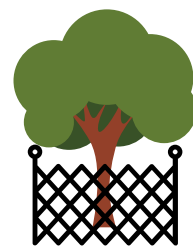
## Community-led

Conservation, sustainable resource management, livelihoods, & food security are balanced. Indigenous & local communities lead.



## Top-down

Humans are excluded, impacts & use are minimized as much as possible. Governments and conservationists lead.



## Why is community-led conservation important?



**1. The stewardship of indigenous peoples and traditional communities protects landscapes.** This is part of what makes community-led conservation more effective in the long-term for conserving carbon, biodiversity, and natural resources than projects that don't allow people to actively manage their surroundings.

**2. Community-led conservation allows forest benefits to be harvested by communities and countries.** Sustainable forest management not only conserves and captures carbon, it can also support livelihoods. Self-determined enterprises, like agroforestry or artisanal handcrafts, better enables communities to generate economic opportunities and food security for themselves.



**3. Biodiversity-friendly, human-managed landscapes are critical complements to traditional protected areas** – they create protective buffers and help connect natural spaces that species need to move freely.<sup>3</sup>

## What does community-led conservation look like?

### Apiwtxa, Brazilian Amazon

Since 1992



Credit: Marina Douchev

The Apiwtxa Asháninka indigenous people of Brazil have developed community guidelines for decision-making on ecological values in their territory, including how they will interact with outsiders. Recent activities include training agroforestry agents and increased territorial monitoring. New outposts and patrols have led to the expulsion of illegal loggers, hunters, and farmers. As a result, wildlife, including capibaras and river turtles, have been returning.<sup>4</sup>



Credit: Apiwtxa Association

### Salween Peace Park, Myanmar

Since 2018



Credit: KESAN

The Karen people, displaced by Myanmar's decades-long armed conflict, have recently been able to return to a portion of their ancestral lands, declaring it a "Peace Park." They have revived traditional governance systems, introduced new agroforestry and seed banking projects, and established a committee to monitor their boundaries. The Peace Park helps protect a global biodiversity hotspot, one of the last remaining in Southeast Asia.<sup>5</sup>

**“I believe that in the future, thanks to the peace park we are building, the children of my village will be able to live differently. They will be able to stay home and live in peace.”**

– Saw Tha Say, Karen elder

### Living Pharmacies

### Yawanawa & Suruí territories, Brazilian Amazon

Since 2014

Through the "Living Pharmacy" Project, indigenous Yawanawa and Suruí communities transfer ancient knowledge to new generations. Medicine men and women travel deep into the forest with young apprentices to teach medicinal plant identification and harvesting. Important plant species are catalogued and collected for cultivation in strategic locations – safeguarding both the communities' cultural traditions and local biodiversity.<sup>6</sup>



Credit: Tashka Yawanawa

[1] UNEP-WCMC. 2018. 2018 United Nations List of Protected Areas. Supplement on protected area management effectiveness. UNEP-WCMC: Cambridge, UK. [www.sprep.org/attachments/VirLib/Global/2018-list-protected-areas.pdf](http://www.sprep.org/attachments/VirLib/Global/2018-list-protected-areas.pdf).

[2] Protected Planet. "Aichi Target 11 Dashboard." Protected Planet, data from UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, updated monthly. Accessed on 29 Sept. 2020. [www.protectedplanet.net/target-11-dashboard](http://www.protectedplanet.net/target-11-dashboard).

[3] Kremen, C. and Merenlender, A.M. 2018. Landscapes that work for biodiversity and people. *Science*. 362, 6412. doi: 10.1126/science.aau6020.

[4] Hodgdon, Benjamin D. Spring 2020. "The Revolutionary Forest." *Earth Island Journal*. [www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/the-revolutionary-forest-myanmar-peace-park/](http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/the-revolutionary-forest-myanmar-peace-park/).

[5] Zwick, Steve and Calderon, Ciro. 23 Sept. 2016. "The Asháninka People Of The Amazon Are Saving The Forest, And Doing It Their Way." *Ecosystem Marketplace*. [www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/articles/ashaninka-people-amazon-saving-forest-way/](http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/articles/ashaninka-people-amazon-saving-forest-way/).

[6] Coxon, Cheyenne and Bennett, Genevieve. 2020. "The Living Pharmacy Project." *Forest Trends Association*. [www.forest-trends.org/publications/the-living-pharmacy-project/](http://www.forest-trends.org/publications/the-living-pharmacy-project/).