

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO ACTION: MOBILISING FINANCE FOR LOCALLY-LED CONSERVATION

20 October 2026

UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE
TAKING ACTION FOR NATURE

COP17 / CP-MOP 12 / NP-MOP 6
YEREVAN ARMENIA
19-30 OCTOBER 2026

NTFP-EP

Nature is our foundation

IUCN National Committee of The Netherlands

Speakers



Daryl Bosu
A ROCHA Ghana



Ivo Walsmit
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Micheal Clifford
Reverse the Red



Pria Ghosh
Syncronicity Earth

- Date: 20 October 2026
- Time: 14:15-15:15
- Location: Dutch Pavilion

Hosts



Anne Alexandre
Conservation Connect



Sander van Andel
IUCN NL

Session outline

- Opening
- Keynote speakers
- Panel interaction
- Audience dialogue
- Closing


IUCN
National Committee
of The Netherlands
Who is in the room?

The persistent mismatch

High responsibility on the ground. Low access to resources and decisions.



The result: local actors carry the mission, but remain restricted.

CONCERNS ABOUT TRUST BASED FUNDING



Reduced control, as project finance simplifies the assessment



Not predetermined short-term result based



Enough accountability for recipient organisations



Can organisations can responsibly manage unearmarked funding

NATURE'S HEARTBEAT

Embedding grassroots actors in the global conservation movement

For locally led protection of Key Biodiversity Areas

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

LANDSCAPE NETWORKS

TRUSTED FINANCE



Andrew Kartende / IUCN NL

TRUST BASED FUNDING FOLLOWING THESE PRINCIPLES:

- Providing largely flexible funding
- Over multiple years
- Reducing the burden of planning and reporting
- Transparency and openness
- Welcoming feedback, and taking appropriate actions
- Go beyond just financial assistance



Erwin Mascerinas / IUCN NL

Trust-based funding for locally led action in KBAs

Reciprocal accountability. Control, learning and risk are shared differently.

PROJECT-CENTRED

- activities fixed early
- restricted budgets
- compliance upward
- risk transferred locally

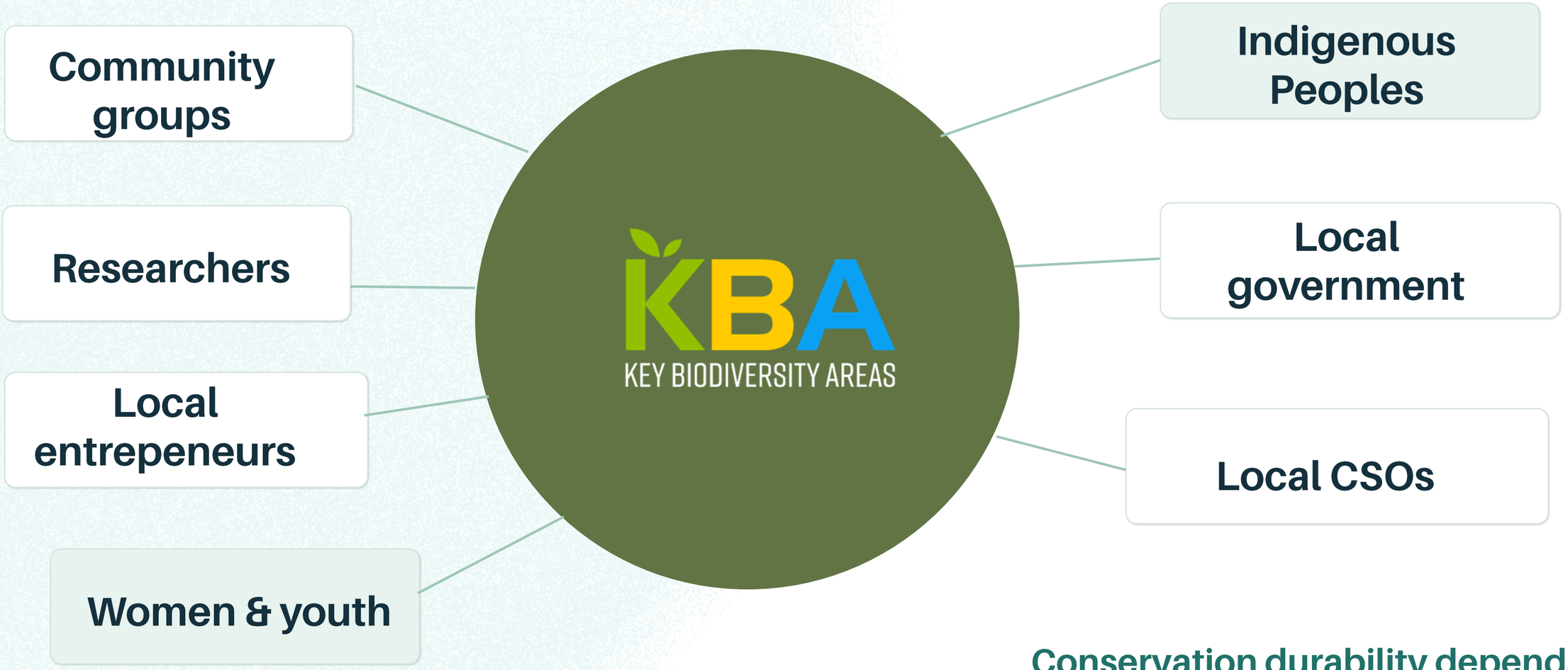
PARTNERSHIP-CENTRED

- priorities shaped locally
- flexibility within shared purpose
- accountability as dialogue
- risk understood together

Erwin Mascerinas / IUCN NL

Key Biodiversity Areas need a network of local stewards

Sites matter. So do the communities, institutions and relationships around them.



Conservation durability depends on the surrounding social system

NATURE'S HEARTBEAT



PATHWAY 1:

STRONG GRASSROOT CONSERVATIONISTS ON THE FRONT LINE



PATHWAY 2:

A SYSTEM SHIFT TO TRUST-BASED FUNDING



NATURE'S HEARTBEAT

OUR LANDSCAPES





Our work at a glance

7
countries

19
Key Biodiversity Areas

50+
local conservation organisations supported

6+ mln.
hectares of high-value nature

NATURE'S HEARTBEAT

Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika
Alliance for Tompotika Conservation

Armonía
CONSERVACIÓN DE AVES EN BOLIVIA

A ROCHA GHANA

ECOTRUST
The Environmental Conservation Trust of Uganda

NATIVA
NATURALEZA TIERRA Y VIDA

NTFP EP

Strong Roots

Vereniging van Saamaka Gemeenschappen
wan hati

Komunitas Konservasi Indonesia
WARSI

IUCN | National Committee of The Netherlands

Scale the method, not a blueprint

Growth should preserve local choice and adapt to each landscape.

- SHARED VALUES
- FLEXIBLE FINANCE
- TAILORED SUPPORT
- NETWORKS
- SIMPLE EVIDENCE



Replicate principles.
Contextualise practice.

The network grows through new hubs and donors, while decisions remain close to each KBA landscape.

Nature is Critical Infrastructure, that is rejected

For Ghana, biodiversity is the operating system for three things:

- **Food security:** pollination, soil fertility, rainfall regulation and food crops and forest commodity resilience.
- **Health:** clean water from forested watersheds, bushmeat and medicinal plants, and disease buffering.
- **Wellbeing and economy:** livelihoods, cultural identity, and flood and heat protection.
- **Safety-net - Communities and economy**





The Challenge

01 Limited and unreliable public funding for biodiversity conservation.

02 No fiscal space. Debt competes with conservation. Forestry and wildlife agencies depend on thin retained revenues and project cycles.

03 Fragmented, short-cycle money: not the standing costs of protection: patrols, community institutions and legal defence.

04 Competing interests and implementation in silos. Poor integration of biodiversity and nature-based solutions into national planning agenda

05 Funding accessibility by international bodies including UN agencies crowding out local institutions and capacity



The Solution: Empower and Resource at local

01 Mobilizing Communities for collective biodiversity conservation outcomes - Organizational Development, legitimacy, and fundraising capacity

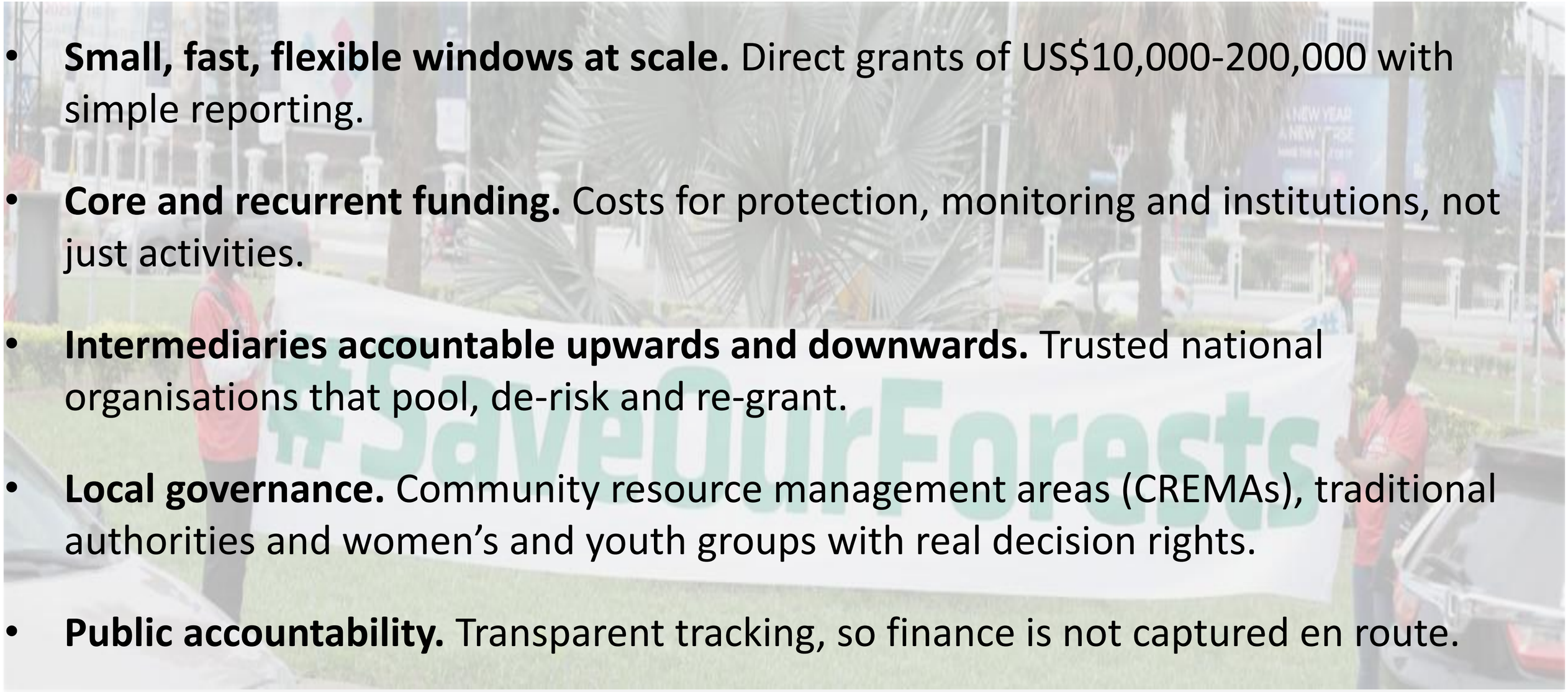
02 Identifying and amplifying the activities of local CBOs and organizations – Strengthening the roots and Natures' Heartbeat, CEPF

03 Identifying, connecting local private enterprises for investment in sustainable commodity sourcing, tied to biodiversity outcomes

04 A national fund for local activation is needed at scale,but can operate at landscape too. Eg. Conservation trust funds



Going forward – Last Mile



- **Small, fast, flexible windows at scale.** Direct grants of US$10,000-200,000 with simple reporting.
- **Core and recurrent funding.** Costs for protection, monitoring and institutions, not just activities.
- **Intermediaries accountable upwards and downwards.** Trusted national organisations that pool, de-risk and re-grant.
- **Local governance.** Community resource management areas (CREMAs), traditional authorities and women's and youth groups with real decision rights.
- **Public accountability.** Transparent tracking, so finance is not captured en route.

Conservation Connect

A centralised, trusted space where donors and conservationists connect



Picture from Aka Pacha
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/4596

Conservation Connect

The bottleneck is infrastructure, not ideas

There are thousands of frontline conservationists making real change, but the funding they need isn't being distributed effectively. The missing piece is infrastructure that connects conservationists with funders safely, efficiently, and at scale.



Picture from Aka Packa
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/4596



Picture from Wildtracks
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/2548

Challenges to address

The obstacles to bringing funds to the frontline

- **Fragmentation and isolation** of conservation efforts, harder to identify high-impact, locally-driven organisations.
- Risk aversion of donors, fueled by a **lack of visibility** and credibility of locally-led efforts
- Donors also operate in silos, therefore lots of double work and **broken funding chain**,
- **Lack of overview** of who does what, where, funded by whom. Harder to identify underfunded areas of intervention.
- **Misalignment in donor sector**; over bureaucratic application processes and mix-match of frameworks

A central space for donors

Overview & insights

Increased efficiency:

- >5.500 vetted projects
- References

Exchange experiences

Align approaches & frameworks



Picture by Anoulak
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/518

And for conservationists

Visibility

Credibility

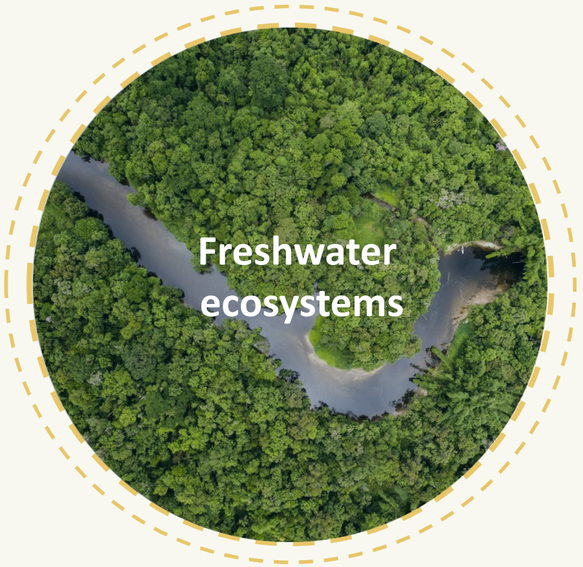
Network

Access to funding

Targeted funding towards pressing topics

Using data-insights from our database, we can identify where need is greatest and funding can achieve the most impact. By combining literature research with indicators like urgency and potential for scalable impact, we can flag topics that are especially high leverage.









Picture by Arend de Haas from African Conservation Foundation
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/2214

Succes story: Proving the power of connection

Five organisations in Cameroon now working together on conserving the Cross-river gorilla habitat

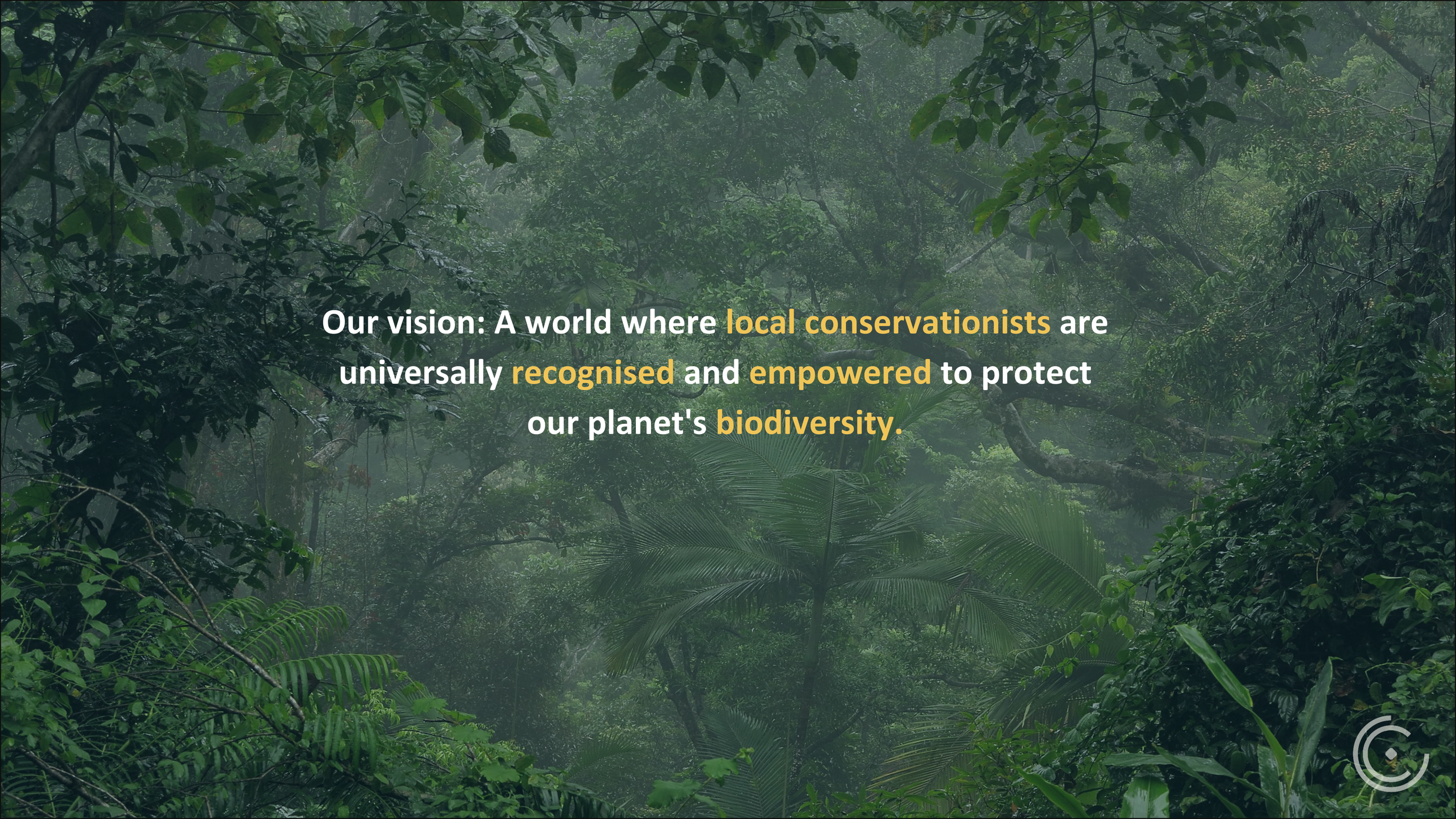


Picture from Luckango Tree Conservancy
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/5765

Challenges Remain

What we need to overcome the obstacles for a more effective funding landscape for local conservation efforts

- Building this infrastructure and coordinating efforts requires funding and time.
- We are often stuck in business-as-usual. We need to encourage and embrace change.
- Fixed application rounds make us rigid, we need flexible funding for catalytic co-and follow-up funding
- See collective action and sectorial alignment as a priority, no nice-to-have


Our vision: A world where local conservationists are
universally recognised and empowered to protect
our planet's biodiversity.

Panel discussion



Pria Ghosh
Syncronicity Earth



Daryl Bosu
A ROCHA Ghana



Ivo Walsmit
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Micheal Clifford
Reverse the Red

Hosts



Anne Alexandre
Conservation Connect

Credits: IUCN NL/Broekarts

Audience dialogue



Closing remarks



Sander van Andel
IUCN NL

Erwin Mascerinas / IUCN NL

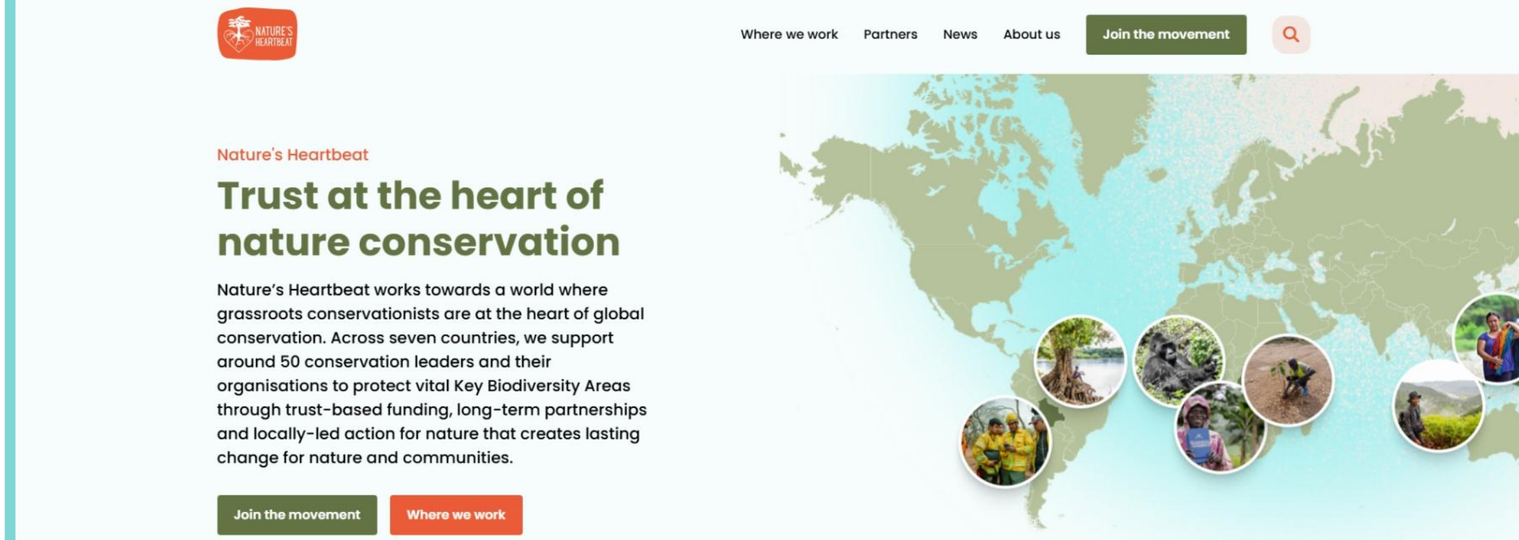
NATURE'S HEARTBEAT

Join the movement

VISIT

www.naturesheartbeat.org

Scan QR code



Our work at a glance

7	19	50+	6+ mln.
countries	Key Biodiversity Areas	local conservation organisations supported	hectares of high-value nature



Where we work

A global movement rooted in local landscapes

From the forests of Ghana and Uganda to the wetlands of Bolivia and the islands of the Philippines, Nature's Heartbeat promotes locally-led conservation in some of the world's most important Key Biodiversity Areas. We always work through the organisations and communities that understand their landscapes best.

Connect with us!

Current times show the necessity for coordinated action. Conservation Connect facilitates this need and grows the impact funders have. We hope you join us.

anne@conservationconnect.earth

www.conservationconnect.earth

/company/conservation-connect



Picture from Khamai Foundation
https://conservationconnect.earth/owner/4505

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

More information?

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What’s next?


COP17
YEREVAN ARMENIA
IUCN National Committee of The Netherlands
SYNCHRONICITY EARTH
COP17 | 21 October 2026
Building Trust for Biodiversity: Reimagining Funding Relationships for Higher Conservation Impact
Date: October 21 2026
Time: 12:00-13:00 UTC +4
Location: FPWC Blue Zone Pavilion, Meridian Exhibition Center


COP17
YEREVAN ARMENIA
IUCN National Committee of The Netherlands
COP17 | 23 October 2026
Frontline conservation resilience: why trust -based rapid response funding is essential for delivering the Global Biodiversity Framework
Date: 23 October 2026
Time: 14.00 - 15.00 UTC +4
Location: IUCN Pavillion Forum Room: B

link naar natures heartbeat website

Link naar Conservation connect website

Link naar anderen?

The network in the landscape effect compounds impact for Nature

From capable organisations to a resilient landscape constituency.



1 Stronger organisations

2 collaboration

complementary roles

3 Collective influence

shared evidence + advocacy

4 Durable stewardship

organizations that remain after projects

Panel Questions

How to move from fragmented grants to lasting local stewardship?

NETWORK
Why is a diverse set of local actors crucial for KBA landscape conservation

FINANCE
How can funding strengthen organisations and networks, not only activities?

RISK
What risk should donors and re-granters share rather than transfer?

CONNECT
How can KBA local actors influence national and global systems?

Embedding grassroots actors in the global conservation movement

For locally led protection of Key Biodiversity Areas

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

LANDSCAPE NETWORKS

TRUSTED FINANCE

The persistent mismatch

High responsibility on the ground. Low access to resources and decisions.



The result: local actors carry the mission, but remain restricted.

Trust-based funding for locally led action in KBAs

Reciprocal accountability. Control, learning and risk are shared differently.

PROJECT-CENTRED

- activities fixed early
- restricted budgets
- compliance upward
- risk transferred locally

PARTNERSHIP-CENTRED

- priorities shaped locally
- flexibility within shared purpose
- accountability as dialogue
- risk understood together

Nature's HeartBeat

OUR LANDSCAPES



Nature’s Heartbeat: four reinforcing investments in KBAs

Trust is the foundation. Organisational strength and networks turn it into conservation results.

TRUST

shared values, local choices

FLEXIBLE FINANCE

room to respond and invest

LOCAL AGENCY

TAILORED SUPPORT

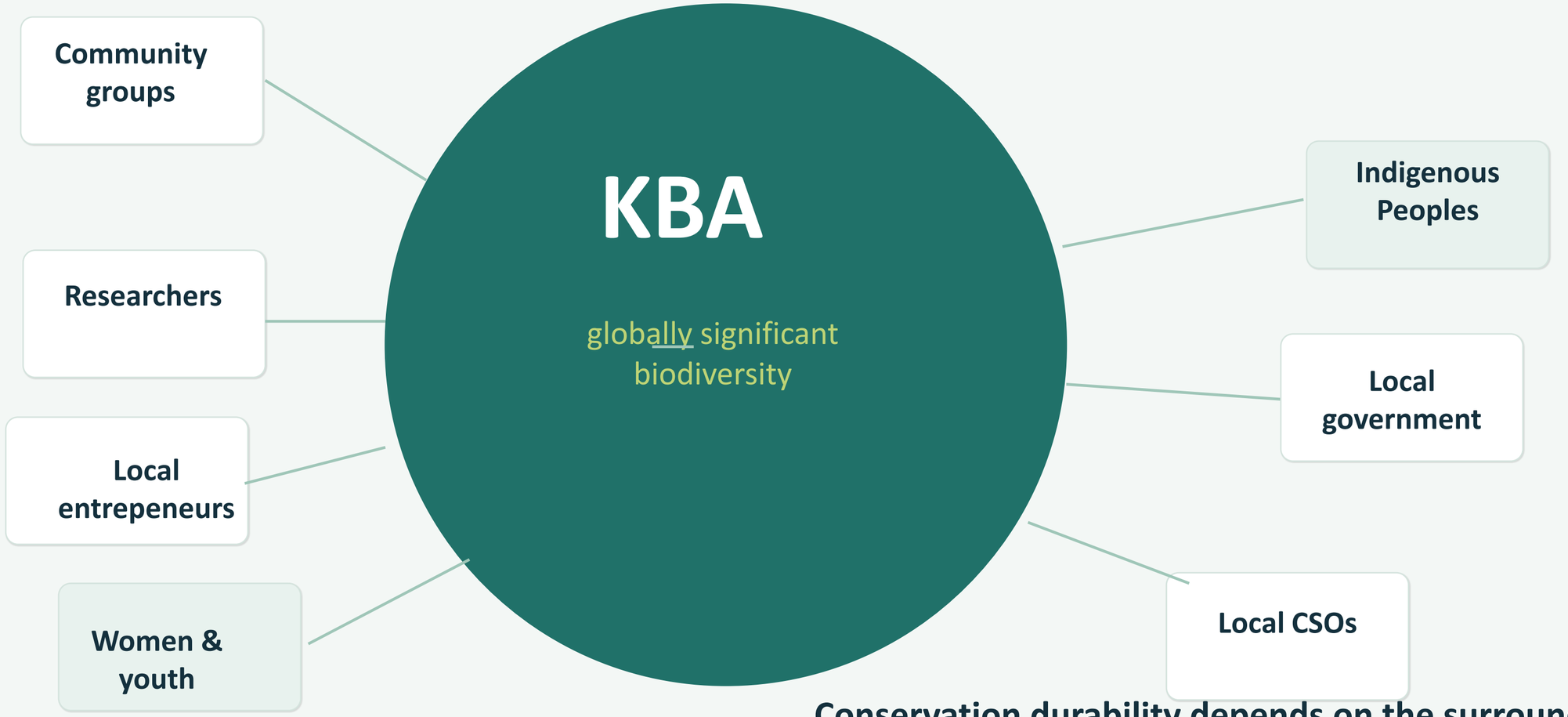
coaching based on need

LANDSCAPE NETWORK

peer learning and global connections

Key Biodiversity Areas need a network of local stewards

Sites matter. So do the communities, institutions and relationships around them.



Conservation durability depends on the surrounding social system

The network effect compounds impact

From capable organisations to a resilient landscape constituency.

1 Stronger organisations

capacity + flexible resources

2 Better collaboration

peer learning + complementary roles

3 Collective influence

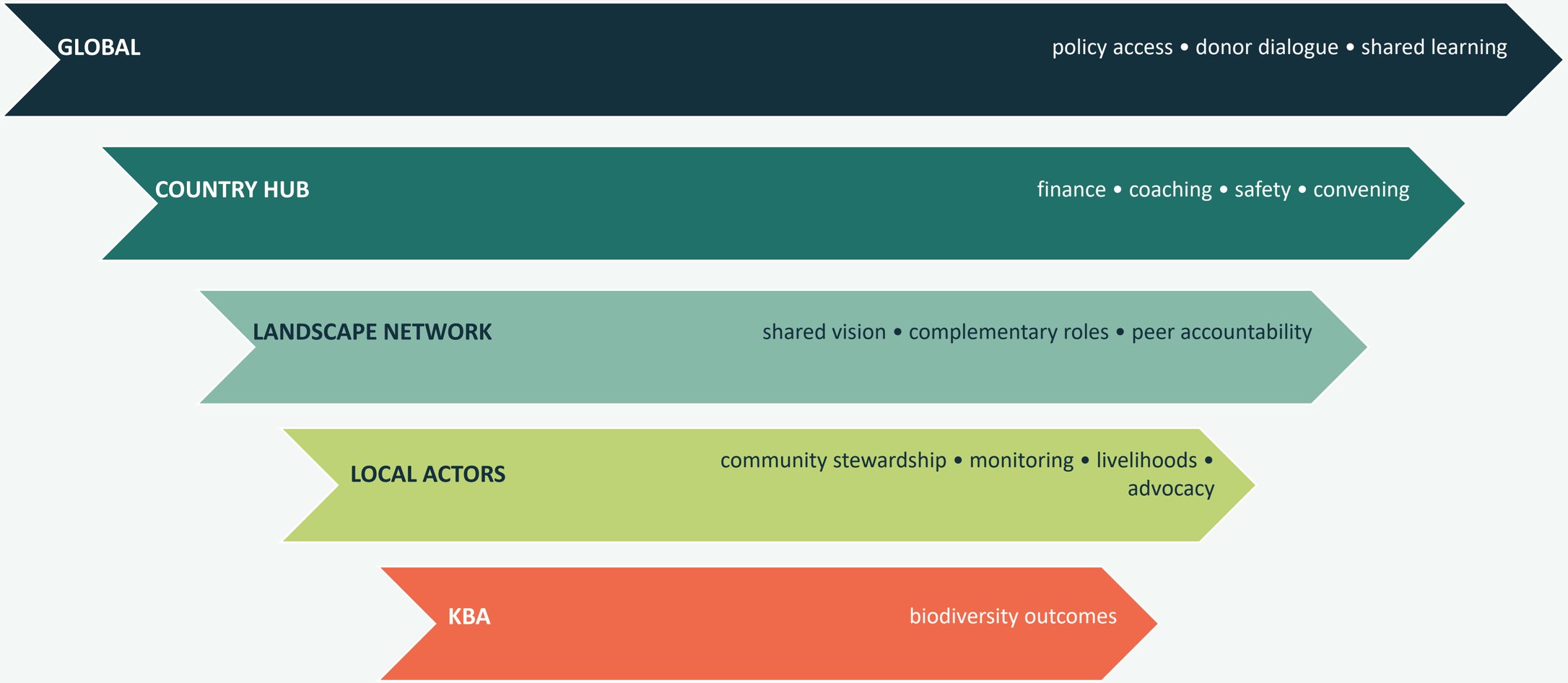
shared evidence + advocacy

4 Durable stewardship

institutions that remain after projects

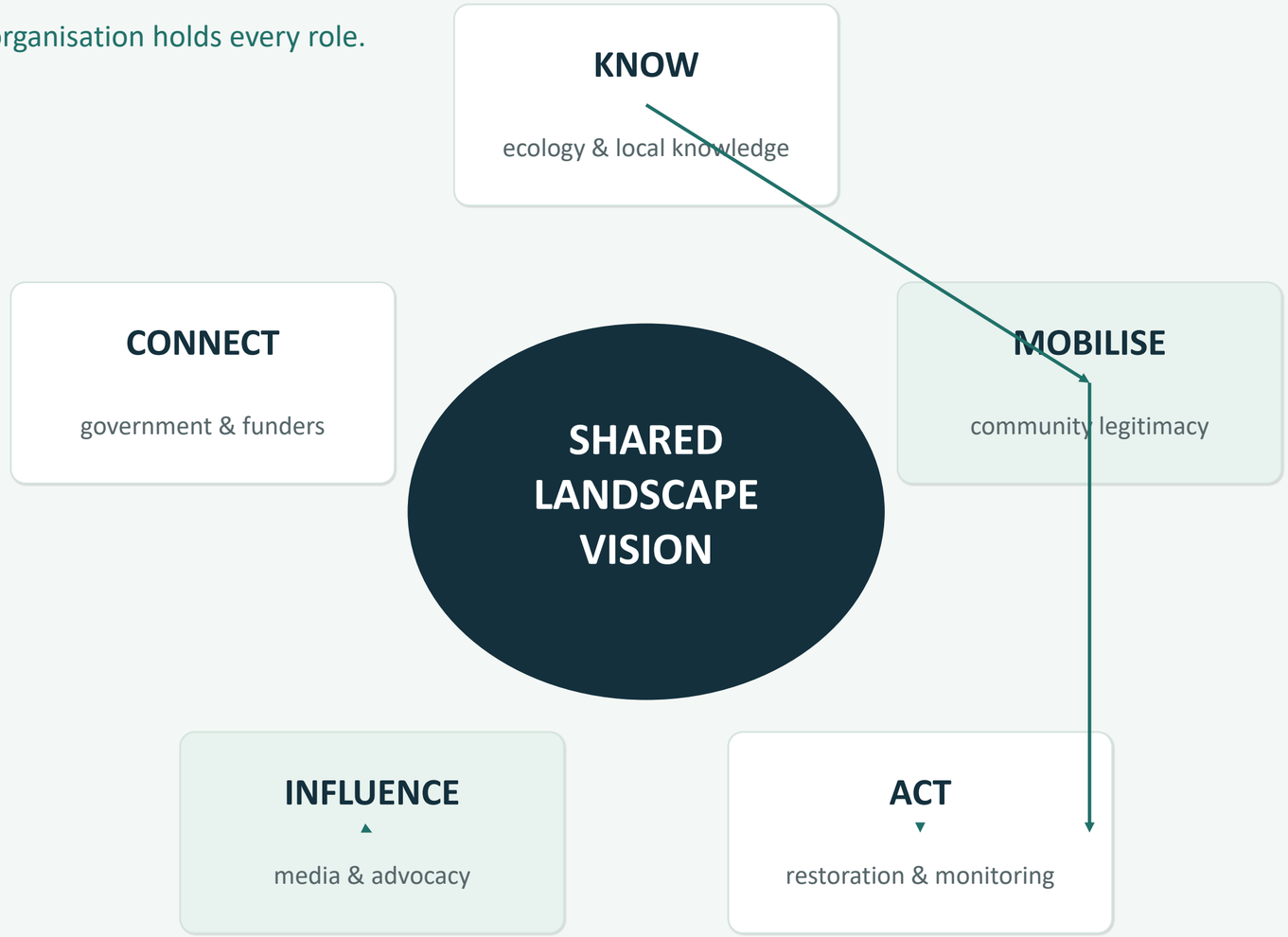
A practical landscape architecture

Local organisations lead. Hubs accompany. Global partners open doors.



Why fund a network, not only separate projects?

A landscape is a system. No single organisation holds every role.



Two pathways, one system change

Strengthen local actors and change the way conservation finance works.

PATHWAY 1

Strong local actors on the frontline

- TRUSTED SELECTION
- FLEXIBLE FINANCE
- CAPACITY AND LEARNING
- SIMPLE IMPACT EVIDENCE

PATHWAY 2

A shift towards trust-based funding

- VISIBILITY
- SHARED STANDARD
- ADVICE TO FUNDERS
- NEW COMMITMENTS

Early evidence confirms the design

Partners ask for more than larger grants. They ask for capability, flexibility and relationships.

82%

technical support or capacity building

75%

more flexible use of funds

75%

stronger relationships with funders

61%

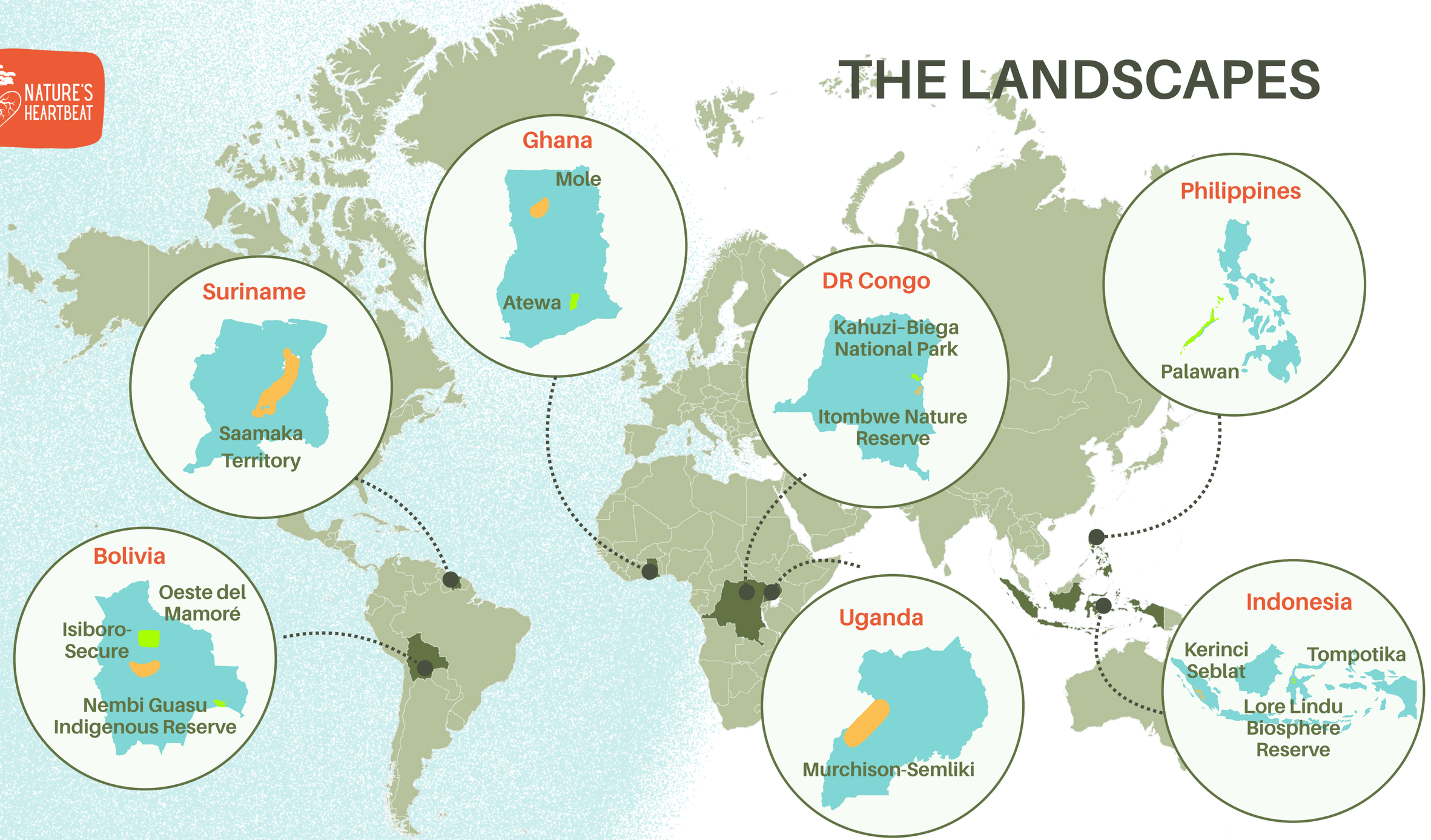
more decision-making power

28 of 35 landscape partners responded to the baseline survey

Design implication: pair flexible finance with accompaniment and network building.

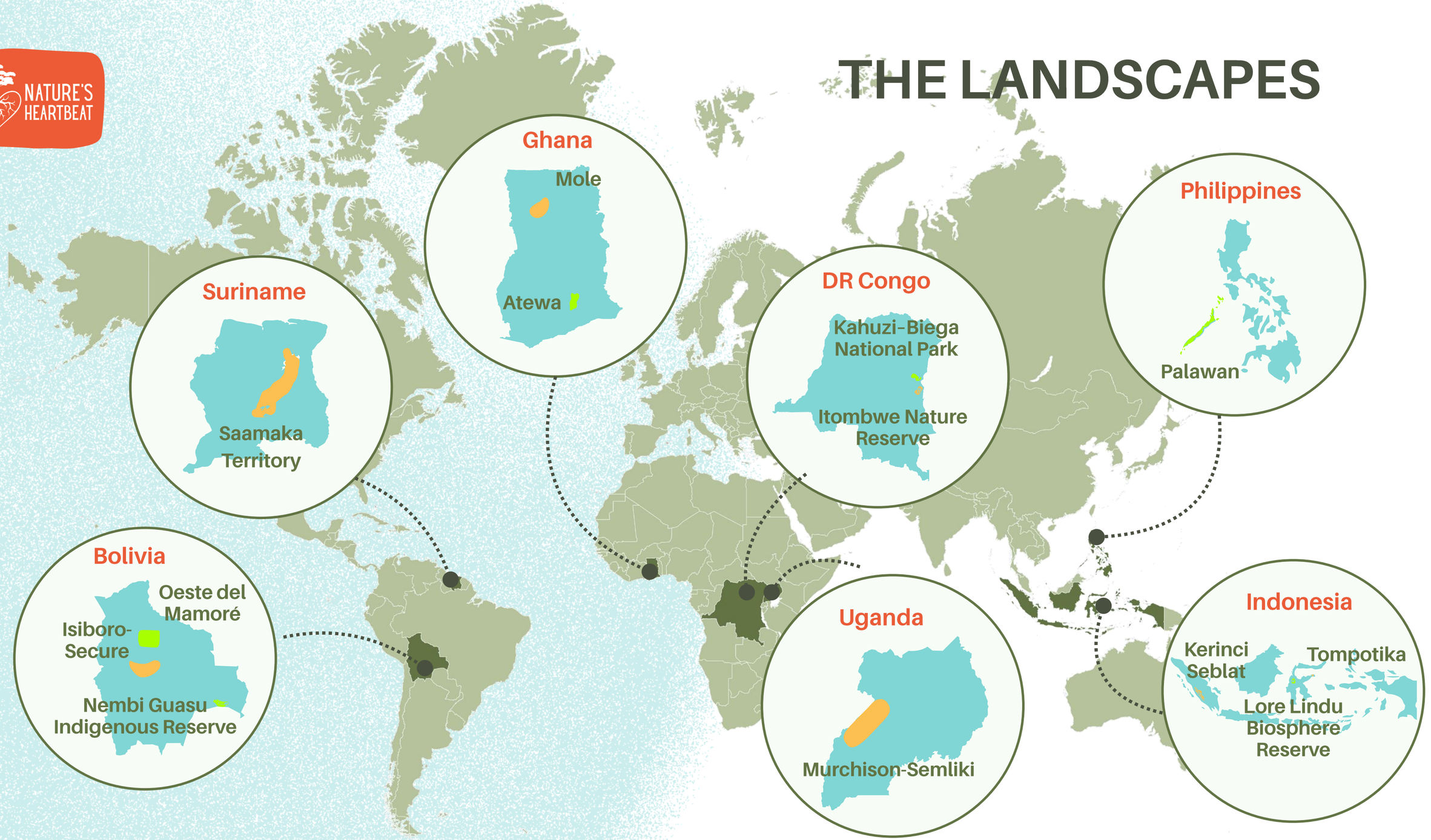
NATURE'S HEARTBEAT

THE LANDSCAPES



NATURE'S HEARTBEAT

THE LANDSCAPES



What networked conservation looks like

Different roles combine around a shared landscape purpose.



GHANA

Advocacy groups, media and CREMAs coordinated action against illegal mining.



INDONESIA

Community groups, government and park authorities developed shared support for Maleo conservation.

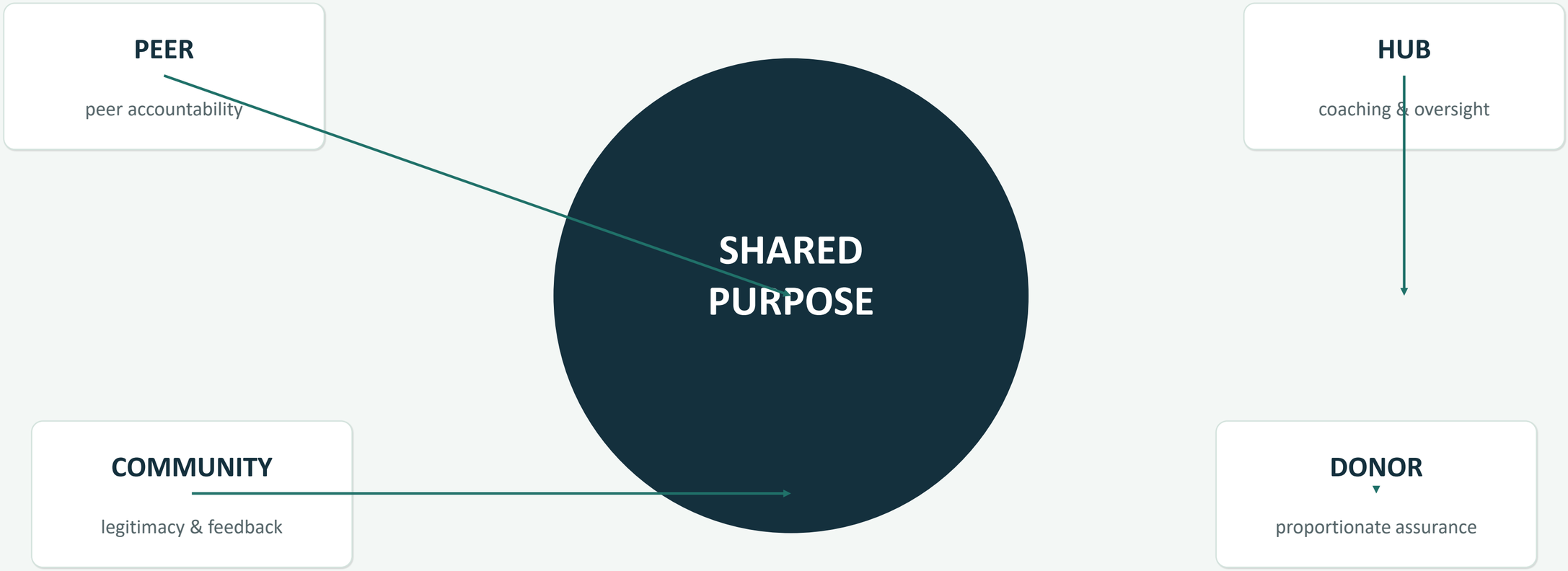


PHILIPPINES

Indigenous youth and women’s organisations are collaborating on restoration, advocacy and enterprises.

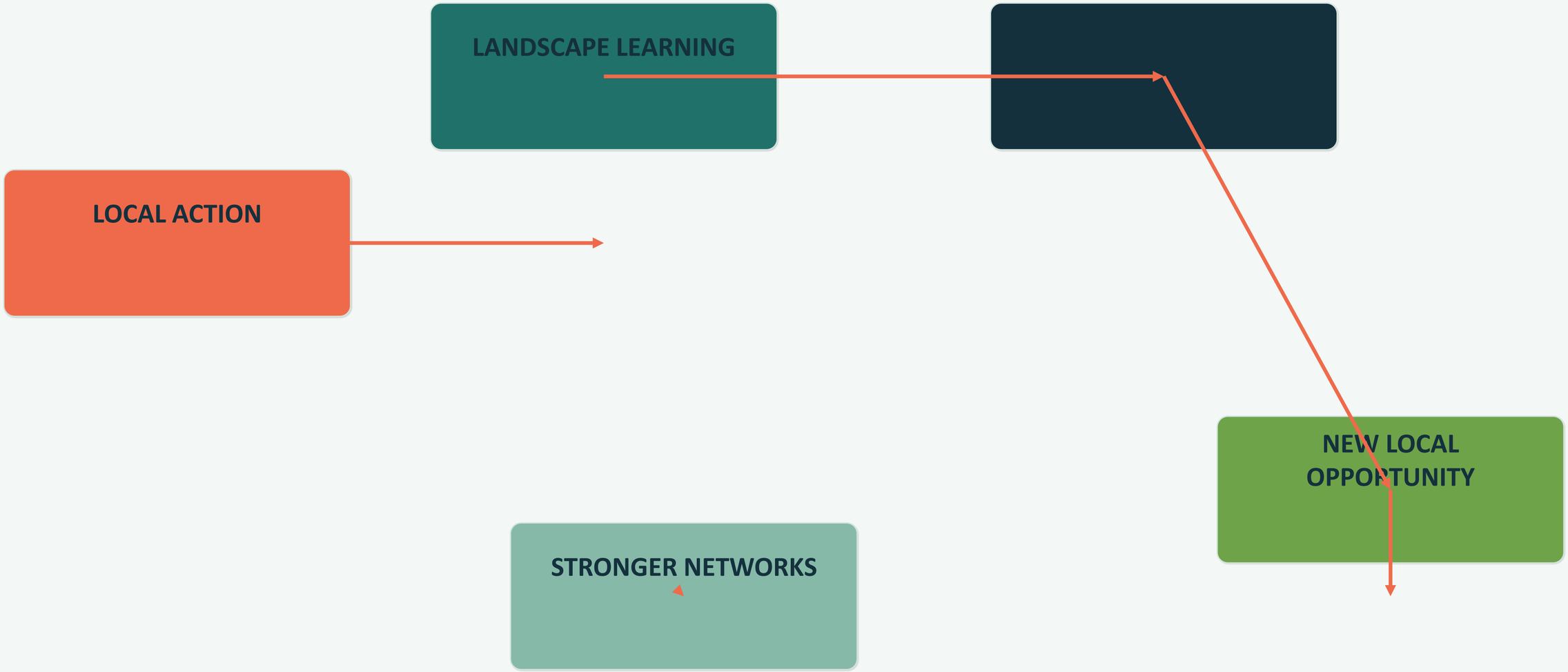
Trust requires a stronger accountability ecosystem

Vertical control becomes one part of a wider system of relationships.



Local → global → local

Evidence and influence should travel in both directions.



Stories, data and practical standards move upward. Resources, recognition and influence return.

What must change now?

DECIDE

Which decisions can move closer to local actors?

FINANCE

How can funding strengthen organisations and networks, not only activities?

RISK

What risk should donors share rather than transfer?

CONNECT

How can KBA actors influence national and global systems?

From fragmented grants to lasting local stewardship

TRUST BASED FUNDING FOLLOWING THESE PRINCIPLES:

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NATURE'S HEARTBEAT



PATHWAY 1:

STRONG GRASSROOT CONSERVATIONISTS ON THE FRONT LINE



PATHWAY 2:

A SYSTEM SHIFT TO TRUST-BASED FUNDING



TAKE OUT ???


PATHWAY 1:
strong conservationists on the front line
PATHWAY 2:
a shift to trust-based funding

WHAT IS TRUST BASED FUNDING

TAKE OUT ???



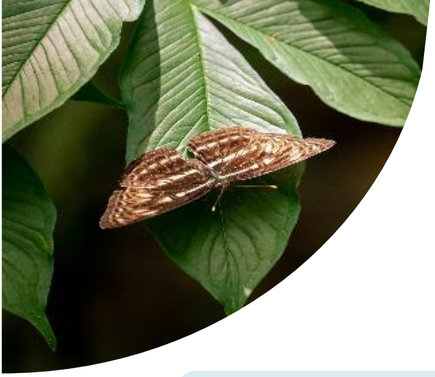
- **Collaborative approach** between funders and civil society with shared accountability.
- **Challenges traditional power dynamics**, focusing on equality and common goals.
- **Building trust**, enabling openness, mutual learning, and tackling complex social issues together.

TAKE OUT ???

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CONCERNS ABOUT TRUST BASED funding

TAKE OUT ???

- Reduced control, as project finance simplifies the assessment
- Not short-term performance based but long-term impact based
- Enough accountability for recipient organizations
- Can organizations can responsibly manage unearmarked funding

Trust-based funding for locally led action in KBAs

Reciprocal accountability. Control, learning and risk are shared differently.

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