

Indigenous communities: Train local experts to help conserve forests

Charles M. Peters, Miguel Alexiades & Sarah A. Laird

Affiliations | **Corresponding author**

Nature **481**, 443 (26 January 2012) | doi:10.1038/481443b

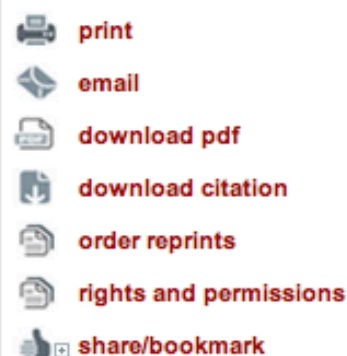
Published online 25 January 2012

Subject terms: [Environmental science](#) · [Ecology](#) · [Communication](#) · [Developing world](#)

The management of tropical forests by indigenous communities requires a formal intervention plan based on quantitative inventories, growth studies and permanent monitoring systems. But in our 30 years of experience, few such communities, if any, would be able to produce a plan on their own. This shortcoming needs to be rectified.

One answer would be to train village-based resource managers, who could use their knowledge and skills in forestry, ecology, ethnobotany, economics and anthropology to help local communities manage forests and interact with the state, commercial markets and the global conservation community. This would reduce dependency on external inputs, draw on local skills, promote community organization and self-governance, and help to implement ways of reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation.

Crucially, community-owned forests would then stay in the hands of those who have lived in, used and looked after them for so long.



- Author information

[Author information](#) · [Comments](#)

Affiliations

The New York Botanical Garden, New York, USA.

Charles M. Peters

University of Kent, Canterbury, UK.

Miguel Alexiades

People and Plants International, Bristol, Vermont, USA.

Sarah A. Laird

Corresponding author

Correspondence to: [Charles M. Peters](#)