

Forging Community Connections: pathways to inclusive and durable conservation action

Tahina Herisoa^{1,2}, **Vanessa Handley**^{1, 3, 4, *}, Heritiana Ranarivelo¹, Mateo Roldan⁵, Peggy Fiedler⁴, Maria Melanie Medecilo-Guiang⁶, and Esperanza Maribel Agoo⁷

¹California Academy of Sciences, United States of America

²University of Antananarivo, Madagascar

³Montgomery Botanical Center, University of Antananarivo

⁴The Red List Project

⁵Mashpi Reserve & Lodge, Ecuador

⁶Central Mindanao University, Philippines

⁷De la Salle University, Philippines

*Corresponding author email: vanessa@montgomerybotanical.org

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The arid landscape of southwestern Madagascar is home to an extraordinary floristic assemblage – the Malagasy spiny thicket. Endemism defines the ecoregion with almost the entire indigenous flora found nowhere else on earth. Tragically, this exceptional biodiversity is caught in the crosshairs of poverty and climate change. The remoteness of the region has hampered conservation efforts and left the local community extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts and exploitation of natural resources by external entities. This disheartening scenario is reiterated across global Biodiversity Hotspots and, to address the mounting biodiversity loss in these regions, community-centred solutions are essential. While the need for inclusive conservation strategies is broadly acknowledged, the pathways to implementation may be unclear - particularly for conservation staff working within the framework of a botanical institution. Several case studies will be presented to highlight action strategies that engage and benefit local communities. The key objective: to mobilize resources and empower local stakeholders to steward their natural heritage into the foreseeable future.