

# NATURE-DEPENDENT PEOPLE WHERE NATURE IS A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

Nature is an essential part of our daily lives. It's the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe. But some groups of people around the world depend more directly on nature than others to meet their basic needs. Until now, the precise estimates of the number and location of these individuals and communities have been unknown, making it easy to overlook them in land management strategies and policies related to nature conservation or human development.

In a new study, Conservation International has identified that more than 1.2 billion people in tropical countries are highly dependent on nature for basic human needs like clean water, energy for cooking, shelter and their livelihoods. This accounts for as much as 30% of the total population of the countries in the tropics, across Africa, the Asia-Pacific and the Americas.

Nature-dependent people are often also the most directly affected by environmental degradation, deforestation and climate change. Our findings underscore the importance of protecting and restoring local ecosystems and biodiversity as means to support the lives and livelihoods of those who need nature the most.



New study and interactive map on  
[ndp.resilienceatlas.org](http://ndp.resilienceatlas.org)





## Supporting nature-dependent people

For 1.2 billion people in the tropics, the conservation of nature is a matter of survival every single day. As climate change and biodiversity loss continue to accelerate, people who derive basic needs from natural sources are disproportionately affected. Even small changes to their environment can have an enormous impact on their lives and livelihoods — cutting off access to food and clean water, building materials or their incomes.

We can now locate nature-dependent communities with greater confidence and better understand how they use natural resources in their daily lives. Using this data to guide efforts to protect nature ensure they also support people's needs. This includes partnering with nature-dependent people and considering their needs and aspirations from the very start and working collaboratively to put nature at the center of resilient, sustainable development.

## Ensuring nature-based solutions also support the well-being of people who need it the most

Nature protection may be appropriate in areas with few nature-dependent people + high nature integrity (e.g. Suriname, Myanmar, Peru, Gabon, Guyana, Ecuador)

Sustainable use may be appropriate in areas with many nature-dependent people + high nature integrity (e.g. Cambodia, Central African Republic, DR Congo)

Nature restoration may be appropriate in areas with many nature-dependent people + low nature integrity (e.g. Madagascar, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan)

Integrated management may be appropriate in areas with few nature-dependent people + low nature integrity (e.g. Mexico, Philippines, Viet Nam, Senegal, Thailand)

## Defining nature-dependent people

To determine where the most nature-dependent people live around the globe, Conservation International scientists analyzed more than 5 million household interviews conducted from 2011-2018 by international organizations or national statistical offices in 85 tropical countries. The surveys collected information from local people who reported how they are actually using and benefiting from nature.

Based on this information, we defined nature-dependent people as those that directly use natural sources for at least three of the following four basic needs:



### OCCUPATION

agriculture, forestry, or fishery workers (skilled and unskilled)



### ENERGY FOR COOKING

wood, charcoal, straws, grass, shrubs, or dung



### HOUSING MATERIAL

wood, bamboo or palm, dung, earth or mud



### DRINKING WATER

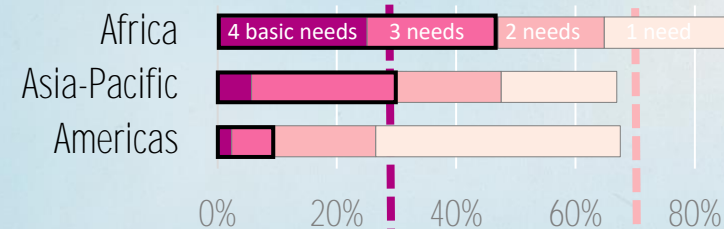
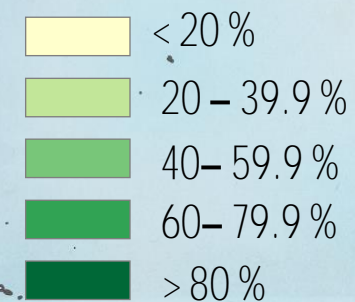
from rivers, lakes, rainwater, natural springs, or wells





## HIGHLY NATURE-DEPENDENT PEOPLE

% OF PEOPLE PER SUB-NATIONAL REGION



**50 million**

people in the Americas are highly dependent on nature, especially for their occupation, relying upon agriculture, forestry or fisheries for their income.

**480 million**

people in Africa are highly dependent on nature, mostly for all four basic needs, but especially for energy for cooking (eg. firewood, charcoal)

**640 million**

people in Asia-Pacific are highly dependent on nature, especially for energy for cooking and housing materials