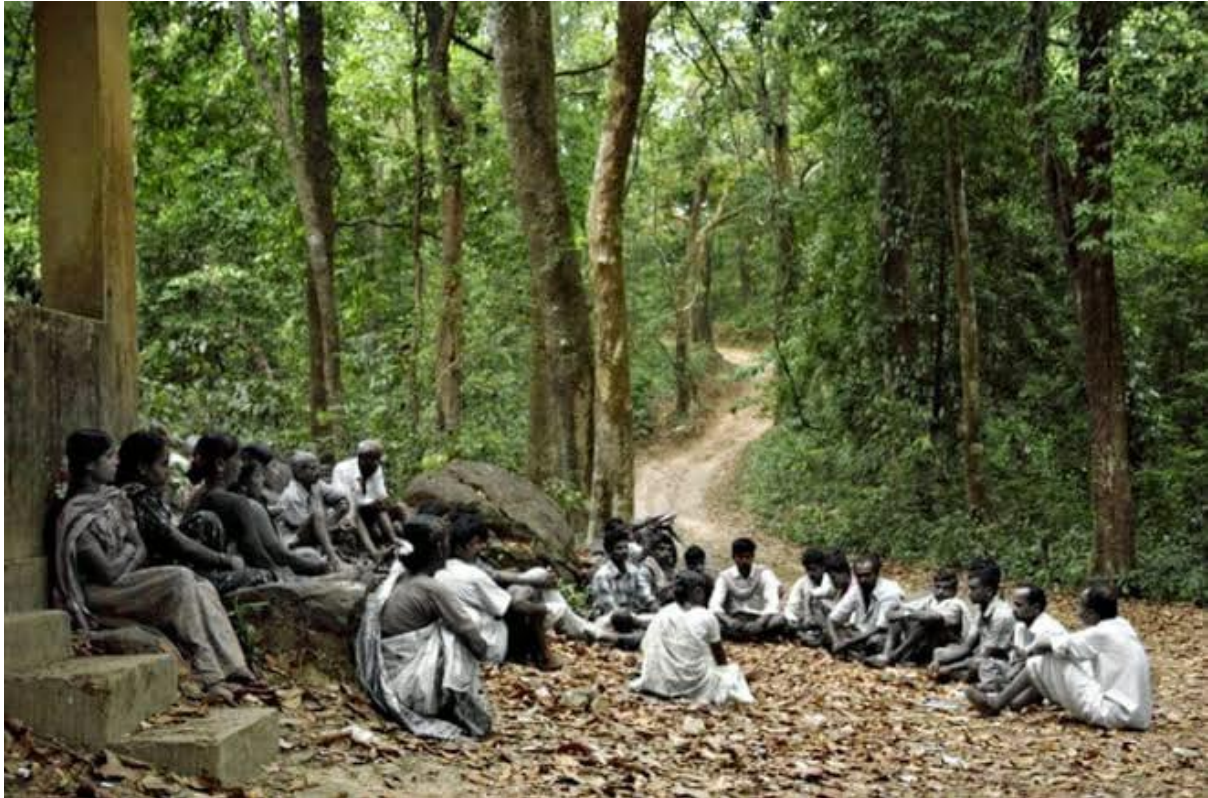


Resettling tribal communities outside of protected forests costs more than involving them in conservation efforts: report

08 December 2020



Resettling tribal, forest-dwelling communities in the name of biodiversity protection costs much more than involving them in efforts to conserve their land, a new report has found.

According to the report, India has the largest population that stands to be affected by biodiversity conservation initiatives: 240 million people. While Rs. 50 trillion is required to resettle this group outside of India's biodiversity hotspots, a community-led rights-based conservation policy would only cost Rs. 28 billion. In other words: A resettling-based conservation approach costs 1,750 times more than community-based conservation.

"The current model of protected areas based on the exclusion of people is not feasible for effectively protecting biodiversity in India – the huge financial costs make it impossible, even if the cost of human suffering and cultural displacement is ignored," Kundan Kumar, director of Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)'s Asia chapter and report co-author, told the media.

RRI, an NGO from the U.S. that fights for community-based forest preservation, collaborated with Campaign for Nature to conduct an analysis of population data from important biodiversity conservation areas in India, Peru, Indonesia, Nepal, and Liberia. Then, based on financial forecasts of resettlement action plans, the researchers estimated the cost of relocating the forest-dwelling populations.

"This report shows that as far as both the science and economics are concerned, investing in indigenous peoples' and local communities' land and resource rights should be a primary strategy for reaching global biodiversity targets," Brian O'Donnell, director of Campaign for Nature, a collaborator of the study, told the media. O'Donnell recommends countries adopt rights-based

conservation strategies “to protect the planet and significantly expand human rights at the same time.”

Last month, a report published in Nature Sustainability studied community forest management data from 51 countries and concluded that community forest management policies, when designed and implemented properly, have positive environmental and economic effects.

The rationale behind community-led forest management is to take advantage of indigenous people’s vested interest in the their forest of origin, prompting them to do a more effective job than government officers in faraway offices.

“We consider ourselves to be guardians, custodians of our natural resources. Our view is different from the Western fortress conservation approach where forest dwellers are driven out, and their relationship with nature is broken. ... To us, there is no wasteland; all land has value,” Paul Sein Twa, an indigenous Karen from Myanmar, whose grassroots activism made him the Asia winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, also known as the ‘Green Nobel’ earlier this month, told Global Citizen. He was not involved in the RRI-Campaign for Nature report.

“Recognizing customary and ancestral territory that may not be formally tenured is central to our land use management. It encourages people to more actively thwart the logging, dams, and mining that are a threat to our existence, Sein Twa added.

Source: <https://theswaddle.com/resettling-tribal-communities-outside-of-protected-forests-costs-more-than-involving-them-in-conservation-efforts-report/>