



Endala Tilbe, “Ade”– Gamo – Doko, Ethiopia

Conversations with the Earth

Indigenous Voices on Climate Change



.Conversations with the Earth



Map of CWE indigenous climate change stories to date - 2011


Conversations with the Earth (CWE) is a way of **listening closely to traditional custodians of the world's biocultural diversity** in order to formulate viable global responses to environmental challenges. CWE's opening conversation brings **Indigenous Voices on Climate Change** to convey local experiences of climate change. Grounded in respectful long-term partnership between indigenous-led organizations and award-winning experts in participatory video, journalism, photography, and audio, CWE conveys local accounts of the impacts of climate change on indigenous communities, stories of the unintended consequences of imposed mitigation efforts on local livelihoods, and examples of traditional knowledge and its value in developing appropriate responses to climate change. CWE asserts indigenous peoples' inherent rights to their territories, lands, and resources as a necessary condition of maintaining and enhancing resilience of local social-ecological systems to multiple converging global crises, including climate change.

.Core Beliefs

“We have knowledge that can contribute to finding solutions to the crisis of climate change. But if you’re not prepared to listen, how can we communicate this to you?”

Marcos Terena, Xané leader, Brazil.

Traditional and Indigenous communities depend on a healthy relationship with the land and therefore possess a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and practical experience in adapting to long-term changes in their environment. Still, indigenous communities are extremely vulnerable to the current unprecedented rate of global climate change, with its large-scale external disruptions to the web of life. This threat to traditional communities is a threat to the entire human family. Proposed or implemented responses to the common challenges of climate change will fall short, unless they are grounded in a recognition of the territorial, land, and resource rights of Indigenous peoples. The traditional ecological knowledge, wisdom and practices of Indigenous peoples comprise the global biocultural heritage that must inform and guide climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies at global, regional and local scales.

A woman stands in the center of a dense field of Enset plants. The plants have large, broad, green leaves with prominent veins. The woman is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and a patterned skirt. She is looking towards the camera. The background shows more of the same plants under a bright sky.

.Why now?

*“Our proverb says: ‘The ox never gives birth, and it never rains in the dry season.’
But now we have rains in the dry season, and it’s dry in the rainy season.”*

Shagre Shano Shale (Gamo), Ethiopia.

Enset propagation field – Doko village, Ethiopia

Compared to the dominant industrialized societies, Indigenous Peoples have contributed least to climate change. Still, they suffer the brunt of the immediate and direct effects of escalating climate disruption. Despite the September 2007 adoption by the UN General Assembly of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Indigenous Peoples continue to be excluded from the UN climate negotiations – the embodiment of climate injustice. At this critical time of global decision-making, Indigenous voices have important knowledge and wisdom to contribute to the global discourse on climate change that guides global choices in shaping our collective future. From Manus Islanders in Papua New Guinea working together to save their oceanside homes, to Maasai villagers in Kenya responding to a cattle-killing drought in the open grasslands, Conversations with the Earth works to enable local Indigenous communities to create and share first-hand accounts of their experience of climate change.

.Who?

"I make a call to all the people, to all the world, that we shouldn't destroy, we should continue leaving the bad aside, and take care." [Josefina Lema \(Kichwa\), Mojandita, Ecuador.](#)



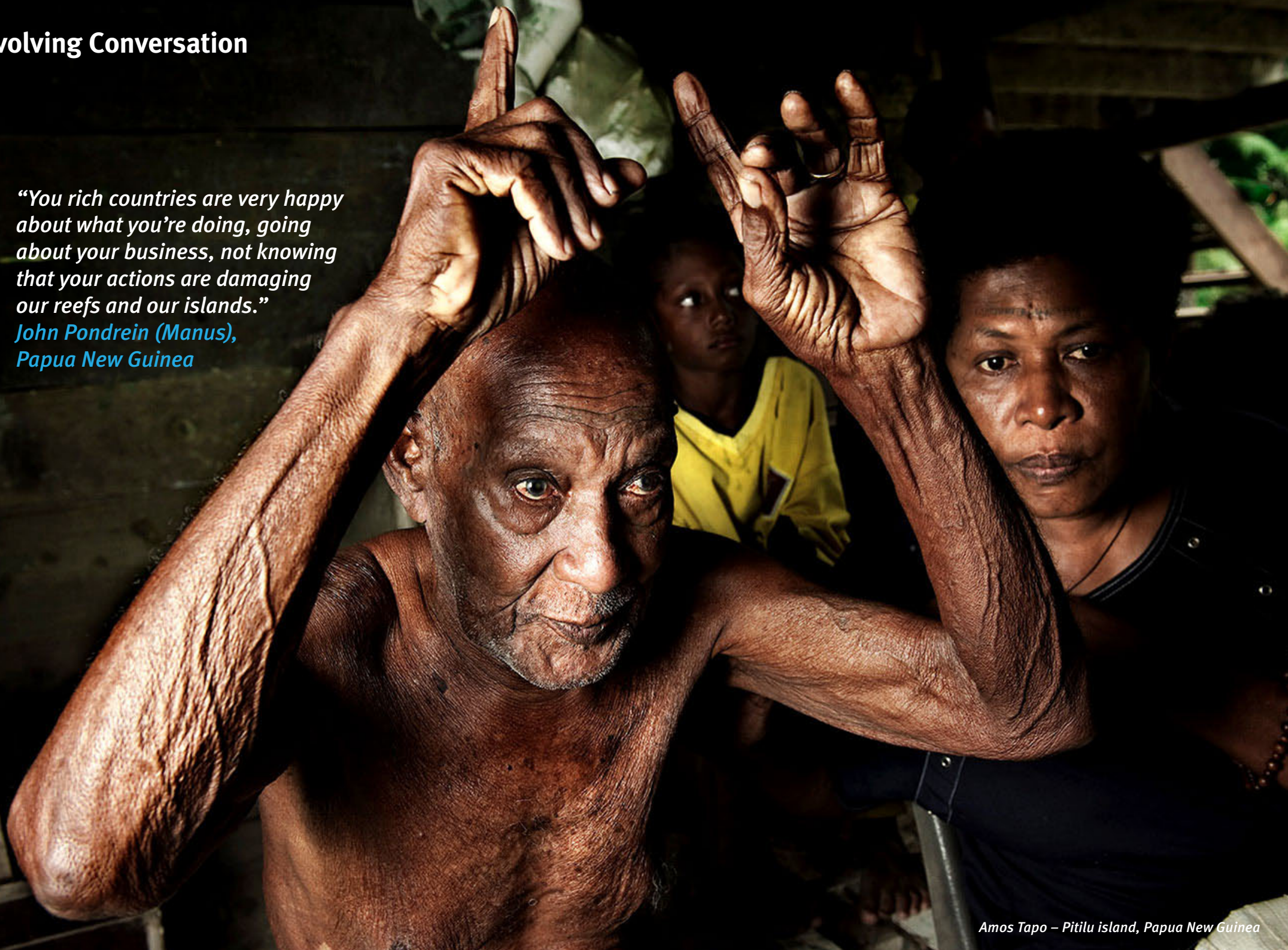
Josefina Lema – Mojandita, Ecuador

Conversations with the Earth (CWE) was founded in 2009 by an international indigenous-led advocacy and education organization for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Land Is Life; renowned experts in participatory video, InsightShare; and award-winning photographer and expert in sustaining oral traditions, Nicolas Villaume, founder of Conversations du Monde. CWE has also benefited from contributions from a range of writers and editorial sources. Today, Conversations with the Earth is a growing network of indigenous groups and communities living in critical ecosystems around the world, from the Atlantic Rainforest to Central Asia, from the Philippines to the Andes, from the Arctic to Ethiopia. As part of CWE, the indigenous communities share their local stories of climate change impacts and adaptation strategies with each other and the global community. Around the world, CWE supports and networks communities developing sustainable autonomous indigenous media based on principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), local control and support for local indigenous media capacity.

.Evolving Conversation

"You rich countries are very happy about what you're doing, going about your business, not knowing that your actions are damaging our reefs and our islands."

*John Pondrein (Manus),
Papua New Guinea*



Amos Tapo – Pitilu island, Papua New Guinea

Conversations with the Earth (CWE) premiered as a major multimedia exhibition at the watershed 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark (December 2009). Since then, CWE has continued to bring Indigenous voices on climate change to key meetings around the world through CWE's mobile exhibits in Spanish and English, participatory video screenings at film festivals, and in-person presentations of delegates from CWE partner communities. Venues have included the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia; the 10th International Festival of Film and Video of Indigenous Peoples in Quito, Ecuador; the US Social Forum in Detroit, Michigan; the UNFCCC COP 16 meeting on climate change in Cancun, Mexico; and National Geographic's All Roads Film Festival in Washington, DC. Most recently, CWE's major exhibit was on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Indian in Washington, DC from 22 July 2011 - 2 January 2012.



*"We don't have much, but what we have is out there."
Charley Swaney, Arctic Village community member.*

The CWE exhibits and web-based resources are an open invitation to the world to engage in a conversation about the real impacts of climate change on Indigenous communities, and to grow a global network of sharing, reflection, action and support. To carry forward the momentum generated over the last two years, CWE has been organizing trainings on Indigenous rights, climate change policy, and participatory media; creating new photostories with Indigenous communities; and, enhancing local capacity to connect and share with each other and the rest of the world through holding retreats, participating in global gatherings and using social media. CWE continues to focus on climate change, but is also exploring issues related to local food systems, food sovereignty and sacred sites - fundamental elements of Indigenous wellbeing.

*“We are a harbinger of what is to come,
what the rest of the world can expect.”
Patricia Cochran (Inupiat), Chair of the
2009 Indigenous Peoples Global
Summit on Climate Change.*

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