



# Making knowledge work for people and forests

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Annual review 2022





# About Tropenbos International

## **Thriving and climate-resilient landscapes**

We envision thriving and climate-resilient landscapes across the forested tropics, where land is used sustainably, and local communities exercise their rights and participate equitably in decision-making.

## **Supporting locally owned solutions in frontier landscapes**

We support locally owned solutions for thriving and climate-resilient landscapes at the forest-agriculture frontier, through evidence-based dialogue, collaborative action and improved decision making.

## **Our goal**

By 2030, we aim to improve governance and management of 20 million hectares of tropical forested landscapes, benefiting at least 5 million people and supporting global climate and biodiversity goals.

## **A global network**

TBI is a network of autonomous organizations in Colombia, DR Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Suriname, Viet Nam and the Netherlands, with partners in Bolivia, Ethiopia, the Philippines and Uganda.





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## Opening words

Tropical forests and trees play a vital role in supporting life on our planet, but they are rapidly disappearing due to unsustainable land-use practices. This not only has disastrous effects on biodiversity and the climate, but also puts at risk the livelihoods of more than one billion people who live in forested and woodland areas across the tropics. Decisions that affect these areas are often made without involving local communities and without fully understanding the long-term consequences for people or the environment. This further exacerbates the pressure on forests, especially on landscapes at the frontier between forests and agriculture.

Tropenbos International (TBI) strives to reverse this trend. We combine diverse knowledge systems in support of sustainable land-use practices that simultaneously contribute to livelihood resilience, biodiversity conservation

and climate change mitigation and adaptation, resulting in resilient and thriving landscapes. We focus on locally owned solutions, with a key role for Indigenous people and local communities. This is because we have learned that lasting changes will occur only when local actors are engaged effectively. It requires that they have rights and agency, and are able to participate equitably in the decision-making processes that determine the future of the areas they call home.

This is the central vision of our new strategy, which focuses on establishing more equitable and inclusive governance and management of forests and trees. The strategy aims to develop locally owned solutions in three main impact areas: community forest management and conservation, participatory forest and landscape restoration, and diversified production systems. It also highlights the



importance of working on gender equality and youth engagement, financial capacities and linkages, and locally responsive policies, as common themes that influence progress within the impact areas.

This annual review presents examples of our achievements in 2022 in each of these areas. They illustrate the wide variety of context-specific solutions that TBI members and partners work on. The stories show how Indigenous peoples and local communities, including youth, now have stronger rights to use and manage the forests they depend on, and the capacity to exercise those rights. They show how multistakeholder platforms have become vibrant places for dialogue among landscape actors, and how local

governments' regulations and policies regarding the use of forests and trees have been improved. The stories also demonstrate how best practices are spreading within and between landscapes, and how tangible changes in land use are becoming apparent on the ground.

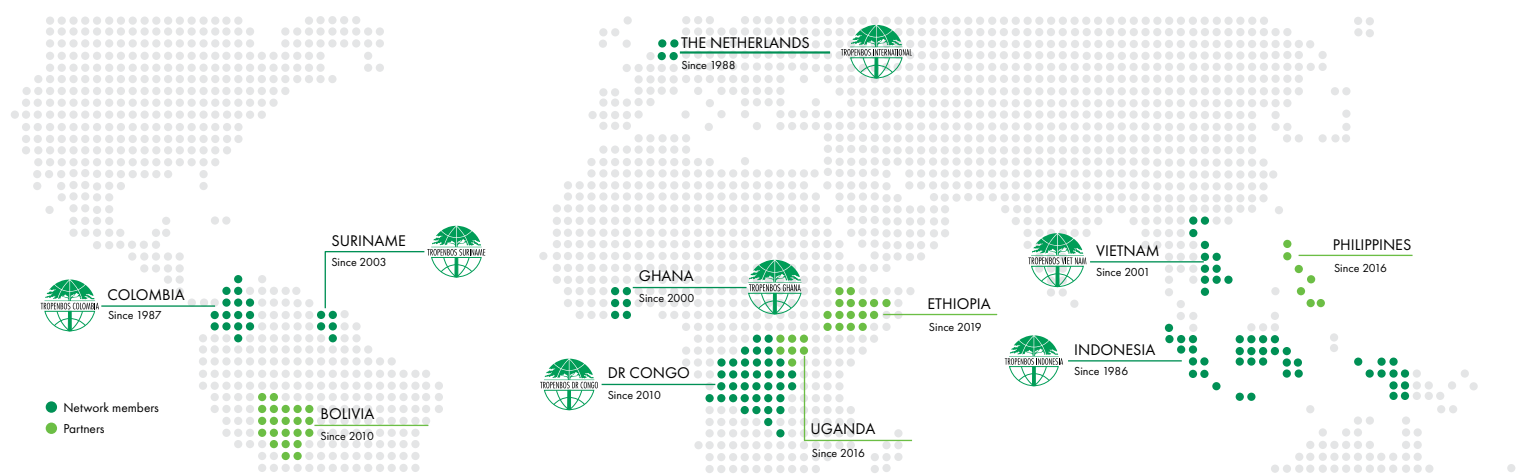
We invite you to delve into the pages of this report and learn about our accomplishments, made possible through the unwavering commitment and professionalism of our members and partners. Their dedication has been instrumental in our achievements, and we sincerely hope that our shared commitment will endure and flourish in the years to come.

**Edwin Huizing**  
Chair

**Joost van Montfort**  
Executive Director



# Our presence



## Impact\*

Over **10m hectares** with improved climate-smart landscape practices in our focus landscapes.

Over **150k people** have benefited directly and indirectly from improved climate-smart landscape practices in our focus landscapes.

Over **12** contributions to changes in policies, regulations and investments concerning inclusive and sustainable development in our focus landscapes.

\*Estimated cumulative figures since 2019

## Reach in 2022

**105** publications

**100k** website page views

**23.3k** reached on social media

**207** events organized

**10.8k** participants in events

## Revenue

In 2022 EUR **8,347,217m** was the estimated total revenue for the TBI network

for more information on TBI secretariaat finance see page 57.



# Outcomes featured in this Annual Review



## DR Congo

Farmers in the Bafwasende landscape **embraced cocoa agroforestry** as a feasible and sustainable land-use option within degraded parts of three community forest concessions.



## Viet Nam

Government officials started recognizing **the role that ethnic minorities play** in forest protection and restoration.



## Colombia

Indigenous people and peasants established over **100 restoration plots** and successfully advocated for the **inclusion of local restoration in plans** of the Solano municipality (≈1.5 million ha; ≈10,600 people).



## Ethiopia

The **inclusive and iterative process** that led to the **adoption of a national restoration strategy** has inspired international organizations, including USAID, GIZ and Oxfam in Ethiopia, to follow suit.



## Indonesia

A **new collective of rubber farmers** provided support for quality improvement and marketing, **increasing the income** from rubber agroforestry for Dayak farmers.



## Ghana

**Female cocoa farmers raised awareness about tree-tenure insecurity**, contributing to the government's decision to mandate logging companies to share profits with farmers whose lands they collect trees from.



## Suriname

Youth representatives of the Saamaka tribe pushed the national government to accelerate the processing of a draft law granting the tribe the **legal right to their traditional territory** (≈1.4 million ha; ≈25,000 people).



## Bolivia

The governments of Ascensión de Guarayos and Urubichá adopted **fire management tools** and **regulations** to minimize wildfire risks and impacts in their municipalities (≈1.9 million ha; ≈44,000 people).





## Locally owned solutions for thriving and climate-resilient landscapes

In conversation with Joost van Montfort

*In June 2022, Joost van Montfort succeeded René Boot as the Executive Director of Tropenbos International (TBI). Having worked for various civil society organizations, including WWF, IUCN NL, AidEnvironment, SNV and Doctors without Borders, Joost has extensive experience with programme management, partnership building and organizational change. Here he talks with Koen Kusters about his views on TBI's role, his ambitions, and the lessons he brings with him from other organizations.*

**Is there a central concept that guides you as director of TBI?**

TBI envisions a future where sustainable forest use and development go hand in hand, contributing to local livelihoods, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation. I think this requires solutions that are developed and implemented by local actors themselves. As far as I am concerned, such locally owned solutions are at the heart of our work. It is what TBI has always stood for. And history proves us right. Most top-down solutions don't stick. Solutions that come from below have more traction, and more chance to survive. Ultimately, they will have greater impact. And that is what we aim for.



### **What do locally owned solutions look like?**

We focus on frontier landscapes. These are areas where forests are threatened by agricultural expansion, where people live in poverty and are vulnerable to climate change. It is in these landscapes where local and global challenges come together, and where solutions need to be found. Solutions will differ from place to place, but what they have in common is that they address challenges in the landscape from multiple angles. They require changes, not only to land-use practices, but also to the governance of natural resources and to the functioning of businesses and financial mechanisms.

### **How would you describe the role of TBI in this?**

We partner with local communities and others to develop and implement solutions at the level of the landscape. But it does not stop there. Together with like-minded organizations we try to influence the policies of government agencies, NGOs and international organizations, to create enabling conditions for lasting success.

### **TBI is relatively small. Does that have consequences for its potential to change the policies and practices of international players?**

We focus on innovative approaches. We must show what works and what doesn't. Based on this, we can guide the larger organizations in the right direction; we can influence where they go. We are not specialized in lobbying and advocacy, so we must work in smart coalitions. We need to work in partnership with other organizations to be more effective in influencing policies and practices.

### **How is TBI different than other organizations?**

First, what sets us apart is that we explicitly focus on frontier landscapes. Second, we work with local stakeholders to develop and implement locally owned solutions.

We are able to do that because we have longstanding connections with local groups and governments in those landscapes. We are trusted by local stakeholders. Most other international organizations are not as embedded in the landscape as we are. Third, we focus on mobilizing a range of knowledge systems, from Indigenous worldviews to state-of-the-art science, to strengthen locally owned solutions.

### **What is the added value of being organized in a network?**

Within the network, partners can learn from each other. This helps them to better understand what works and why, and to sharpen their interventions and strategies. Also, being organized in a network helps to exert influence. After all, a message has more weight when it comes from ten organizations instead of one. And as a network we have better opportunities to develop programmes and look for funding.

### **Among funders there seems to be more emphasis on organizations that represent certain groups in society. TBI does not really represent a group, so how would you describe its licence to operate?**

In international development, questions about legitimacy are getting more and more attention. Who represents whom? We also need to think about that. Our focus is on local communities, but we do not represent them. So that means that we should not advocate on their behalf. Instead, we should enable communities to advocate for themselves. We should help them with identifying, and acting on, possibilities to improve their conditions and influence. If we do that well, it will give us credibility. In the end, credibility is our licence to operate.



**What are your ambitions for Tropenbos?**

We want to at least double our impact. This requires us to critically reflect on our role and achievements. Sometimes we may have to deprioritize activities that do not lead to the desired impact, and we must identify where and how we can be more effective.

**Could you name something that would require more attention?**

More attention can be paid to collaborative learning for collective action. Technology offers all kinds of new possibilities. During the Covid-19 pandemic we saw a rise in the use of online technologies to facilitate interactions. And the possibilities go much further. In communities today, almost everyone has a mobile phone. This makes it possible for people from different communities to interact, to learn and exchange information, and to develop collective action. As TBI, we can facilitate such processes, and we have still much room to learn and improve. This is especially relevant at the level of the landscape.

**Before TBI, you worked for various environmental organizations. What lessons do you bring with you?**

I learned that large organizations are not necessarily more effective than small organizations. Rather, the reverse. Moreover, large conservation organizations are often more conservative, lack agility, and are weighed down by internal politics. We cannot expect them to be the real game changers. They can help to promote innovations and change systems, but they are not the ones driving bottom-up innovations. This means that there is an important niche for an organization like TBI. We can do all sorts of things that larger organizations cannot, because they are too large and unwieldy.

I also learned the importance of understanding the bigger picture, understanding the political economy, understanding value chains. I once worked on a project meant to increase smallholders' coffee production. The project was successful in achieving its objective. However, as the supply of coffee rose, prices fell, and the farmers were worse off. We hadn't given enough thought beforehand about how the value chain worked. Without a good understanding of the bigger picture, you will make mistakes. This is why I think that TBI's focus on knowledge is so important.



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## Stories of change

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The unsustainable use of natural resources in tropical frontier landscapes reduces people's resilience and contributes to climate change and loss of biodiversity. Despite the obvious negative consequences, this unsustainable use persists, and structural changes to address it are urgently needed at various levels. It is our conviction that these structural changes must start with more inclusive and equitable governance and management of forests. To this aim, we support evidence-based, locally owned solutions to landscape-specific challenges across the forested tropics.

Below are examples of our work in 2022. The first set of stories highlights some of our achievements within the three impact areas that are central to TBI's ambition: community-led forest management and conservation, participatory forest and landscape restoration, and diversified production systems. The second set of stories show how achieving impacts in these areas also involves work on cross-cutting themes related to gender and youth, financial capacities and linkages, and locally responsive policies. The third set showcases some of our efforts to address wildfires, as part of a new programme launched in 2021.

Individually, each story illustrates a specific case and set of circumstances, highlighting the need to develop customized solutions to local challenges. Collectively, these stories demonstrate the strength of TBI's approach and the meaningful changes we can achieve by working with local actors and facilitating bottom-up changes.



A landscape with different land uses around Batu Daya village, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Irpan Lamago





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## Impact area

# Community forest management and conservation

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In many parts of the world, forests that are managed and used by Indigenous people and local communities are relatively well preserved, but they face increasing pressure from outside forces such as commercial plantation development, mining and logging. In addition, preservationist approaches to nature conservation threaten local people's access to the forest resources they depend on for their livelihoods. In 2022, TBI supported Indigenous people and local communities to have their forest tenure rights formally acknowledged and to manage their forests in a sustainable manner, on their own terms, and according to their aspirations and needs. Tropenbos DR Congo, for example, supported farmers in the Bafwasende landscape to adopt cocoa agroforestry as a feasible and sustainable land-use option in degraded parts of their community forest concessions (page 16).

TBI partners also helped communities strengthen their internal forest governance processes, supported sustainable business and finance initiatives, and promoted the participation of Indigenous people and local communities in decision-making processes that influence the future of the wider landscape. Tropenbos Viet Nam, for example, supported ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands to convince local government officials of the crucial role that ethnic minorities play in forest protection — a prerequisite to obtaining further government support for locally owned solutions to forest management and conservation (page 18).



Team evaluating a community forest management plan in Guarayos, Bolivia. Photo: Miguel Manchego



## DR Congo: Farmers embrace cocoa agroforestry within community forest concessions

Tropenbos DR Congo assisted communities to apply for local community forest concessions, which give them the right to use and manage their forests. Within the degraded parts of these concessions, Tropenbos DR Congo has been promoting agroforestry to improve livelihoods without putting additional pressure on the forest. This effort resulted in a surge of farmers adopting cocoa agroforestry practices throughout the Bafwasende landscape in 2022.

The vast tropical rainforest in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) is under dire threat from the expansion of logging, mining and agriculture, amid widespread poverty and societal tensions. To encourage sustainable forest management while also addressing poverty, the government has been granting local community forest concessions (LCFCs). These give communities the right to profit from the sustainable exploitation of land and forest resources and are a legal instrument to prevent expropriation by third parties. A concession is governed by a community forest committee, consisting of several elected community members.



Farmer showing his agroforestry cocoa field in Bafwasende landscape, DR Congo. Photo: Annie Beko

Since the administrative procedures are complex, Tropenbos DR Congo has been assisting communities with LCFC applications. With their help, three concessions have now been granted in the Bafwasende landscape, covering 89,750 hectares. Another 26 concessions are in process, covering an additional 729,821 hectares. Simultaneously, Tropenbos DR Congo has been working with traditional chiefs — many of whom initially perceived the LCFCs as a threat to their power — and has succeeded in cultivating a more supportive attitude among the chiefs toward the community forest concessions.

Within established concessions, Tropenbos DR Congo has been helping communities of Indigenous shifting cultivators to develop sustainable land-use practices. Their efforts focus not only on managing the natural forest, but also on promoting sustainable agroforestry within parts of the concessions that were previously deforested. For an example, Tropenbos DR Congo looked at the Yira migrants who recently settled in the Bafwasende landscape. The Yira have a long tradition of cultivating cocoa in agroforestry systems, and they have successfully established profitable cocoa agroforestry farms not long after arriving in the area.

In the view of Tropenbos DR Congo, cocoa agroforestry — which combines cocoa and other tree species in mixed land-use systems — was a model that indigenous farmers could learn from. They therefore organized a trip of around 40 Indigenous farmers, including many women and young people, to Yira villages to learn about cocoa agroforestry. When the participating farmers returned to their home villages, they became champions of cocoa agroforestry among their fellow villagers. To further broaden support for cocoa agroforestry in the landscape, Tropenbos DR Congo worked closely with local chiefs; as a result, two influential chiefs started promoting agroforestry among Indigenous communities.

At the community level, Tropenbos DR Congo helped farmers to establish nurseries for cocoa and indigenous trees, and provided training courses on cocoa cultivation, as well as on post-harvest processing and trade. They also organized meetings between farmers and cocoa buyers, where buyers would explain procedures, prices and quality requirements.

These efforts paid off. By the end of 2022, there was a boom in farmers planting cocoa in the Bafwasende landscape. In response to the rapidly growing number of cocoa-cultivating farmers, cocoa traders have started flocking to the area in search of cocoa beans. To mitigate the risk that the expansion of cocoa agroforestry would put more pressure on the natural forest, Tropenbos DR Congo has facilitated participatory land-use planning, helping communities define areas for cultivation, forest conservation, and sustainable logging. These local spatial plans fit within provincial plans and are backed by local communities as well as the relevant government agencies.

Tropenbos DR Congo will continue to help local authorities to improve planning, and to implement and enforce these plans. They will also continue to support the development of markets for sustainable and deforestation-free cocoa, to improve local livelihoods without putting extra pressure on the forest.



## Viet Nam: Enhancing the role of ethnic minorities in forest management

Tropenbos Viet Nam actively engaged government officials in research into the forest management traditions of ethnic minorities. As a result, government officials are now more aware of the role that ethnic minorities can play in forest management and conservation.

Since the 1990s, the government of Viet Nam has been allocating forest lands to various actors, including communities of ethnic minorities. Although ethnic minorities make up a significant proportion of the rural population, so far they have received only a small percentage of the allocated lands. And, where ethnic minorities were allocated land, the boundaries often did not align with

those of their traditional territories. This situation has resulted in overlapping claims over resources, sometimes exacerbating deforestation. In response, some government officials stopped supporting the allocation of lands to ethnic minorities. But that means losing a valuable partner, according to Tropenbos Viet Nam.

To better understand and document the role of ethnic minorities in forest management and conservation, Tropenbos Viet Nam collaborated with Tay Nguyen University to study forest management traditions and the related challenges among the Ede and M'Nông ethnic minority groups in the country's Central Highlands.



H'Tam Nie, a M'Nông woman, representing her community during the annual restoration forum in Ban Me Thuot, Viet Nam. Photo: Phan Thi Thuy Nhi

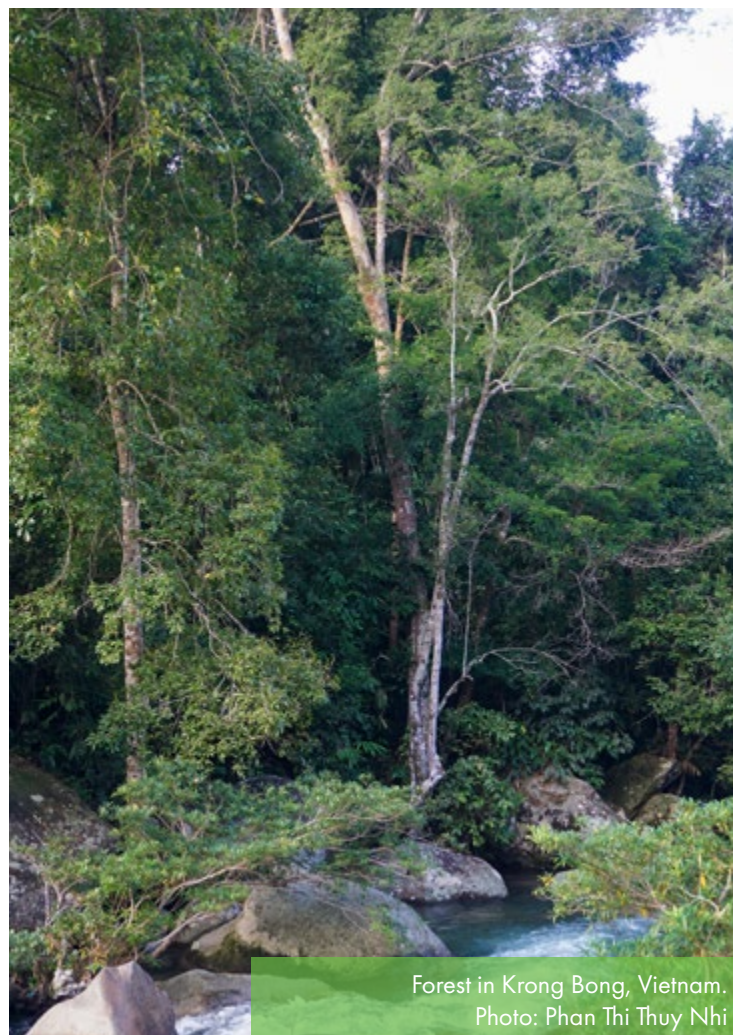
Based on its longstanding relationship of trust with local government agencies, Tropenbos Viet Nam was able to include government officials in the research process: inviting them to provide feedback on the research design, travelling to the communities together, and being part of the analysis. Through this active engagement, officials gradually broadened their perspectives, and revisited their preconceptions.

The respondents told the research team how the boundaries of customary territories used to be known and respected among various communities. They told the team about the importance of protecting watershed forests, as they are critical for water collection. The research team also learned about traditional governance systems, with elected community leaders who would guard and pass down the rules and regulations that govern the forest resources. The introduction of appointed government administrators, however, significantly reduced the role of traditional leaders. From the perspective of the ethnic minorities, government interventions — however well intended — have caused confusion, reduced their control over forest resources, and resulted in the erosion of customary forest management traditions.

In addition to gathering information, the research team wanted to empower the communities to communicate their experiences to the relevant government agencies. This involved raising awareness, particularly among young people, and helping people develop the skills and confidence to share their stories. Through this process, the communities developed a renewed interest in and appreciation for their customary government systems.

On 15 November 2022, representatives of the Ede and M'Nông found themselves in front of a room full of government officials, researchers and NGO staff, attending the annual restoration forum in Ban Me Thuot. Wearing their traditional clothes, they proudly shared their stories. They told of how they used to protect forests to safeguard their water sources, how their practices were passed on

from generation to generation, and how they could help conserve natural forests and restore degraded areas, if only they were given a chance. The audience listened attentively. After the meeting, the government's department of ethnic minorities invited the representatives to share their stories in a podcast which was then widely shared. It is a sign that the government is beginning to change its perception — a crucial step towards enhancing ethnic minorities' role in forest management and conservation.



Forest in Krong Bong, Vietnam.  
Photo: Phan Thi Thuy Nhi





## Gaan Kuutu: A meeting of community leaders from Bolivia, Colombia and Suriname

In recent years, many governments have been **formalizing the rights** of Indigenous people and local communities to use and manage forest resources. Such tenure reforms give local actors greater control over forest resources. TBI network partners work with communities to apply for tenure rights, and to strengthen communities' capacity to deal with the new opportunities — as well as the challenges — that come with tenure changes.

TBI network partners in Bolivia, Colombia and Suriname realized that the communities they work with could learn a lot from each other. They organized a **meeting** from 8 to 13 August in Villa de Leyva, Colombia, where 21 community representatives and 17 facilitators (from TBI and TBI partners) shared their experiences in territorial governance and sustainable forest management. This regional exchange was called Gaan Kuutu, which means “tribal meeting” in the language of the Saamaka tribe in Suriname.

The exchange gave participants an opportunity to discuss, learn and connect. During the last two days of the week-long meeting, each country delegation used the insights from the discussions with other participants to develop a plan that outlined the necessary next steps to support territorial governance and sustainable forest management, and to provide practical guidance for activities in the coming years.

In the course of the meeting, the participants shared numerous stories. These stories often portrayed experiences of marginalization and struggle, but they also highlighted the beauty of nature and traditional culture — they were stories filled with pride. The participants could identify themselves in each other's narratives, fostering a profound sense of connection and igniting a renewed inspiration to persist in their fight for land rights and for sustainable forest management that is rooted in their customs and beliefs.



Intercambio de experiencias para fortalecer la gobernanza territorial colectiva en Bolivia, Colombia y Suriname





Impact area

## Participatory forest and landscape restoration

Deforestation and land degradation contribute to climate change and biodiversity loss, and threaten the livelihoods of at least one billion people around the world. More than two billion hectares of land are currently degraded, but there is huge potential to restore these areas to diverse and productive lands. To make sure that local people benefit from these efforts, restoration needs to take place through a bottom-up process, led by the people who live in the landscape. TBI has therefore been promoting the application of smallholder-driven restoration in degraded forests and dryland areas. When it comes to promoting participatory productive restoration (PPR), Tropenbos Colombia has emerged as a trailblazer. Thanks to their persistent efforts, PPR has gained significant recognition as a viable alternative (page 24) to conventional top-down restoration approaches. In Ethiopia, TBI's partner, PENHA, accomplished a remarkable feat by facilitating an inclusive and iterative process to develop a national dryland restoration strategy. The strategy has been formally adopted by the central government (page 27). These examples vividly demonstrate the immense potential of participatory restoration as a transformative approach that can effectively contribute to resilient livelihoods, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.



Monkoxi Indigenous people planting trees as a part of their productive restoration plans, TCO Lomerío, Bolivia. Photo: Miguel Manchego



## Colombia: Participatory productive restoration — from proposition to practice

Tropenbos Colombia supported participatory productive restoration as an alternative approach to the government's large-scale tree-planting efforts. Tropenbos Colombia enabled farmers to establish restoration plots, supported inclusive landscape governance, and explored options for innovative financing.

Significant parts of the Colombian Amazon region are degraded. This is caused by, among other things, the expansion of cattle ranching and coca plantations, as well as the spraying of defoliant as part of an anti-drug programme. The central government's approach to restoring these degraded lands is through large-scale and

top-down tree planting efforts, using only a small number of fast-growing tree species. In the view of Tropenbos Colombia, this approach is risky. It pays no attention to the question of who is responsible for nurturing the seedlings and for ensuring that they can grow into mature trees. Tropenbos Colombia therefore put forward a proposition for an alternative approach: participatory productive restoration (PPR).

PPR is based on the idea that restoration will be most successful when it engages communities and provides them with benefits, such as access to timber, fruits, firewood and water. By involving local communities, the restoration



Tree nursery in the Resguardo Teófila Arenosa, Solano, Colombia. Photo: Sofía Cumaco

process becomes more sustainable, since the communities take ownership of the restored areas and are more likely to maintain them.

In the context of the Working Landscapes programme, Tropenbos Colombia has promoted PPR in the Solano landscape in the southern department of Caquetá. This area has undergone rapid land-use changes in recent years, leading to widespread degradation, mostly due to the expansion of cattle pastures. Tropenbos Colombia has helped local people to establish restoration plots, while also improving governance and promoting business and finance in support of PPR.

## Restoration plots

At the start of the Working Landscapes programme, Tropenbos Colombia invited Indigenous farmers and cattle ranchers in the Solano landscape to develop proposals for small-scale restoration initiatives. Tropenbos Colombia then provided technical support and a modest budget for seedlings and fencing materials, resulting in over one hundred local restoration plots — each tailored to specific ecological conditions and requirements. By the end of 2022, these areas were covered with a large variety of young trees, nurtured by their caretakers.

Tropenbos Colombia witnessed formerly deforested areas coming back to life. Farmers recognized the power of restoration and its potential benefits for both them and the environment. They are enthusiastic about the approach, and have been extending PPR initiatives themselves. For example, communities that established tree nurseries with the help of Tropenbos Colombia have started providing seedlings to other communities, and some have applied for additional financial support to expand the area being restored. In addition, Tropenbos Colombia noticed a remarkable shift in attitude among the participating cattle ranchers. Whereas they once viewed the forest as an adversary, they have now come to regard it as an ally in securing their long-term livelihoods. They have begun to

see themselves as guardians of the forest, committed to its preservation.

## Inclusive governance

Tropenbos Colombia views PPR as part of an alternative rural development model in which local communities have rights to the natural resources they depend on, and are able to influence the decisions that affect the future of their immediate surroundings. Tropenbos Colombia therefore took steps to enhance the involvement of Indigenous and peasant communities in decision-making processes at the landscape level.

Enthused by the success of the restoration initiatives, community representatives were keen to promote PPR at the municipal government level. With the help of Tropenbos Colombia they prepared themselves to participate during consultation meetings where stakeholders could provide input and feedback to municipal plans. They were able to make a convincing argument, backed up by data, maps and infographics. As a result, the municipal government decided to incorporate areas for PPR as a distinct category in its spatial plan, and in its plan to stop deforestation (affecting an area of around 1.5 million ha with approximately 10,600 people).

## Business and finance

The adoption of PPR could be accelerated through innovative business models and financing mechanisms. In his inauguration speech in August 2022, Colombia's new president stated that one such financial mechanism — known as a debt-for-nature swap — was a viable way to conserve the country's forest. This mechanism allows countries to have their debts decreased in exchange for their participation in environmentally-friendly initiatives.

In the view of Tropenbos Colombia, debt-for-nature swaps could be used to support PPR, helping communities to build something that has value independent of external





Restoration plot in the Resguardo Puerto Naranjo, Solano, Colombia. Photo: Felipe Gast

financial support. In the second half of 2022, Tropenbos Colombia therefore started presenting this idea to economists and financial experts from Vision Amazonia, a large government programme to prevent deforestation in the Amazon. The response was positive. Tropenbos Colombia will work with the programme to ensure that the government will use debt-for-nature swaps to invest in locally owned environmentally friendly initiatives that directly benefit local communities.

## Upscaling

In only three years, the work of Tropenbos Colombia to promote PPR has resulted in tangible changes in the Solano landscape, as well as changes to the spatial plans of the municipal government. Inspired by these successes, several other NGOs are now eager to support farmers in developing and implementing restoration initiatives. And, following discussions with Tropenbos Colombia, Vision

Amazonia is considering including some elements of PPR in its strategy for the deforested parts of the Amazon basin. They realize that, in the long term, PPR is more sustainable than the government's large-scale tree-planting projects. Crucially, it all starts with the Indigenous people and peasants themselves. They are key to ensuring that tree-planting efforts will ultimately contribute to long-term climate, biodiversity and livelihood objectives.



# Ethiopia: An inclusive approach to developing a national restoration strategy

In Ethiopia, PENHA led the truly inclusive development of a national dryland restoration strategy that is widely supported across regions and government departments. This has inspired others to adopt a similar approach.

Ethiopia is 70% dryland, which is degraded and degrading, and which hosts the majority of the country's 110 million people. A national dryland restoration strategy, endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture, came into effect in December 2022. The strategy harmonizes restoration policies and practices across government departments and other stakeholders.

The Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA), TBI's partner in Ethiopia, facilitated the process leading up to the final strategy, in collaboration with CIFOR-ICRAF, and backed by the Ministry of Agriculture and by Ethiopian Forestry Development (EFD), a federal institution. At the outset, community-level consultations were conducted across different regions with forest user groups, smallholders and pastoralists, women's and youth groups, as well as the Abo Gereb ("fathers of the tree"), traditional leaders in the Tigray and Afar regions. PENHA also ensured the active participation and buy-in of relevant government agencies. In 2021–22, a series of workshops brought together national and regional



View of the village Adamas from the Simien Mountains, Ethiopia.  
©Hans J. Aubert - stock.adobe.com



government agencies, research institutions and NGOs to discuss the required elements and to reflect, review and revise the strategy. Dutch Embassy staff members contributed throughout the process.

The process involved around 50 participants from six regions. Task teams of 8 to 10 individuals were formed to work on four different themes: management, rights, markets, and institutional coordination. Three-day workshops allowed for in-depth discussions and informal exchanges. After each session, representatives returned to their home areas to gather feedback. After several months they reconvened to revise the strategy, based on input they had received. Through the back-and-forth between the national and regional levels, local perspectives were included, resulting in broad support throughout the country. The **final strategy** emphasizes the need to involve communities in restoration, including women, youth, and landless and marginalized people. It is a clean break from the government's previous restriction of access to dry forests and pasture.

These were highly turbulent years for Ethiopia, with Covid-19, locusts, drought, and a violent conflict in the Tigray Region. To those involved in the process, these crises brought about a spirit of unity. Participants shared a common objective, forging connections with each other through a sense of solidarity and trust. This was also crucial in the next stage, when regional governments started reviewing and adapting the strategy to their priorities and contexts. Governments in Afar, Oromia and Somali regions have already approved revised strategies. Amhara, Tigray and Benishangul-Gumuz regions will follow in 2023. Regional governments will then be responsible for

implementation, and by following the strategy, they are well placed to receive federal funds. PENHA will help with pilot activities in selected landscapes, beginning in eastern Tigray and northwestern Afar.

EFD has adopted this approach in developing a new national strategy on humid forests, and is revising the *2018 National Forest Law* to incorporate an emphasis on community rights and economic empowerment. Other organizations, including USAID, GIZ and Oxfam, have been inspired to pursue similar approaches in their dryland programmes. PENHA and CIFOR-ICRAF, with EFD, are now engaged in a consultation process to develop a national fire management system.

In Ethiopia, PENHA plays the role of "honest broker." It facilitated an iterative process for the restoration strategy, actively involving local people and experts, with ample time to gather and review input, and without imposing its views. This truly inclusive approach provides a successful model for developing sustainable development policies and initiatives in other countries.



**Publication**  
**Ethiopian National Drylands  
Restoration Strategy**





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Impact area

## Diversified production systems

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Many frontier areas in the forested tropics have witnessed a rapid expansion of agrocommodities such as palm oil, soy, coffee and cocoa. This leads to the destruction of natural forests and reduces diversity in the landscape, increasing local people's vulnerability. We aim to reverse this process by supporting deforestation-free models for agrocommodity production that are based on sustainable practices and improve farmers' resilience. One way of achieving this is through the integration of trees on farms in diverse agroforestry systems. Tropenbos Indonesia, for example, has been supporting rubber farmers in Simpang Dua, West Kalimantan Province, to adopt agroforestry practices, while also helping them to get organized and improve production and processing techniques, enhancing the economic feasibility of rubber agroforestry relative to oil palm plantations (page 31). In Ghana, efforts to promote cocoa agroforestry encompassed training in agroforestry techniques, fostering business development, and facilitating the establishment of local savings groups. Tropenbos Ghana also helped to raise the voices of female cocoa farmers, shedding light on the insecurity of tree tenure through national media coverage, and compelling the government to take proactive measures in response (page 33). At the international level, we have been collaborating with other NGOs to urge the European Union to account for the potential effects of the new EU regulation on deforestation-free products on smallholders in producing countries (page 35).



Agroforestry plot with a mix of crops near Sinar Kuri village, Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan. Photo: Irpan Lamago



## Indonesia: Revitalizing rubber agroforestry in West Kalimantan

**Tropenbos Indonesia helped Indigenous farmers in Simpang Dua subdistrict to increase their income from rubber agroforestry. Through capacity building and organization, their prospects have improved significantly. Revitalized rubber agroforestry can provide an alternative to oil palm plantations, benefitting farmers as well as the environment.**

Over the past two decades, many farmers in West Kalimantan Province converted their rubber agroforests into monoculture oil palm plantations. Not all of them did so, however. Rubber agroforestry is still common among the Indigenous Dayak farmers in Simpang Dua subdistrict.

It provides them with a range of products, while helping to protect the soil and absorbing carbon. Despite these benefits, farmers are increasingly lured to cultivate oil palm. This is due to the low productivity of existing agroforests and the low and unstable price of rubber. [Tropenbos Indonesia](#) has been working with farmers to address these challenges.

To improve productivity, Tropenbos Indonesia organized farmer field schools, where farmers were encouraged to critically analyze their land-use practices. Technicians and farmers would then work together to identify and test ways to improve management practices; for example, by applying organic fertilizers. They also introduced shade-



Showing how rubber is correctly tapped in an agroforest near Mekar Raya village, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Irpan Lamago



tolerant crops such as coffee and ginger, and improved techniques for rubber tapping and post-harvest processing. After completion of the farmer field schools, Tropenbos Indonesia provided additional courses to selected participants and government extension officers, so they could become trainers themselves, and disseminate best practices in other villages.

To address the problem of dealing with the low and unstable price of rubber, Tropenbos Indonesia helped farmers to organize themselves, so they could increase their bargaining power and make direct connections with rubber buyers. In June 2022, this resulted in the formal establishment of a Collective Rubber Processing and Marketing Unit (*Unit Pengolahan dan Pemasaran Bokar*, or UPPB), with 121 participating farmers. Tropenbos Indonesia then helped them to develop an agreement with a large rubber factory to secure offtake, and to develop a standard operational procedure for post-harvest treatment, in line with the factory's quality requirements.

One important hurdle still needed to be cleared. The UPPB required investment capital to purchase the first batch of rubber from the participating farmers, but it did not qualify for a loan, due to its lack of operating experience. This was a catch-22 situation: the unit needed a loan to start operating, but it needed to have operational experience to obtain a loan. Tropenbos Indonesia then made an unconventional decision. It used its own finances to provide a zero-interest loan. The UPPB then bought 8,000 kg of rubber from its farmers, and sold the whole batch to the factory. Business had started, and individual rubber farmers' income is estimated to increase by 30% in the near future.



**Video**  
Diversifying rubber agroforests in  
Indonesia



Training of trainers on effective rubber tapping, Indonesia. Photo: Sukardi Ariyanto

Tropenbos Indonesia plans to continue working with the UPPB in Simpang Dua, helping it to expand its business, develop a portfolio, and obtain loans from financial institutions. As farmers who grow a variety of marketable products will have alternative income sources when global rubber price are low, Tropenbos Indonesia will also help the unit accommodate agroforestry's secondary products, such as coffee. Tropenbos Indonesia will share lessons from Simpang Dua with other UPPBs being established in West Kalimantan, and will assist the government to develop more effective programmes to support these units throughout the province. With the support of Tropenbos Indonesia, rubber agroforestry can continue to provide benefits to farmers and the environment in West Kalimantan.



## Ghana: Female cocoa farmers challenge Ghanaian tree tenure law

A law in Ghana stipulates that all naturally growing trees are owned by the state. In 2022, female cocoa farmers collaborated with Tropenbos Ghana to draw attention to the adverse effects of this law on their livelihoods.

Allowing trees to grow within cocoa farms could help prolong the productive lifespan of the cocoa plantation and provide farmers with timber. However, many Ghanaian cocoa farmers neglect trees that grow spontaneously in their fields. This is because all naturally occurring trees are considered to be owned by the state, even if they grow on farmers' fields. If a farmer cannot prove that a tree was planted, the state can provide a logging company

with a licence to harvest the tree. Although the company is required to seek the farmer's written consent before logging, this obligation is often ignored. The company obtains the tree, the government receives a fee, and the farmer gets nothing.

Tropenbos Ghana has been providing training to cocoa farmers in the Juabeso-Bia and Sefwi-Wiawso landscapes to empower them to assert their rights when logging companies fail to obtain their consent to harvest trees on their land. Following one of these training sessions, a cooperative of women cocoa farmers resolved to send a strong message to the government, emphasizing the



Women cocoa farmers expressing the need for tree tenure reforms to support agroforestry practices. Photo: Sefanam Agbobl



negative impacts of existing tree tenure legislation. They believed it was crucial for farmers themselves to advocate for change and exert pressure on the government. They asked Tropenbos Ghana to help them.

As a first step, they contacted other women's cooperatives to join forces. Together, they developed a statement and organized a press event. Their goal was to generate media attention, believing this to be the most effective way to communicate their message to the government. In conjunction with Tropenbos Ghana, they carefully formulated their message, invited journalists and made arrangements for the occasion.

On 10 August 2022, representatives from three women's cooperatives addressed a room filled with journalists from various newspapers, as well as radio and television stations. Their message was unequivocal: they believe that the government is depriving them of the benefits of the trees that grow on their land.

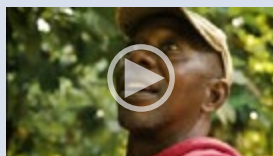
The message resonated with the journalists, who covered the story on various media platforms across the country. This pushed the issue higher on the government's agenda. Several months after the press event, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources asked Tropenbos Ghana for help with developing a way to address the farmers' concerns. The new arrangement will require logging companies to share a percentage of their profits with farmers whose lands they harvest trees from. It is expected to come into effect in 2023.

It is a solution that will help address farmers' concerns in the short term. In the long term, however, Tropenbos



Drying of cocoa beans, Juabeso-Bia landscape, Ghana. Photo: Maartje de Graaf

Ghana believes that farmers should own the trees on their land and be able to reap the full benefits from them. Tropenbos Ghana will, therefore, continue to advocate for an amendment to the law concerning tree tenure (*the Concession Act, 1962*), together with local actors such as the cooperatives of women cocoa farmers in the Juabeso-Bia and Sefwi-Wiawso landscapes.



#### Video

Supporting cocoa farmers to deal with climate change in Ghana





## EU regulation on deforestation-free commodities

Agricultural expansion driven by demand from the European Union (EU) is a leading cause of global deforestation, biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas emissions. In response, the EU has been working on developing a [regulation](#) to minimize its impact on forests worldwide, which received political agreement at the end of 2022. The idea is simple: the EU should stop importing commodities that have been produced at the expense of forests. This can be achieved by requiring companies to produce a due diligence statement — showing that their supply chains are not contributing to the destruction of forests and are produced according to national laws — before they can place their products on the EU market.

Such EU-wide regulation can help to reduce pressure on natural forests, but it also brings risks. To fulfil their due diligence requirements, companies may put a disproportionate burden on the smallholders that produce agrocommodities, or may simply push smallholders out of the market. TBI therefore connected with five other NGOs in a smallholder coalition to draw high-level attention to the potential unintended negative effects on smallholders, who are often already marginalized.

Together with civil society organizations from around the globe, the coalition wrote open letters to the European Commission, urging them to take into account the realities and needs of smallholders and forest communities, and calling for additional support measures in producer countries. Based on the European Council's legislative proposal of the regulation, the coalition developed specific text amendments to make the regulation more inclusive of smallholders. In May 2022, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment supported nearly all these text amendments, and in September, the European Parliament included them in its official position.

In December 2022, the European Parliament and Council reached political agreement on the EU regulation on forest-risk commodities and products, including palm oil, beef, timber, coffee, cocoa, rubber and soy. Disappointingly, the final text pays little explicit attention to the need for inclusive implementation of the regulation in smallholder-intensive sectors. However, it does acknowledge the need for partnerships with producing countries in order to promote sustainable production practices through capacity building and technical assistance. Tropenbos International will continue working with the smallholder coalition to ensure that these partnerships support a transition to deforestation-free value chains, while contributing to resilient livelihoods for smallholders.





# The future of smallholders in forest frontier areas: a compilation of perspectives

Natural forests and trees are rapidly disappearing from many tropical forest frontier areas, with negative long-term effects on livelihood resilience, biodiversity and the global climate. TBI attempts to reverse these processes by promoting multifunctional landscapes, where smallholders maintain a combination of fields, forests and agroforests, contributing to resilience, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation.

Much of TBI’s work focusses on supporting smallholders, in order to contribute to thriving and resilient landscapes. At the same time, however, in the landscapes where TBI members are active, young people are not always interested in land-based livelihoods, and may prefer to leave the countryside to look for jobs elsewhere. This raises fundamental questions concerning TBI’s vision and strategy. Is it naïve to support smallholder-based agriculture, agroforestry and forest management? What other perspectives are there on the role of smallholders, and what can we learn from them?

As part of TBI’s efforts to reflect on these questions, this [booklet](#) compiles a range of views on the future role of smallholders in forested landscapes. It characterizes three archetypical narratives of the role of smallholders in sustainable rural development, followed by 11 interviews with international experts that address the role of smallholders from various angles, with specific attention to the situation and preferences of young people.





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## Common themes

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**Gender and youth:** Women and youth are often not able to participate on equal terms with men in decisions regarding the management of agricultural and forest lands, and often they do not share equally in the benefits. For any intervention to be sustainable in the long term, it is imperative that youth and people of all genders can participate on equal terms in the design and implementation of initiatives for climate-resilient landscapes. These solutions should reflect their interests, and all people should be able to share equitably in the benefits. In 2022 we made sure that all our activities paid attention to the perspectives and needs of women and youth. In addition, we carried out activities in the landscapes that specifically focused on strengthening the situation of women and young people (for an example, see our story on the role of Saamaka youth in Suriname on page 41).

**Local financial capacities and linkages:** To meet the many ambitious international climate and biodiversity targets, a greater amount of public and private finance must go to local people who pursue community forest management, participatory restoration and diversified production systems. In 2022, TBI partners strengthened the capacity of local actors to develop feasible business plans in the forestry and agroforestry sectors, and to apply for loans and funding. At the same time, TBI partners have been collaborating with financial institutions to explore options for innovative financial products that are suitable for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community-based businesses (for an example, see our story on green finance for SMEs on page 43).

**Locally responsive policies:** Achieving thriving and climate-resilient landscapes requires local, national and international policies that reflect the needs and interests of local people. Policies must also acknowledge landscape approaches as valid strategies to achieve climate, biodiversity and development goals. Throughout 2022 we engaged with decision makers at various levels to help improve their policies. Part of this work focussed on improving sub-national policies in order to help achieve national climate change mitigation and adaptation goals (for an example, see our story on nationally determined contributions, or NDCs, on page 45).



Youth in Guarayos during a training on the use of drones to monitor forests and natural resources, Bolivia. Photo Miguel Manchego



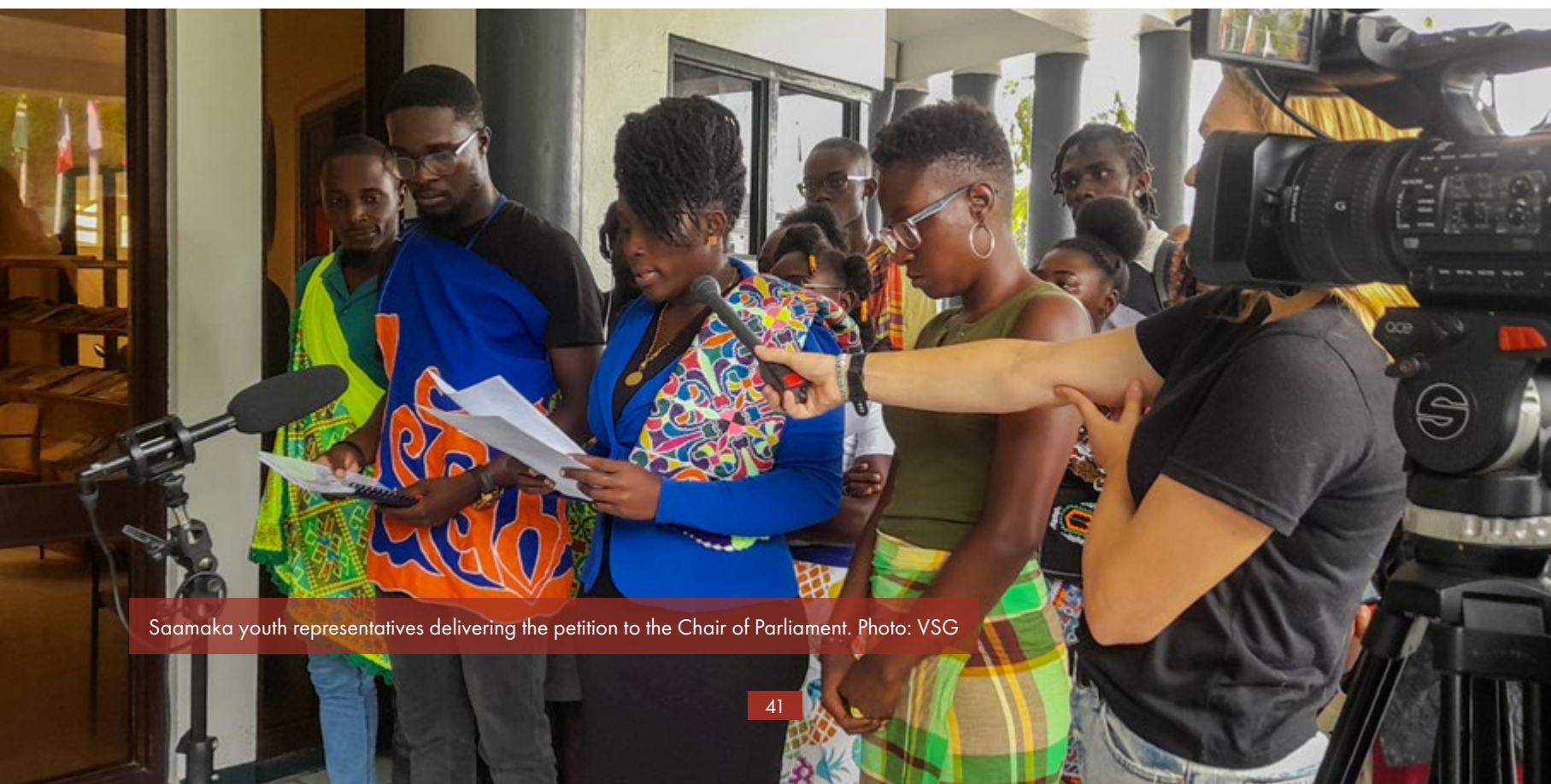
## Saamaka youth in Suriname demand legal recognition of ancestral territory

The natural forests within the territory of the Saamaka tribe in Suriname are threatened by logging and mining companies, without the consent of the Saamaka people. On 28 November 2022, a delegation of Saamaka youths went to Parliament, urging the government to expedite the processing of a law to provide the Saamaka with the legal right to their territory.

The Saamaka tribe is one of six tribal groups in Suriname. Their ancestors were brought to the country from Africa as enslaved people, but managed to free themselves and establish their own communities deep within the interior rainforest. Over time, they developed a unique culture that

includes customary laws and territorial boundaries. The ancestral territory in Suriname includes 74 villages located along the upper Suriname River and its tributaries, covering around 1.4 million ha and inhabited by over 25,000 people.

In the 1990s, the Suriname government began to grant industrial logging and mining concessions within the Saamaka's tribal territory. Seeing how their natural resources were rapidly being exploited, the Saamaka initiated a case against the Suriname government at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, arguing that their ancestral rights were being violated. On 28 November



Saamaka youth representatives delivering the petition to the Chair of Parliament. Photo: VSG



2007, the court issued a landmark ruling stating that the Surinamese government must recognize the territorial rights of the Saamaka, as well as those of other tribes and Indigenous Peoples in the country. In response, the Suriname government has been working on a Land Rights Act for Indigenous and Tribal Communities, but it has not yet passed Parliament.

In anticipation of the new law, **Tropenbos Suriname** has been working with the **Association of Saamaka Traditional Authorities** (*Vereniging van Saamaka Gezagsdragers* or VSG) to prepare them for self-governance. These efforts are being coordinated by Hugo Jabini, a prominent Saamaka lawyer and the main initiator of the 2007 court case against the Suriname government. Jabini has been working closely with a group of Saamaka youths who have become active within the VSG in recent years. He brought them to more than 60 consultations in Saamaka villages. During these consultations, villagers often expressed confusion about the status of the law, given that the government was still awarding concessions located within Saamaka territory, despite the 2007 ruling.

This fuelled a sense of urgency and determination to take action among the VSG youth. They realized that the law was being stalled by the government and decided they needed to add pressure. Together with Jabini, they prepared a petition demanding the rapid consideration of the draft law and threatening new legal action if the government failed to comply. The Saamaka youth then travelled to Saamaka villages to explain the petition's content and gather signatures.

On 28 November 2022, 15 years after the court's ruling, a delegation of Saamaka youth delivered the petition to the Chair of Parliament, in the presence of parliamentarians and government staff, as well as journalists from television, radio and newspapers. The visit received widespread media coverage. This helped to further increase pressure on the government, and within a few months Parliament put the draft law on its agenda. After many years of stalling, the Saamaka youth's persistence and willingness to take action resulted in the widespread recognition that the law could not be stalled any longer.



Biza Akienboto, Saamaka youth leader, during a meeting in a village, Suriname. Photo: VSG



## Green finance for SMEs

Through the Green Finance for SMEs (GFS) programme, Tropenbos International aims to bridge the gap between international finance and local entrepreneurs with ideas for sustainable businesses. In 2022, the programme broadened its strategy by including buyers and exporters in the value chains of forestry and agroforestry products.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the forestry and agroforestry sectors have the potential to generate sustainable economic activities that benefit local communities while also contributing to biodiversity and building climate resilience. However, only a small portion of international biodiversity and climate funding is

allocated for this group. Moreover, SMEs often struggle to access financial capital to invest in sustainable businesses.

In 2021, to facilitate finance flows for SMEs that contribute to thriving and climate-resilient landscapes, TBI started a three-year programme, Green Finance for SMEs (GFS), with support from the Dutch Postcode Lottery. The programme aims to strengthen SMEs' capacity to develop bankable business proposals, while simultaneously creating awareness among financial institutions and funders of the need to develop financial instruments to reach SMEs, and to spur action on their part. The programme also set up a GFS facility, which provides guarantees to local



Woman selling fruits and vegetables grown on peatland, intercropped with young oil palm, Pawan-Kepulu landscape, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Rosalien Jezeer



and international financial service providers to decrease their risks when investing in SMEs in the agroforestry and forestry sectors.

In 2022, the programme took some important steps. At the landscape level, Tropenbos members in Colombia, Ghana, Indonesia, and Suriname helped local SMEs to develop nine feasible business cases. Simultaneously, the programme broadened its strategy by including established buyers and exporters within the value chains of key forestry and agroforestry products. The GFS facility can help buyers and exporters with accessing finance to invest in sustainable and responsible production by smallholders and community organizations. Through targeting such private players, the programme's impact will increase. It will also provide an example for other conservation and development organizations, who are often hesitant to move beyond direct support for smallholders and communities.

One significant opportunity was identified in Ghana. Cocoa farmers who switch to organic agroforestry practices can earn significant premiums from the European market, while also benefitting from a range of other products cultivated in their cocoa fields, such as cassava, banana and ginger. Tropenbos Ghana

started collaborating with a local buyer and exporter of organic cocoa, with whom they signed a memorandum of understanding to invest in smallholders' organic practices for a more climate-resilient landscape. The local exporter then started applying for a trade finance facility from an international fund to buy organic cocoa at premium prices from approximately 1,800 organic cocoa smallholders, using the GFS guarantee as a de-risking tool. Similar opportunities have been identified in Asia and Latin America, to be implemented in 2023.

In November 2022, staff from the TBI secretariat in the Netherlands and Tropenbos Ghana gave a presentation on the GFS programme to international impact investors, fund managers and development banks at the European Microfinance week of the European Microfinance Platform, in Luxembourg. They also established connections with important players, such as the Rabo Foundation, who are interested in collaboration. Together with other stakeholders, TBI will continue to develop its innovative approach to bridging the gap between international finance and local actors' sustainable practices.



## Local solutions for Nationally Determined Contributions

**TBI partners in Bolivia, Colombia, Ghana, Indonesia and Viet Nam worked with local governments to implement strategies that contribute to achieving targets and ambitions set in nationally determined contributions.**

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are the specific climate commitments and action plans that countries submit to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These are self-determined pledges that each country makes to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, requires all parties to submit revised NDCs every five years.

In 2020 and 2021, TBI partners helped national governments to improve their NDCs by paying more attention to forest- and tree-based strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation. In 2022, the emphasis shifted to helping local governments to develop and implement such strategies, in order to contribute to each country's overall NDC ambitions. **Tropenbos Ghana**, for example, collaborated with the country's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to organize regional workshops to disseminate information on programmes of action and targets related to the agricultural and forestry sectors in Ghana's NDC, and to develop monitoring, verification and reporting frameworks with local stakeholders. Following the workshops, five municipal and district assemblies (MDAs)



Indigenous women collecting non-timber forest products from the forest in Krong Bong District, Viet Nam. Photo: Phan Thi Thuy Nhi



integrated NDC targets in their medium-term development plans. This will contribute to climate-smart management of over 100,000 ha, benefiting around 50,000 people.

Other examples include the work of **Tropenbos Indonesia** with the Ketapang Regency government to support peatland restoration as an effective approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from peat fires. Similarly, **IBIF**, TBI's partner in Bolivia, helped to achieve ambitions set out in the country's NDC by working with municipal governments and other stakeholders to set up a system to decrease the occurrence and impacts of wildfires and to maintain the area under forest management in the Guarayos landscape. **Tropenbos Colombia** supported locally led restoration of degraded lands, and explored options to link local restoration efforts to carbon initiatives, in close collaboration with a municipal government.

And Tropenbos Viet Nam helped the Dak Lak provincial government to design their climate action plan by identifying areas suitable for restoration and by developing tools to calculate the amount of sequestered carbon.

These efforts help local governments to develop and implement strategies and approaches that contribute to the ambitions set out in the NDCs, while providing promising models for mitigation and adaptation that can be adopted in other landscapes. TBI will also be able to use these experiences to better inform decisions on climate-related legal and policy frameworks.



## Contributions to the UN Climate Conference and the Global Landscapes Forum

The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) took place between 6 and 20 November in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. As part of the conference, Mercy Owusu Ansah, Director of Tropenbos Ghana, spoke at an event organized by the Mary Robinson Centre for Climate Justice, on fair and equitable access to climate finance in Ghana, as well as at an event organized by the Ghanaian Ministry for Lands and Natural Resources to showcase the country's forest solutions related to the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme. TBI was also represented at the Global Landscapes Forum, which took place on the sidelines of COP27, with a TBI **session** on fire-smart landscapes as a promising approach for effective climate change adaptation and mitigation. There, panellists from Australia, Bolivia, Ghana and Venezuela discussed practical examples of integrated fire management and fire risk reduction approaches, with active engagement by Indigenous and local communities, and ways to scale up such approaches in the context of nationally determined contributions (NDCs). They stressed, among other things, the need to improve land-use planning regulations for effective fire management, and the need to learn from local knowledge related to wildfire prevention and mitigation. They also emphasized the need to mobilize climate funding to support the inclusive development and implementation of national fire management strategies, policies and regulations.



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## Fire-smart landscape governance programme

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Across the tropics it is common for farmers and plantation companies to use fire to clear vegetation for cultivation. However, these fires often spiral out of control. The human tragedy, the loss of assets, and the impacts on health and the environment are devastating. Fire fighting efforts are often futile, and prohibiting the use of fire altogether has proven ineffective. There is a need for better approaches to effectively reduce the risk of wildfires.

Recognizing this need, we developed a [programme](#) based on the concept of fire-smart territories. Here, stakeholders work together to develop locally appropriate strategies to manage the use of fire as an agricultural practice, while reducing the risk of wildfires. Such strategies take account of local ecological, climate and cultural factors.

The programme is being implemented in landscapes that are grappling with recurring and destructive fires. In 2021 we started in Bolivia and Indonesia, where local governments had requested our help with developing approaches to prevent fires. In 2022 we extended the programme to Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda. The story on page 49 presents some of the recent achievements in Bolivia, where Instituto Boliviano de Investigación Forestal (IBIF) worked with local actors in the Guarayos landscape to improve fire management tools and regulations, and to minimize wildfire risks and impacts.

As part of the programme, Tropenbos International published a new edition of *Tropical Forest Issues* (previously called *ETFRN News*) on fire-smart landscapes (see page 51), and organized a session on the same topic at the Global Landscapes Forum in November 2022.



Fire patrol attending a fire in Pawan-Kepulu-Landscape, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Rosalien Jezeer



## Reducing wildfire risks and impacts in Bolivia

In Bolivia, IBIF has been working with stakeholders in the Guarayos landscape to develop fire management tools, early warning systems and fire brigades, as well as regulations that help prevent wildfires from occurring within and around the Guarayos Indigenous Territory. Their approach is starting to be recognized by other organizations and government agencies.

Bolivia's forests play a crucial role in the country's economy and provide a source of livelihoods for many communities. However, wildfires pose a significant threat to these forests and the people who depend on them, particularly in the Guarayos landscape in the Department of Santa Cruz.

Small- and large-scale farmers use fire to clear lands for agriculture; the fires can spiral out of control and destroy vast areas of forests, often located within Indigenous territories.

Fires were particularly devastating in 2019. This served as a wake-up call to the government, which then decided that all departmental and municipal land-use and development plans should include strategies to reduce fire risk. The [Instituto Boliviano de Investigación Forestal \(IBIF\)](#) — TBI's partner in the country — saw this as an opportunity to help local governments in the Guarayos landscape develop an integrated approach to wildfire prevention, with meaningful participation by all stakeholders. The effort focused on the



Controlled burning in Ascensión de Guarayos, Bolivia. Photo: Miguel Manchego



municipalities of Ascensión de Guarayos and Urubichá, which overlap the Guarayos Indigenous Territory. The two municipalities cover around 1.9 million ha, and are home to approximately 44,000 people.

Within the framework of TBI's fire-smart landscape governance programme, IBIF started working with multiple stakeholders in the two municipalities. Realizing that fire is an integral component of existing farming practices, the aim was not to prohibit the use of fire, but to reduce wildfire risk, and to support a timely response when wildfires occur. IBIF facilitated a multistakeholder dialogue, bringing together representatives of Indigenous and peasant communities, farmer organizations, NGOs, municipal governments and government agencies such as the *Autoridad de Fiscalización y Control Social de Bosques y Tierra* (ABT). The participants developed a consensus agenda for managing wildfire risk.

At the municipal level, IBIF helped to develop and implement various tools for preventing and dealing with wildfires, such as fire contingency plans and emergency response plans, as well as municipal early warning systems, which provide timely information in case of fire emergencies and initiate first responses. IBIF also helped to establish and strengthen the capacities of fire brigades, which were trained in the use of equipment and techniques for fire control and management, and facilitated the appointment of people to monitor wildfire risks in communities that are particularly vulnerable and fire-prone. This greatly increased the capacity to effectively respond to forest fires within the municipalities of Ascensión de Guarayos and Urubichá. IBIF also helped municipal governments incorporate fire risk reduction strategies into



Using the Forest Watch application to monitor wildfires, Urubichá, Bolivia. Photo: Miguel Manchego

comprehensive territorial development plans and new regulations, such as a municipal law for integrated fire management.

The fire-smart landscape governance programme only started in 2021, but the results are already significant. This has not gone unnoticed. In 2022, the programme formed alliances with several key organizations and agencies, including the Peasant Research and Promotion Center, the Departmental Autonomous Government of Santa Cruz, and the national Bolivian Forests and Lands Authority (*Autoridad Nacional de Bosques y Tierras*). This provides an excellent foundation for IBIF to scale up its approach to other municipalities within the Department of Santa Cruz.



**Video (in Spanish)**  
Gestión de riesgos contra incendios forestales en Guarayos





## Tropical Forest Issues 61: Towards fire-smart landscapes

The 61st edition of *Tropical Forest Issues* (formerly *ETFRN News*), “Towards fire-smart landscapes,” collates 25 articles from more than 100 contributors.

The cases provide rich insights into a range of issues. They show that “no-fire” policies introduced in many countries have been counterproductive and have even contributed to more intense wildfires. Thus, a shift is urgently needed, from a focus on suppression to one on prevention and integrated management, including the controlled use of fire. The cases also highlight the need to ensure participation by local actors in the design and implementation of fire prevention and suppression. Capacity development for fire management, and integrated, cross-sector fire management strategies, policies and action plans are required as well. There is also a clear need to expand international efforts, building on well-established organizations and networks, for generating, collating and sharing experiences.

The publication shows that, by combining science, traditional knowledge, effective policies, community inclusion, landscape governance and capacity strengthening, it is possible to reduce the risks and impacts associated with wildfires. It also shows that it is possible to give local populations a strong role in the management of their resources and the equitable governance of their landscapes.



Controlled fire in an agricultural plot in Pikin Slee, Upper Suriname River, Suriname. Photo: Sara Ramirez

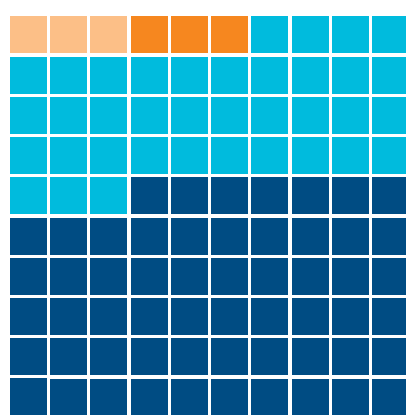


# Outreach and engagement

Tropenbos International engaged in a wide range of outreach initiatives to connect forest-dependent communities, businesses, smallholder farmers, researchers, civil society organizations and decision makers within and beyond landscapes, to facilitate dialogue, learning, collaboration and collective action.



More than **205** events were organized with more than **10,800** participants  
(Stakeholder meetings, seminars, conferences and exhibitions)



3% Young women  
< 25 years

3% Young men  
< 25 years

37% Women  
> 25 years

57% Men  
> 25 years

Percentages of event participants by gender and age



**105** workshops and training sessions with more than **7,500** participants.



**70** multistakeholder meetings with more than **2,150** participants.



**32** webinars and exhibitions with more than **1,000** participants.

Tropenbos International also had a strong presence on social media:

**23.3k** total reach  
in social media



**12k** likes on Facebook  
Reach **60k**



**4k** followers on Twitter  
Engagements **22.5k**



**7.3k** followers on LinkedIn  
Engagements **3.3k**



**5,455** videos viewed on YouTube



# Publications

Asante J, Ansah MO and Abu DK. 2022. Inclusive fire management in Ghana's transitional zone. In: Pasiecznik N and Goldammer JG. eds. *Tropical Forest Issues 61* (Towards fire-smart landscapes): 175–180. <https://doi.org/10.55515/FGTS4102>. Also available in Spanish.

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## Interviews

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- Bringing people together for a more sustainable future. In conversation with René Boot. Interview by Koen Kusters (30 June 2022)
- Smallholders in transition in DR Congo. In conversation with Alphonse Maindo. Interview by Koen Kusters (14 June 2022)
- Agricultural firebreaks are proving to be a valuable tool in helping to reduce the risk of wildfires. Interview with Harifidy Rakoto Ratsimb by Nick Pasiecznik (8 June 2022)
- Youth engagement in community forestry in Mexico. In conversation with Constanza Mora. Interview by Koen Kusters (31 May 2022)
- To reduce peatland fires in Indonesia needs collaborative efforts... but this is really complicated. Interview with Atiek Widayati by Nick Pasiecznik (30 May 2022)
- A critical perspective on agroecology. In conversation with Nassib Mugwanya. Interview by Koen Kusters (24 May 2022)
- Firefighters use water to control fires, but Indigenous communities use fire to control fire. Interview with Bibiana Bilbao by Nick Pasiecznik (19 May 2022)
- Agroecology is about the whole system. In conversation with Pablo Tittone. Interview by Koen Kusters (17 May 2022)
- Empowering indigenous youth in Kalimantan, Indonesia. In conversation with Sumarni Laman. Interview by Koen Kusters (10 May 2022)
- Increasing smallholder productivity. In conversation with Rudy Rabbinge. Interview by Koen Kusters (4 May 2022)

- Don't fixate on smallholders. In conversation with Stefan Dercon. Interview by Koen Kusters (26 April 2022)
- Smallholders on the forest frontier — Insights from research on oil palm farmers in Indonesia. In conversation with Diana Chalil. Interview by Koen Kusters (19 April 2022)
- Smallholders as landscape stewards. In conversation with Pablo Pacheco. Interview by Koen Kusters (12 April 2022)
- Turning away from investment-driven development. In conversation with Annelies Zoomers. Interview by Koen Kusters (6 April 2022)
- Global conservation scenarios and the role of smallholders. In conversation with Mark van Oorschot. Interview by Koen Kusters (31 March 2022)

## Blogs

- E. Ponco Mulyoutami (1 November 2022) Rural women driving change in Indonesia.
- K. Kusters and M. de Graaf (6 July 2022) Community forest tenure rights — ten conditions for success.
- C. Vargas and M.C. van der Hammen (23 May 2022) Empowering the Korebaju Indigenous women in Solano, Colombia.

## Infographics

- Community Forest Rights - A Theory of Change.
- How to reduce the risks of peatland fires?
- Inclusive finance for sustainable landscapes requires a multistakeholder integrated approach.
- Promoting landscapes towards an integrated fire management in Bolivia.

## Videos

- Integrated approaches for fire prevention in peatlands
- Gestión de Riesgos Centro de Monitoreo. In Spanish.



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# Safeguarding and integrity

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TBI strives to deliver high-quality work in line with its values and legal standards. This includes fair and respectful treatment of all its staff, partners, target audiences and beneficiaries.

## Integrity, quality and control

TBI endeavours for a professional culture based on trust, mutual respect, open communication and high standards of professional conduct, which are essential to achieve its mission. Since 2018 an overarching [integrity policy](#) for the Tropenbos International Network members and staff has been in place. It consists of a code of conduct and a complaints procedure. All TBI staff are informed about the expectations, rules and regulations outlined in the integrity policy. The policy can be found on the TBI website.

In 2022, TBI took the initiative to revise this policy, taking advantage of new insights gained from Partos and the GLA Integrity Working Group. In 2023, TBI's new integrity system is expected to be ready, clarifying TBI's integrity standards and what TBI considers as integrity violations.

In 2022 there were no reported complaints or breaches of the code of conduct.

## General data protection regulation

Regarding the protection of personal data, TBI follows the AVG programme of the Stichting AVG voor Verenigingen, from which TBI receives a compliance statement every year. In 2022 there were no cases of data leaks or other infractions of the general data protection regulation. The [Privacy Statement](#) on the TBI website provides clear and transparent information about how the organization handles personal data.

## Diversity, inclusion and equality

TBI has a policy of inclusion and equality that applies to the whole network. In its programmes TBI has mainstreamed attention to gender and youth, which means that all planned activities consider the specific perspectives and needs of women and youth. Since 2020 a Gender and Youth team, with representatives of all TBI network members, has been in place, to ensure diversity and inclusion throughout the network.

In 2022, TBI took the initiative to revise the policy of inclusion and equality. In 2023 the new policy is expected to be in place and will guide all our actions across the network and programmes.



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# Financial summary

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In 2022, TBI received major programme funding from the Directorate General for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) of the Netherlands. A range of other donors also supported TBI's work. TBI's partners in the network provide substantial contributions in kind, such as office space and/or equipment. They also make available researchers and relevant expertise.

## Revenues

	Euro 000	% of total
● Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) of the Netherlands	6,084	96.43
● Dutch Postcode Lottery	117	1.85
● Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Netherlands (LNV)	4	0.06
● Join for Water	2	0.03
● Projects	102	1.62
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,309</b>	<b>100</b>

## Expenditures

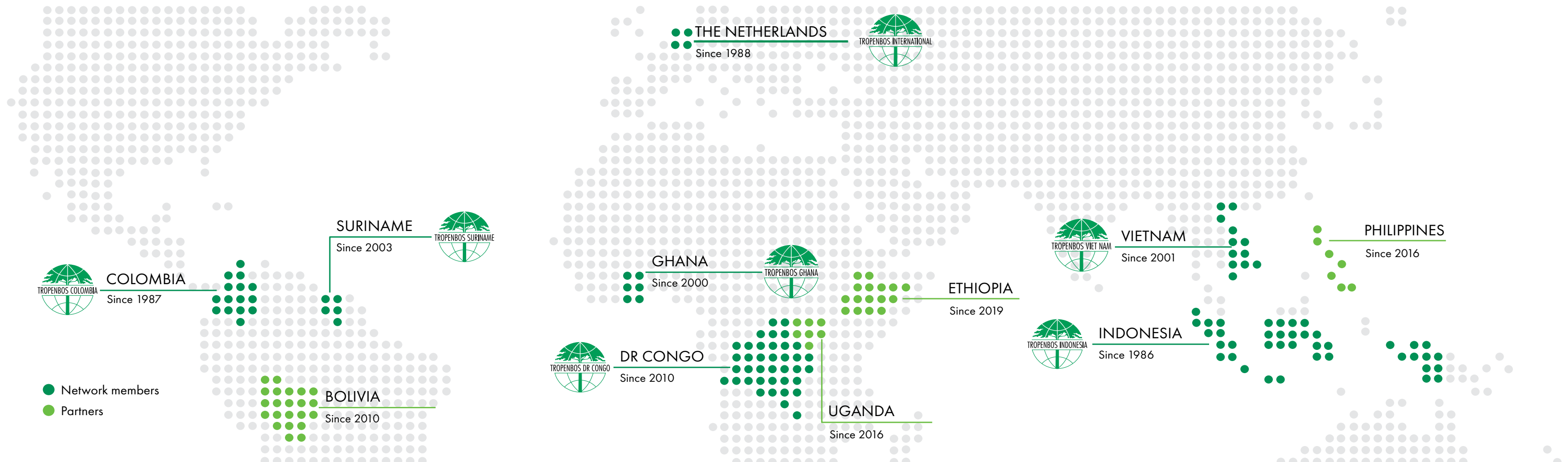
	Euro 000	% of total
Programmes	6,103	96.25
Projects	123	1.94
Organizational costs	115	1.81
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,341</b>	<b>100</b>





Preparation of a biofertilizer using water hyacinth, an invasive species found in the nearby lake La Teófila, Solano, Colombia. Photo: Sofía Cumaco





## General board

TBI is governed by an international General Board composed of respected Dutch and international experts drawn from the research, policy, business and development communities.

**Edwin Huizing (Chair)**  
Founding CEO IMS Foundation

**Maas M. Goote**  
Founder/Owner of 'Carraway Strategies'

**Sarbani Bhattacharya**  
Head Finance and IT transformation at ASML

## Consultative committee

The Consultative Committee consists of the Chairs of the Tropenbos Network Members and advises the TBI Board on the strategic thematic direction and long-term development of the TBI Network.

**Prof. Alfred A. Oteng-Yeboah** (Ghana - Chair)

**Prof. Honorine Ntahobavuka** (DR Congo)

**Trieu Van Hung** (Viet Nam)

**Dr. Dicky Simorangkir** (Indonesia)

**Manuel Rodriguez Becerra** (Colombia)

**Ir. Djaienti D.C. Hindori** (Suriname)

## Network members

**Tropenbos International - the Netherlands**  
Director: Joost van Montfort  
Ede, the Netherlands  
[www.tropenbos.org](http://www.tropenbos.org)

**Tropenbos Colombia**  
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Bogota, Colombia  
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**Tropenbos DR Congo**  
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**Tropenbos Ghana**  
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**Yayasan Tropenbos Indonesia**  
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**Tropenbos Suriname**  
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Paramaribo, Suriname  
[www.tropenbos.sr](http://www.tropenbos.sr)

**Tropenbos Viet Nam**  
Director: Tran Huu Nghi  
Hue, Viet Nam  
[www.tropenbos.vn](http://www.tropenbos.vn)



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# Programmes

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## Working Landscapes

By promoting climate-smart landscapes, the Working Landscapes programme contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation, improved livelihoods and environmental integrity, which are crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Duration:** 2019–2023

**Implemented in:** Bolivia, Colombia, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Suriname, Uganda, Viet Nam

**Financed by:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (DGIS)

*In 2022 a midterm review was conducted. The review recommended that the programme should capitalize on its accomplishments by scaling successful models and approaches. The active participation of the country teams in the midterm review process facilitated cross-country learning and facilitated the swift integration of the recommendations into their 2023 work plans.*

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## Forests for a Just Future - Green Livelihoods Alliance

Tropical forests and forest landscapes are sustainably and inclusively governed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, fulfil human rights and safeguard local livelihoods.

**Duration:** 2021–2025

**Implemented in:** Bolivia, Colombia, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, the Philippines, Uganda, Viet Nam

Green Livelihoods Alliance (GLA) is an alliance of Gaia Amazonas, IUCN NL, Milieudefensie, NTFP-EP, SDI and Tropenbos International, with WECF and FERN as technical partners.

**Financed by:** Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) through the DSO Power of Voices policy framework.

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## Mobilizing more for climate

Bringing together entrepreneurs, companies, policymakers, investors, civil society organizations and local entrepreneurs to make green business propositions that tackle the impacts and causes of climate change at the landscape level in developing countries, and to attract investments for these initiatives.

**Duration:** 2019–2024

**Implemented in:** Ghana and Indonesia

**Financed by:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (DGIS)

*In 2022 a midterm review was conducted. The main recommendations for the programme were to focus on market access for the different businesses supported and to focus on further advanced business cases to achieve investment readiness before the end of the programme.*

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## The Green Finance for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Initiative

Increase responsible investments in sustainable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community based organizations (CBOs) in the forestry and agriculture land-use sectors, in the Global South.

**Duration:** 2021–2023

**Implemented in:** Ghana, Colombia, Indonesia, Suriname

**Financed by:** Dutch Postcode Lottery

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## Contributing to the development of integrated models for sustainable agriculture and forestry in tropical landscapes

The main activities are: 1. Co-organize a “Regional Meeting and Knowledge Share Fair on lessons learned and good practices” 2. Develop a strategic proposal for a landscape-level financial mechanism to facilitate inclusive investments in the Juabeso-Bia Landscape in Ghana towards climate-smart landscape practices; and 3. Develop an analysis of agroforestry in Indonesia to create more insight into the barriers to and solutions for scaling (co-financing with the Dutch Embassy of Indonesia).


**Duration:** September 2022–July 2023

**Implemented in:** Ghana and Indonesia

**Financed by:** Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Netherlands

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**Cover photo:** Aerial view of Kamora Village, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Irpan Lamago; **Photo page 2:** Mosaic Landcape of Sinar Kuri Village, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Irpan Lamago; **Photo page 3:** "Maloca" traditional indigenous gathering house in the Resguardo Guayabal, Solano, Colombia. Photo: Mabel Martínez; **Photo page 20:** Participants of the Gaan Kutuu in Villa de Leyva, Colombia; **Back cover:** Gender transformative change session with Saamaka women, Suriname. Photo: Sara Ramirez

Practical training session for cocoa farmers on FMNR in the Western North Region, Ghana. Photo: Tropenbos Ghana



Tropenbos International is a network of partner organizations deeply embedded in landscapes across the dry and humid tropics with as mission to make knowledge work for people and forests: to help develop and apply locally owned, evidence-based solutions that improve the inclusive and equitable governance and management of forested landscapes in the tropics, for the benefit of local sustainable development, biodiversity and our climate.



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