NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS

NAPA 202

CONSERVING NATURE IN AFRICA

THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

EDITO

Re-centering education around nature!

By Dr Frédéric M. MBIDA
Coordonnateur Programme - Health And Conservation (Cameroun)

Learning out of context is building obsolete knowledge!

Today's world is evolving amid the continuous degradation of nature. Development activities aimed at meeting people's daily needs are expanding over time, further driven by rapid global population growth. As a result, priorities tend to focus on infrastructure, food production, and other basic needs—often at the expense of a natural environment that is becoming poorer and more vulnerable each day, making us more vulnerable as well. This dynamic has led to a form of contextual uprooting that, unfortunately, is passed from one generation to the next through education systems that are too often disconnected from reality. Faced with this disconnection, rethinking our educational model has become an urgent necessity.

Nature-based education—also known as nature-centered learning or outdoor pedagogy—is an approach that places nature at the heart of the learning process. It promotes direct, hands-on experiences in natural settings, fostering experiential learning and deepening the connection between people and nature. This approach includes environmental education, outdoor classes, and traditional knowledge, and it advocates for a holistic education model in which learners see themselves as members of a community that includes humans, non-humans, and all other living and non-living elements of nature.

It is common, after a school day, to ask students what they learned. Their answers are often: "We studied landscapes; the teacher told us about forests, savannas, or climate change and its impacts on our environment."

They may be able to define or describe these concepts but are generally unable to identify tangible signs of climate change around them—or even to strictly identify a type of landscape. As a result, ideas such as "landscape" or "climate change" remain distant, abstract realities that they feel have little direct impact on their immediate environment—thus not requiring any particular effort to protect or preserve it.

Nature-based education: a solution cherished by IUCN

Nature-based education brings significant educational, social, environmental, and health benefits to learners. It helps students better understand the processes affecting their environment, the progressive changes taking place, and the need to adapt or act. It also helps shape a generation of responsible, engaged, skilled, curious young people with the critical thinking needed to understand the impacts of their actions, the interconnections between people and nature, the benefits nature provides, and the measures required to maintain environmental harmony.

As a concrete example, under the project Acting for Nature Conservation, supported by IUCN-PAPACO, PFN and FAW, students have the opportunity to connect with nature and learn directly within familiar environments. Among other objectives, this project aims to complement classroom lessons and equip learners to address the current triple global crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Through outdoor activities and classes, learners experience reality firsthand while also nurturing personal commitment and a sense of responsibility toward their environment.

At the end of Phase 1, we observed notable achievements: young people capable of restoring their environment through reforestation activities; students able to combat pollution through waste sorting, plastic and paper recycling, and sustainable water management; and youth capable of identifying local plant and animal biodiversity and actively contributing to its protection—thanks to excursions in protected areas, green spaces, and conservation sites.

However, fully or effectively implementing nature-based education remains a challenge—particularly in the African context—for several reasons. First, awareness of the benefits of this approach remains limited, both within schools (among teachers and administrators) and at the ministerial level. Second, teachers often lack training in this method, as well as capacity-building programmes to help them support learners effectively.

Finally—and most importantly—financial resources are insufficient to sustain such an approach in schools. Even when institutions allocate a budget, challenges persist: limited access to green or conservation areas, lack of available space within schools, constraints linked to curricula and timetables, and sometimes even the difficulty of obtaining parental authorization.

To address these challenges, several avenues can be explored:

- Revising and adapting curricula to integrate this pedagogical approach;
- Training teachers and providing didactic resources (such as Youth Conservation materials available at www.youth-conservation.org);
- Offering administrative and financial support to encourage outdoor activities and classes;
- Raising awareness among all stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, and communities.

Only by doing so can we effectively and sustainably integrate nature-based education into today's education systems.

OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCS, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

Our 8 MOOCs, 4 Essentials and 5 Tutorials are always open and available!

MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria.

See you on:

www.mooc-conservation.org

THE MOOCS
THEME-BASED TRAINING

MOOC PA management
Goal: understand the essence and goals of PAs. Students will be able to grasp the importance of PAs, their role and the different management aspects.

MOOC Ecological monitoring
Goal: understand the different techniques used in protected areas to assess the impact of managment by monitoring the ecosystem...

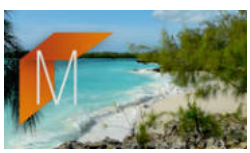
MOOC Law enforcement
Goal: understand the different legal contexts, their strengths and weaknesses as well as the techniques used to enforce rules in parks...

MOOC Species conservation
Goal: understand the techniques developed to conserve species in PAs, in situ and ex situ...

MOOC Valorisation of resources
Goal: how the valorisation of different protected area resources can take place, and understanding protected area valorisation through tourism...

MOOC New technologies
Goal: new technologies applied to conservation, existing techniques, prerequisites for their implementation, their opportunities and limitations...

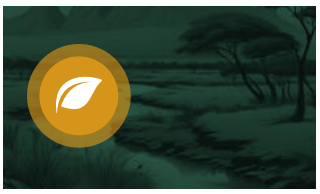
MOOC Governance
Goal: to understand what PA governance is, how to assess it and how to improve it...



MOOC Marine protected areas
Goal: to understand the design and creation of MPAs, governance, ecological monitoring, but also surrounding economic activities...

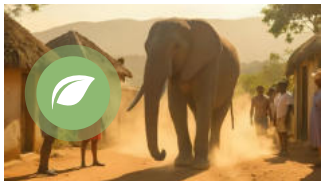
TUTORIALS
TECHNICAL TRAINING

TUTO EDUCATION
For teachers, educators, parents, etc., to provide them with the tools and methods they need to teach the children in their care about nature conservation...



TUTO WORDS
An interactive glossary with 100 essential words and expressions you need to know if you want to conserve nature and understand PA management...

TUTO PLANNING
A step-by-step guide to organising the preparation, implementation and evaluation of your protected area management plan...



TUTO H/W CONFLICTS
A simple method for understanding, anticipating and responding to conflicts between humans and wildlife...

TUTO RESTORATION
A practical guide explaining the different steps to follow to prepare, restore and assess a damaged protected area...

MOOC CONSERVATION IS SUPPORTED BY THE **FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL**

OUR MOOCS THIS MONTH:
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

THEMATIC TRAINING VS TECHNICAL TRAINING

Among the categories of MOOCs available, there are thematic courses and technical courses, also known as 'tutorials'.

Thematic courses are more general in nature: they are usually longer and cover a topic as a whole, without going into detail on each aspect.

Technical courses, on the other hand, focus on a specific subject and seek to answer a concrete question.

For example: *How can human-wildlife conflicts be managed in a protected area? How can a protected area be planned? How can a protected area be restored?*

TUTORIAL: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Among these technical training courses, the first to be launched was the tutorial on environmental education. It answers a simple question: *how can we raise awareness among young people about nature conservation?*

More than 5,600 participants discovered how to approach this topic with younger generations, which teaching methods to use, which resources to mobilise and, above all, how to effectively train eco-citizens capable of preserving our planet.

The stakes are high, and training supervisors is therefore essential. A real community of actors (tutors) has been created around this course. They are teachers, association leaders or simply passionate individuals who have been trained to, in turn, train the eco-citizens of tomorrow.

This training programme is still open, and it's not too late to sign up: register now.

ONLINE CERTIFICATE IN PA CONSERVATION

Since June 2025, graduates of the Online Certificate in Conservation of PAs from French-speaking Africa and Haiti can apply for a field internship to put into practice the knowledge acquired in the MOOCs.

>> How to obtain the Online certificate? Click here. <<

2025 MOOC CONSERVATION CALENDAR

3 December : Online exam for French-speakers

4 December: Online exam for English-speakers

YOUTH CONSERVATION - SOME NEWS!

"YOUTH CONSERVATION AUDIO EPISODES NOW AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND IN PORTUGUESE!"

Good news! Our Youth Conservation audio series is now **available in English and in Portuguese** — still 100% free on our website, Spotify, and YouTube.
Across **18 episodes**, these audios explore major environmental themes: biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, degradation of seas and oceans, invasive species, and much more.
🎓 **Designed for learning and awareness-raising**, the episodes are simple, pleasant to listen to, and perfect for classroom use. They can serve as educational material to complement the Youth Conservation video series, along with the facilitation guides provided for teachers and educators.
The audios are now available in both French, English and Portuguese — and soon in other languages — to reach even more children and young people around the world.
🌍 Visit www.youth-conservation.org or our Spotify and YouTube channels to subscribe and start listening!

YOUTH CONSERVATION - VOICES FROM THE FIELD

🌱 AFRIKA SINI-GNASIGUI: SOWING HOPE, GROWING THE FUTURE

In Burkina Faso, the NGO Afrika Sini-Gnasigui is sowing, both literally and figuratively, the seeds of a greener future through its **ambitious project 'Act for Tomorrow**,' dedicated to environmental education and the creation of green spaces in schools.

🌿 **Training the Eco-Citizens of Tomorrow**
As part of this project, a call for applications was recently launched among primary schools in four provinces (Tanghin-Dassouri, Koubri, Ziniaré, and Komsilga).
The response far exceeded expectations: over 50 schools expressed their interest in joining this collective adventure for the planet!

The goal is clear: to train the eco-citizens of tomorrow through the establishment of Green Clubs, school gardens, and concrete reforestation activities.
Afrika Sini-Gnasigui is now in the pre-selection and interview phase to identify the four pilot schools that will benefit from this first stage of the program.

🌳 **A Nursery for a Sustainable Future**

In parallel, the team has launched a nursery at the association's headquarters to supply the selected schools.

A total of 1,500 seedlings — including forest, fruit, and medicinal species — will be grown, serving as a powerful symbol of hope, perseverance, and commitment.

The first young shoots have already emerged, reflecting the careful and patient preparation: seed treatment, gradual potting, and daily monitoring.

Each plant will soon carry a message for the future, planted within schools and local communities: protecting nature is preparing tomorrow.

🌎 **Together for Ecosystem Restoration**

Afrika Sini-Gnasigui's initiative perfectly embodies the Youth Conservation spirit: engaging young generations in a hands-on, local, and participatory approach to ecology.

YOUTH CONSERVATION - VOICE FROM THE FIELD

🌿 TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME AGENTS OF CHANGE: THE GREEN ORAT'HON AT SOA HIGH SCHOOL (CAMEROON), LED BY OUR VOLUNTEER TUTOR, DOLORÈS MACHE

On October 20 and 22, 2025, environmental awareness reached a new milestone at Soa High School in the Centre region of Cameroon.

Led by Dolorès MACHE, climate activist and president of the NGO NatureGivesBack, thirty students took part in an unprecedented activity: the Green Orat'hon.

Supported by Youth Conservation resources, including the online tutorial "Educating for Nature Conservation", this initiative aimed to develop young people's ecological awareness through three complementary approaches:

🌍 **Environmental Advocacy** — teaching students to speak up and take action for nature within their communities.
🌳 **Tree Planting** — to enhance biodiversity and green spaces at the school.
💧 **Workshop on Building a Smart Irrigation System** — demonstrating how technology can support sustainable agriculture and responsible water management.
Guided by the head of the school's environmental club, students alternated between discussions, experiments, and hands-on activities. This experience allowed them to understand major environmental challenges while developing practical skills to address them.

For Dolorès MACHE, "Educating young people about nature conservation means giving them the keys to a more sustainable future, where everyone can become a guardian of the planet."

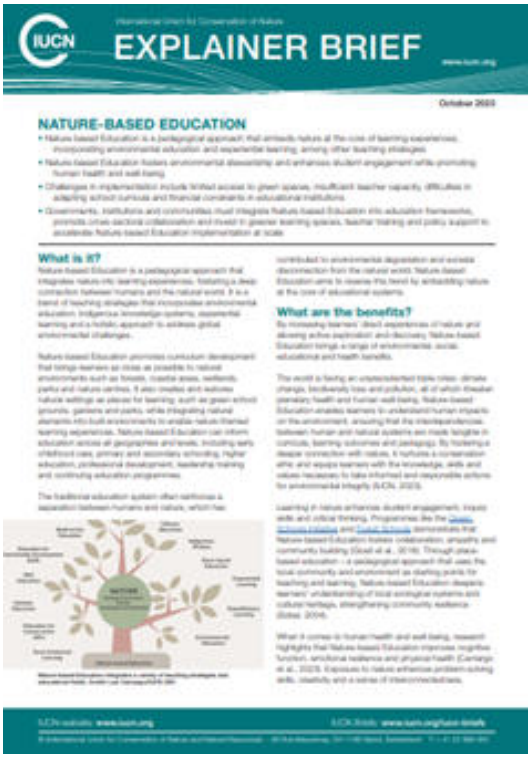
💡 To explore the tutorial "Educating for Nature Conservation" and other educational resources, visit Youth Conservation.

Together, let's inspire a new generation of engaged eco-citizens! 🌱

NATURE-BASED EDUCATION - IUCN EXPLAINER BRIEF

FROM IUCN BRIEFS: WWW.IUCN.ORG/IUCN-BRIEFS

Nature-based Education is a pedagogical approach that embeds nature at the core of learning experiences, incorporating environmental education and experiential learning, among other teaching strategies.



Nature-based Education fosters environmental stewardship and enhances student engagement while promoting human health and well-being.

Challenges in implementation include limited access to green spaces, insufficient teacher capacity, difficulties in adapting school curricula and financial constraints in educational institutions.

Governments, institutions and communities must integrate Nature-based Education into education frameworks, promote cross-sectoral collaboration and invest in greener learning spaces, teacher training and policy support to accelerate Nature-based Education implementation at scale.

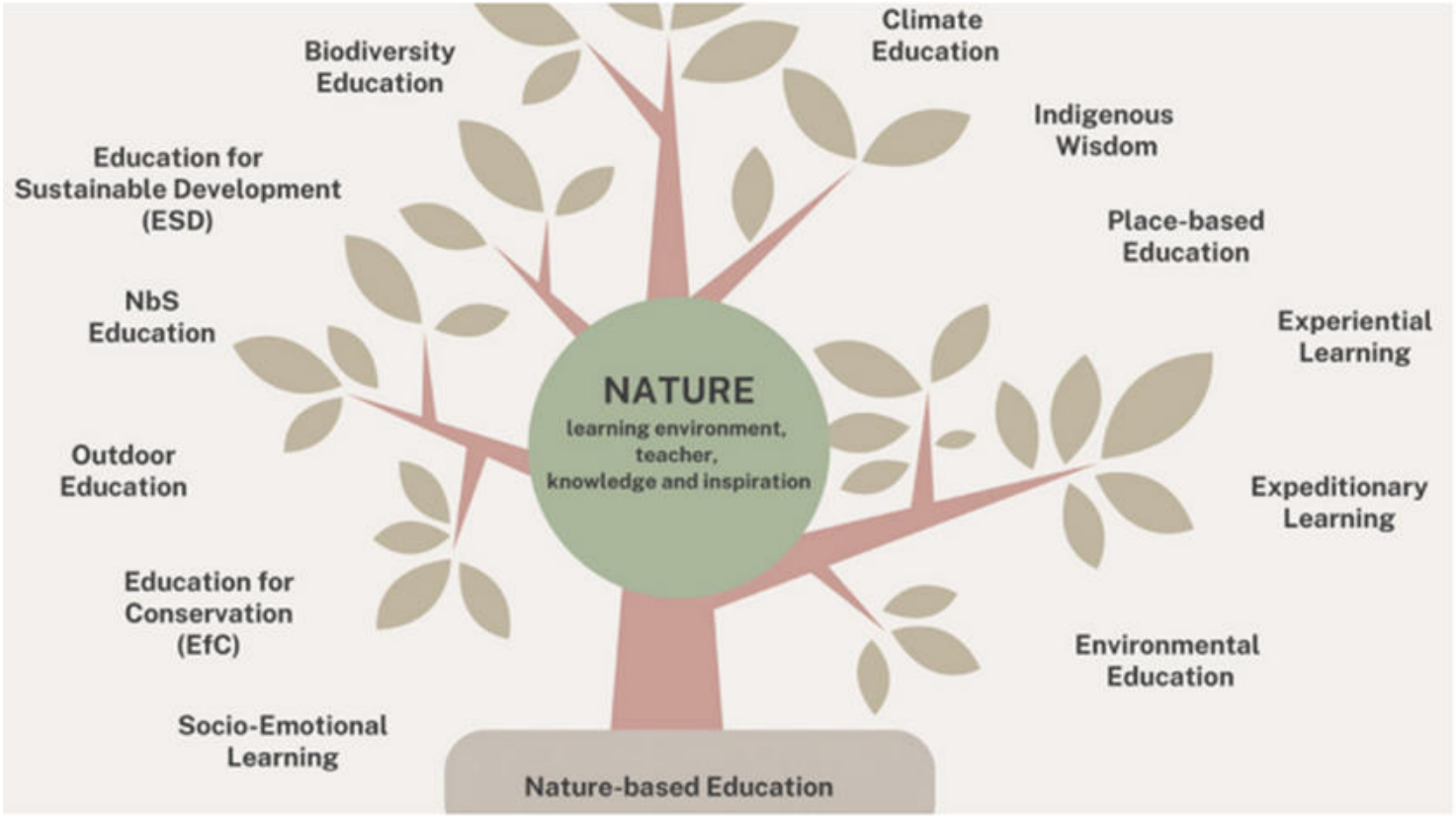
What is it?

Nature-based Education is a pedagogical approach that integrates nature into learning experiences, fostering a deep connection between humans and the natural world. It is a blend of teaching strategies that incorporates environmental education, Indigenous knowledge systems, experiential learning and a holistic approach to address global environmental challenges.

Nature-based Education promotes curriculum development that brings learners as close as possible to natural environments such as forests, coastal areas, wetlands, parks and nature centres. It also creates and restores natural settings as places for learning, such as green school grounds, gardens and parks, while integrating natural elements into built environments to enable nature-themed learning experiences. Nature-based Education can inform education across all geographies and levels, including early childhood care, primary and secondary schooling, higher education, professional development, leadership training and continuing education programmes.

The traditional education system often reinforces a separation between humans and nature, which has contributed to environmental degradation and societal disconnection...

...from the natural world. Nature-based Education aims to reverse this trend by embedding nature at the core of educational systems.



Nature-based Education integrates a variety of teaching strategies and educational fields. Credit: Luis Camargo/IUCN CEC

What are the benefits?

By increasing learners' direct experiences of nature and allowing active exploration and discovery, Nature-based Education brings a range of environmental, social, educational and health benefits.

The world is facing an unprecedented triple crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, all of which threaten planetary health and human well-being. Nature-based Education enables learners to understand human impacts on the environment, ensuring that the interdependencies between human and natural systems are made tangible in curricula, learning outcomes and pedagogy. By fostering a deeper connection with nature, it nurtures a conservation ethic and equips learners with the knowledge, skills and values necessary to take informed and responsible actions for environmental integrity.

Learning in nature enhances student engagement, inquiry skills and critical thinking. Programmes like the Green Schools Initiative and Forest Schools demonstrate that Nature-based Education fosters collaboration, empathy and community building.

Through place based education – a pedagogical approach that uses the local community and environment as starting points for teaching and learning, Nature-based Education deepens learners' understanding of local ecological systems and cultural heritage, strengthening community resilience.

When it comes to human health and well-being, research highlights that Nature-based Education improves cognitive function, emotional resilience and physical health. Exposure to nature enhances problem-solving skills, creativity and a sense of interconnectedness, contributing to individual and collective well-being. Studies indicate that green learning environments lower stress levels, reduce anxiety and promote active lifestyles.

Nature-based Education supports the goals of Education for Sustainable Development outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligns with IUCN's commitment to environmental education and conservation through policies such as Resolution 5.101 on children's right to connect with nature.

What are the challenges?

Institutions implementing Nature-based Education might face a variety of challenges, such as limited access to green spaces; lack of administrator support; insufficient teacher preparedness, experience and capacity; difficulties in adapting school curricula; lack of awareness of the many outstanding curricular resources and training opportunities that are available to support Nature-based Education; and unfamiliarity with protocols for assessing programme effectiveness.

Additional barriers include limited awareness of the evidence-based benefits to both students and the environment as a result of these approaches as well as political and regulatory obstacles, financial limitations and the need for coordination among involved stakeholders. All of these challenges are surmountable, with positive results.

What's next?

Several measures can help overcome challenges to implementing Nature-based Education:

Policy and funding support

Governments should enact policies that recognise Nature based Education as a critical component of education and environmental strategy. Allocating funding for relevant...

... initiatives, supporting research and establishing partnerships between educational institutions and environmental organisations will accelerate Nature-based Education implementation at scale.

Enhancing educational frameworks

Governments and educational institutions should incorporate Nature-based Education principles into curricula by embedding nature-based outdoor learning, experiential activities and sustainability education. Revising formal education frameworks to include systems thinking and interdisciplinary approaches can bridge the gap between humans and nature.

Greening learning spaces

Schools and universities should transform their infrastructures to integrate green spaces, outdoor classrooms and nature-based learning environments. Initiatives such as Singapore's "green schools" and the Paris Oasis Programme exemplify effective greening strategies that enhance biodiversity and resilience.

Training educators

Professional development programmes should equip teachers with the skills and confidence to implement Nature-based Education strategies effectively. Training should include outdoor education methodologies, risk management and socio-emotional learning components to foster holistic teaching practices.

Leveraging technology

While direct interaction with nature is essential, technology can complement Nature-based Education through virtual field experiences, digital biodiversity tracking and AI enhanced environmental education. Programs like iNaturalist and citizen science initiatives demonstrate the potential of technology in fostering ecological awareness.

Conclusion

Nature-based Education is a crucial strategy for addressing the environmental and societal crises of the 21st century. By fostering a deep connection between learners and the natural world, it cultivates environmental stewardship, enhances well-being and prepares individuals to contribute to a sustainable and resilient future. Given the severity of the triple planetary crisis, scaling up Nature-based Education initiatives must be a global priority. Coordinated efforts among policymakers, educators, communities and organisations are needed to ensure equitable access and lasting impact. Nature-based Education is not just an educational reform; it is a necessary shift toward a healthy planet and a just, sustainable future for all.

Find the brief **here**

Join our tutorial on environmental education on **www.mooc-conservation.org**

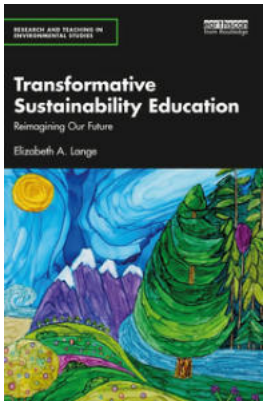
QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind."
— David W. Orr, Earth in Mind, American environmental educator, author, and thinker

READING OF THE MONTH

TRANSFORMATIVE SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION - REIMAGINING OUR FUTURE

BY ELIZABETH A. LANGE



Elizabeth A. Lange's latest book calls for a profound shift in how we teach and learn about sustainability. Moving beyond traditional Western approaches, she promotes a relational way of thinking inspired by Indigenous knowledge, decolonial perspectives, and a deeper sense of connection with the living world. Blending theory, learner transformation stories, and practical tools for action at all levels, the book offers a fresh, imaginative framework for truly transformative sustainability education. A valuable resource for educators in both formal and non-formal settings.

IN THE NEWS

COP30: KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PROTECTED AREAS

COP30 in Belém delivered several advances for nature conservation despite a tense geopolitical context.

A new fund for tropical forests:
The Tropical Forests Forever Facility will provide long-term financing for forest protection, with at least 20% of resources allocated to Indigenous Peoples, whose role in conservation is widely recognized.

Increased adaptation finance:
Countries committed to tripling adaptation funding by 2035, strengthening the resilience of protected areas and natural landscapes to climate impacts.

Nature-based solutions highlighted:
The "Global Implementation Accelerator" places ecosystems at the center of climate action, emphasizing mangroves, forests, wetlands, coral reefs, and protected areas.

Forest & Climate Roadmap:
Though non-binding, it encourages countries to enhance protection of critical forest landscapes, offering strategic direction for anti-deforestation efforts.

Stronger focus on local communities:
COP30 reaffirmed the importance of women, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples in natural resource governance and ecosystem management.

While no binding agreement on phasing out fossil fuels was reached, the conference underscored that conservation, restoration, and inclusive governance are now core pillars of global climate action.

CONTACTS - PAPACO

. Geoffroy Mauvais, coordinator of the Programme on African Protected Areas and Conservation - PAPACO - geoffroy.mauvais@iucn.org
. Madeleine Coetzer-Vosloo, Programme Officer PAPACO - Communications - madeleine.coetzer@iucn.org
. Hélène Magdelain, Youth Conservation focal point - info@youth-conservation.org
. Joie Didier Sossoukpe, Papaco/Senghor University focal point - joie.sossoukpe@usenghor.org

To contribute to a NAPA (article or publication on protected areas, cover photo, job offer, etc.), contact us at moocs@papaco.org.