

## **The Success of Community-Based Conservation (Community Conservation)**

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Conservation is the act of protecting Earth's natural resources for current and future generations (Conservation | National Geographic Society, 2022), which includes protecting all biodiversity components. Since the 1980s, conservation efforts in developing countries have generally tried to protect biodiversity while incorporating the interests of local populations, an approach referred to as community-based conservation (Brooks et al., 2013). In a community-based conservation project, local communities take action to protect and conserve the lands on which they live through participation in the management of natural resources (Brooks et al., 2013). In this paper, I argue that community conservation serves Blairtonia better than protectionist conservation because it acknowledges Indigenous existence and provides communities with economic and ecological benefits. Then, I will identify the necessary mechanisms of successful community conservation, and end with an example from Guatemala.

To start, protectionist conservation poses an existential threat to Indigenous people. Protectionist conservation takes place when the government creates protected areas where biodiversity and ecosystems can exist only in isolation from human communities (SESMAD, 2022). Since protectionist conservation views nature as a pristine place separate from human societies (Planetary Health Alliance, 2021), it fails to account for Indigenous communities' existence and ignores the past and present ecologies of their places. This leads to the displacement of people and prohibits them from governing the resources; a disposition which is often the result of policies such as reserve establishments that exclude people from protected areas in fortress conservation (Carruthers, 2007). Conversely, community conservation recognizes the existence of Indigenous people and acknowledges the need of engaging Indigenous communities in conservation (Sneed, 2019). This recognition in Blairtonia is important because Indigenous people have a long history of living in biodiversity areas, having a deep knowledge of their territories and being spiritually connected to their lands and resources. Recognizing communities increases their trust and support of conservation and strengthens their collaboration in protecting biodiversity (Armitage et al., 2020). Indeed, collaboration with community members is linked to better ecological success; biodiversity is promoted when projects engage positively with local cultural traditions (Brooks et al., 2013).

An example of a community conservation project that recognizes the value of local communities in biodiversity conservation is the Lacandon Community Forest in Mexico. This project was initiated in the 1990s by the Lacandon Maya, who have lived in the forest for centuries and have a deep cultural connection to the land (Kosoy et al., 2008). In collaboration with the Mexican government and conservation organizations, the Lacandon community established a protected area within the forest, known as the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve. The community was involved in the decision-making and management of the reserve and played a key role in enforcing conservation regulations and patrolling the forest to prevent illegal logging and other threats. By recognizing and valuing the traditional knowledge of the Lacandon Maya, this community conservation project has been successful in protecting the forest and its biodiversity, while also promoting the interests of the local community (Kosoy et al., 2008). Overall, engaging Blairtonia Indigenous communities in conservation is essential for creating effective conservation.

Moreover, community-based conservation confers economic and ecological benefits to communities, whereby conservation policies increase people's access to livelihood resources. To name a few, fuel is one of the most common economic resources, while others include incomes like sustainable forestry (Kegamba et al., 2022) and benefits from which local people receive any necessities of life such as food and access to non-timber forest products (Talukdar et al., 2021). Community conservation in Blairtonia can also generate income by allowing trophy hunting. Trophy hunting also can provide economic benefits to local communities through the money that hunters spend on fees and licenses. For example, revenue generated from trophy hunting may be used to fund anti-poaching efforts (Whitman et al., 2004). Those benefits help in strengthening community cooperation in conservation (Camill et al., 2013). Community conservation enables the government of Blairtonia to account for those benefits which support the livelihoods of its Indigenous people. By contrast, protectionist conservation limits human activities in protected areas by establishing strict access regulations. This in turn prevents Indigenous communities from benefits derived from areas they traditionally rely on for resources and leads to distrust

in the leading authorities in conservation and a lack of community compliance with conservation (Matseketsa et al., 2019).

For example, fortress conservation in the Serengeti-Mara region, in Tanzania led to the displacement of the Indigenous Maasai group. Laws from the Tanzanian government, with support from international protectionist conservation groups, have forced the Maasai onto small lands, which has threatened their existence and livelihoods (Oakland Institute, 2019). In the past, the region served as a home for the Maasai; it supported their sustainable harvesting of resources and cattle grazing. They had managed their livelihoods to support biodiversity. However, fortress conservation on the Maasai lands led to their displacement and seizing of cattle. It has also led to the spread of hunger and arrest of the Maasai. As a result, the Maasai expressed their antipathy to conservation policy by killing animals in and around the protected area (Meguro, 2009). Thus, protectionist conservation fails to account for the benefits that Indigenous communities receive from community conservation.

Furthermore, protectionist conservation not only prevents Indigenous communities from benefits derived from their areas, but it can also negatively impact the poverty of Indigenous communities in Blairtonia. Which might lead to the foreclosure of land use for local communities. Protectionist conservation policies that restrict access to land use and resources can prevent the livelihoods of Indigenous people, leading to the exacerbation of poverty (Adams et al., 2004). This exacerbation of poverty is a contravention of Indigenous rights to sustainable development. As the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People puts it, “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities” (United Nations, 2007). Sustainable development for Indigenous peoples in Blairtonia requires the recognition of their rights which protectionist conservation fails to account for. By contrast, community conservation integrates their right to poverty alleviation-development, with biodiversity conservation. This integration is important because conservation success to a sufficient degree fails without addressing poverty alleviation (Roe, 2013). Poverty alleviation depends on

sustainable resource use, where livelihoods depend on living resources their sustainable use will promote the resource and the livelihood associated with it (Brockington et al., 2012). It has been found that when people become poverty alleviated, they are more amenable to accepting conservation policies (Jones, 2021).

Under the right governance and partnership, community integration can work, and communities can develop positive habits toward biodiversity (Lele et al., 2010). Research has found that the governance of natural resources is necessary for the success of community conservation. While good governance necessitates ease of access to and use of natural resources upon conservation, successful governance requires regulations that enable community conservation and capacity-building support for Indigenous communities (Community Conservation Research Network, 2016). This means that community institutions should have the authority to access their land. Also, successful community conservation requires collaboration and partnership of multiple stakeholders (Paul, 2018), meaning that parties must work together and share decision-making power to effectively conserve natural resources and address the needs and concerns of all involved.

To take a case in point, the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala is a successful community conservation project of good partnership and governance mechanisms. Established in 1990, the reserve aim is to conserve the natural resources and biodiversity of the region, while also promoting sustainable development of local communities (Gutierrez, 2017). Communities in the Maya Biosphere protect ecosystems and rely on sustainable harvesting of resources. Their success is attributed to the strong collaboration that focuses on their participation and empowerment, and the respect for their traditional knowledge. For example, communities engage in palm harvesting that is certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council (People are the solution: Three examples of community-based conservation that are thriving even under the most difficult conditions 2017). Their harvesting takes place within the Biosphere reserve boundaries, and is used for selling which generates income for community businesses. Also, communities help conserve a fifth of the tropical rainforest biodiversity by engaging in the governance of the rainforest; they coordinate with the country's army and the National Council for Protected Areas in

Guatemala for protecting their forests from degradation and deforestation. To preserve biodiversity while maintaining community livelihoods, Blairtonia's community conservation efforts must seek a conservation model with such mechanisms.

To conclude, as this paper highlighted through various examples, community conservation serves Blairtonia better than protectionist conservation. Community conservation recognizes Indigenous people and acknowledges the need of integrating them into conservation, while offering a range of benefits to Indigenous people, including improved livelihoods and empowerment. Also, the success of poverty alleviation in biodiversity conservation is linked with good governance and partnership among multiple stakeholders, such as in the case of the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

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## Appendix

In this paper, the following assumptions were established on the country of Balairtonia. To start, the country is located in the global south. There is Huge poverty in Balairtonia. Poverty in Balairtonia is primarily found in Indigenous communities. Poverty is exacerbated partially because of colonization that remained in Balairtonia up till the mid of the 20th century. Colonization in Balairtonia has worked to alienate Indigenous peoples from their territories and resources. For centuries, Indigenous communities have owned huge amounts of land, in which their cultures and livelihoods are deeply embedded in. The government of Balairtonia recognizes the rights of Indigenous people of resource sovereignty, self-determination and development. This includes their access to benefits derived from natural resources and biodiversity as a whole. However, there is an existing dominant narrative of conservation that favors the isolation of humans from wildlife that prevails in neighboring countries of Balairtonia, the result of which has been a continued legacy of fortress conservation and an ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands.