

BUILDING A CARBON MARKET:

DESIGNING, CREATING AND FACILITATING
NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS TO
CLIMATE CHANGE

IN BRIEF...

NATURE CONSERVATION RESEARCH CENTRE

The Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC) will meet the demand for voluntary carbon offsets with nature-based solutions that promise investors a significant return and deliver economic benefits to indigenous populations.

NCRC's planned projects will help restore multiple ecosystems in Africa, where land degradation costs an estimated \$3 billion a year — mitigating climate change in a meaningful way.



THE CONTEXT

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) set guidelines for the voluntary carbon market, creating the conditions for this critical market to grow and thrive. Even before COP26, voluntary carbon markets already posted an almost 60% increase in value from the prior year; the “State of the Voluntary Carbon Markets” predicts that transactions on the voluntary carbon market will exceed \$1 billion in 2021. Saving and restoring carbon-rich ecosystems can be confidently executed through large-scale reforestation programs, efforts to reverse land degradation, and other innovative nature-based solutions, in coordination and support of indigenous communities.

The tradable unit on the voluntary carbon market is a carbon credit, which is equal to one ton of CO₂ kept in the ground or removed from the atmosphere. The most valued mechanism for delivering these tradable credits is through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) projects in developing countries. REDD+ projects engage in forest conservation, production of renewable energy, and other activities designed to support and protect local ecosystems, and are certified to issue a specified number of carbon credits. The credits can then be sold to companies seeking to “off-set” their carbon emissions. In a virtuous cycle, the revenues from these sales finance the forest protection project work.

OUR EXPERIENCE

The Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC) is poised to lead in identifying and developing the kind of REDD+ projects that yield both economic and environmental success. Since 2007, NCRC has been involved in more than \$500 million worth of REDD+ initiatives across Africa.

Three Examples of Our Work:

- Designed and helped lead the Bale Mountain EcoZone REDD+ project in Ethiopia, which has since generated over 11 million tons of emissions reductions
- Designed and implemented key aspects of Ghana’s Cocoa Forest REDD+ Program, which is reducing deforestation across 5.7 million hectares of high forest zone
- Conceptualised the Democratic Republic of Congo’s Mai Ndombe Emissions Reduction Program covering over 12 million hectares

THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN OUR WORK

NCRC approaches all of its work with a deep commitment to working with and supporting indigenous peoples and local communities. For decades, NCRC has been a leader in advocating for local ownership in conservation processes in Africa. We make it a priority to ask questions, listen and collaborate with indigenous leaders and communities. This kind of direct community engagement is the entry point for successful conservation. NCRC will bring that unparalleled experience to building a pipeline of robust certified REDD+ projects that match clients' requirements for new nature-based carbon credit solutions around the world.

OUR APPROACH

Our approach is to bring all the necessary elements of a successful REDD+ development in our trusted partnership including the following:

- Identify a pipeline of REDD+ projects across Africa and beyond;
- Understand and assess the relevant country's regulatory framework;
- Evaluate and select the best development team and in-country partnerships;
- Deliver the project development investment;
- Provide leadership regarding technical design;
- Ensure sound legal agreements are in place;
- Deliver emission reductions to clients;
- Build capacity of all project partners;
- Ensure project validation and verification;
- Build a robust market for carbon credit transactions;
- Ensure a return on investment; and
- Deliver benefits to indigenous communities.

OUR TEAM

OUR ADVISORY BOARD

Our implementation will be guided by a distinguished international advisory panel. The initial members are outlined below and will be expanded with several additional members shortly.

Mariano Cenamo

Founder of Institute for Conservation and Sustainable Development of Amazonas and a global pioneer in designing and implementing REDD+, who was recognised in 2021 as one of the 50 most innovative Brazilians dealing with climate change. Mariano is a forest engineer and social entrepreneur who dedicates his career to developing innovative solutions to reconcile socioeconomic development and forest conservation in the Amazon. He recently launched AMAZ, a start-up accelerator focused on impact entrepreneurship in the Amazon.

Ellysar Baroudy

Lead Natural Resource Management Specialist at the World Bank, currently focused on West Africa and the Sahel. Elly holds a PhD in Aquatic Resources Management and has worked for many years on natural resource management. Previously, Elly was Lead Carbon Finance Specialist & Coordinator for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and the BioCarbon Fund, also at the World Bank. During this time, she mobilized resources, tracked international climate developments and worked with key stakeholder networks, including forest countries, donor governments, international organizations, civil society and Indigenous Peoples, to tackle climate change.

Yadvinder Malhi

Professor of Ecosystem Science at the University of Oxford and a Jackson Senior Research Fellow at Oriel College, Oxford. Yadvinder has advanced the understanding of the functioning of terrestrial ecosystems and how they are responding to climate change, biodiversity decline and loss of megafauna. His work involves an interdisciplinary approach that has focused on understanding and protecting tropical forests in the most remote and challenging regions of the world. In 2020 he was invested CBE by Queen Elizabeth II for his pioneering work on climate change.

Mark Huxham

Professor of Teaching and Research in Environmental Biology at Edinburgh Napier University. Mark researches coastal ecosystem services, with a focus on carbon storage and cycling in mangroves and seagrass. He spent two decades working with local communities dependent on mangrove resources in Kenya and helped to establish Mikoko Pamoja, the first community-based mangrove conservation project funded through the sale of carbon credits. He is the winner of the UNEP Equator Prize.

OUR TEAM

KEY TEAM MEMBERS

JOHN J. MASON

John J. Mason is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC). Born and raised in Nigeria, John has been based in Ghana for 35+ years and is one of the leading voices for local community participation in conservation initiatives in West Africa. John is an expert speaker and instructor on the impact of climate change across Africa. He was one of the first people to draw attention to the threat climate change poses to the economically crucial cocoa sector across Africa. John catalysed cutting-edge REDD+ and agriculture carbon initiatives from Liberia to Ethiopia, led the preparation of the Bale Mountains Eco-region REDD+ design in Ethiopia, and pioneered the development of the highly successful Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA) model, which is being adapted to address the challenges of delivering community benefits under REDD+ initiatives across Africa. John has worked with communities, traditional leadership, governments, civil society and private sector in Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia to develop locally owned and managed conservation initiatives.

Since 2007, John has been member of the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. He is on the Technical Advisory Panel for the REDD Readiness Preparatory Proposal process in African countries and is a member of the Independent Experts Panel for the UN-REDD Programme. John also serves as a faculty member of both the Kinship Conservation Fellowship Program and African Leadership University School of Wildlife Conservation.

REBECCA ASHLEY ASARE

Rebecca Ashley Asare (PhD) is NCRC's Director of Programs and Research in Accra, Ghana. She is a regional expert on REDD+ and Climate Smart Agriculture and leads efforts to develop climate change mitigation projects, formulate the enabling policy environment for REDD+, and support African governments to build the capacity, tools, and strategy for REDD+ project. She has extensive experience in forest and agricultural carbon feasibility assessments, including studies of land use and land use change, carbon stock measurement, and identification of appropriate activities.

Rebecca holds a Ph.D. in Social Ecology from Yale University. She specializes in tree crop systems, agroforestry and community based natural resource management. Her doctoral research focused on the cocoa farming system in Ghana, with a particular focus on the main factors driving cocoa farmer's decision processes and practices in shade management. Rebecca has lived and worked in Africa for over 15 years as a scientist and a conservation and development practitioner. Previously she has worked with Forest Trends, the World Agroforestry Center, the WWF-WARPO office, and as a rural water specialist with the U.S. Peace Corps.

OUR TEAM

KEY TEAM MEMBERS

TADESSE WOLDEMARIAM

Tadesse Woldemariam (PhD) is Founder and Executive Director of Environment and Coffee Forest Forum in Addis Ababa. He is a leading Ethiopian REDD+ expert with 26+ years' experience as practitioner, researcher and educator in biodiversity, conservation, natural resources management, climate change, carbon finance, and participatory conservation planning. Dr. Tadesse has extensive experience in project design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity building in partnership with different stakeholders. He has expertise in REDD+ issues in the Horn of Africa/East Africa and served as a consultant for multiple international bodies, including the World Bank, United Nations Development Program, and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. He is a long-term collaborator with NCRC and has published over 60 articles, including in the journals Nature and PLOSOne. Tadesse also served as Associate Editor of 2 scientific journals and completed over 65 major consultancy assignments.

ALAN HODGES

Alan Hodges is a seasoned and highly skilled executive with deep roots and relationships in Asia. Proven track record of building successful businesses from scratch as well as launching global brands across the Asia Pacific region. Media and Entertainment professional with over 25 years of industry experience. Most recently, Alan has the Asia Pacific Managing Director for the leading American media company, A+ E Networks (to include the History Channel, Lifetime and A&E Channel). Born and raised in Nigeria, Alan has deep experience working across geographies and cultures. He developed extensive Corporate Board and Joint Venture management experience while building a USD\$100MM media business in Asia. His passionate commitment to rewilding and biodiversity conservation has brought him into REDD+, ecotourism and safari guiding in which he is a qualified Safari Guide and Apprentice Trails Guide under the Field Guides of South Africa (FGASA). Alan has a Master's Degree in International Relations and Economics from The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington DC as well as undergraduate degrees from the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada.

OUR PROJECTS

Together with local partners, we have three projects ready to go in early 2022.

TOGO RIDGE IN GHANA

Covering approximately 100,000 hectares of savannah and forest renowned, this region is known for its world class birding, with over 235 species of birds in the region. Through various efforts to halt and reverse deforestation, this project will generate an estimated 200,000 tons a year of emission reductions. Over time, this project is expected to grow and expand into neighboring countries.



KAFA ZONE IN ETHIOPIA



Famous as the birthplace of Arabica coffee and one of the few places it still grows wild, this zone encompasses some 400,000 hectares of broad-leaved evergreen species. The multilayer canopy reaches elevations up to 3,350 meters and contains multiple rich and unique ecosystems. This project will generate an anticipated 900,000 tons of emission reductions annually.

ALBERTINE RIFT WATERSHED IN UGANDA

Known for its big ape population, this is an area with extremely rich biodiversity that covers two million hectares of multiple forest types in southern Uganda. This is our biggest initial project. It will produce an anticipated four million tons of emission reductions per year.





NATURE CONSERVATION RESEARCH CENTRE

The Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC), a registered non-profit headquartered in Accra, Ghana, with offices in Washington, DC and Singapore, is a pioneering conservation entity whose mission is generating and managing climate mitigation projects in Africa. Since 2007 the Centre has successfully originated, designed and implemented key elements of over \$600 million of REDD+ initiatives across the African continent.

NCRC matches each proposed project with a proven REDD+ developer, giving due consideration to the developer's track record, project methodologies, and ability to work successfully in the relevant national and cultural context. Our extensive global networks, media experience and relationships with global companies enables us to secure the requisite project development investment and market off-takers for the project's verifiable carbon credits.

All of NCRC's projects are done with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples—a concept enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We ensure that populations and communities are fully aware of and understand development initiatives planned for their lands (informed), that they receive adequate information well in advance of implementation, providing the time needed to consider and deliberate on the project (prior), and that any consent and contributions are given freely, without interference or pressure (free). This commitment differentiates NCRC from many other organizations, companies, and governments in the region that lack the ability to ensure free, prior, and informed consent, or prioritise a speedy process over genuine engagement and ownership.

NCRC's accomplishments include launching some of the earliest and most successful projects in Ghana that formally involve the participation of local communities in the management of wildlife. Known as Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA), these projects have included women-led organic shea butter initiatives and the production of climate-smart cocoa. In addition, NCRC led the earliest REDD+ technical trainings, carbon stock assessments, carbon mappings and REDD+ project pre-feasibility studies in Africa across Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. NCRC is particularly well-known for leading the technical partnership to design the Bale Mountains Ecozone REDD+ Project for FARM Africa and Oromia Regional State Government, which has resulted in over 11 million tonnes of emissions reductions transacted, and for facilitating pan-Africa dialogue which led to programs that positively impacted 30 million hectares of forest lands in Ghana, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, backed by \$500 million dollars of financing from the World Bank.

NCRC collaborates closely with the key standard-setting bodies for climate change. NCRC also has supported extensive South-South exchanges between Brazilian NGOs and African country NGOs. NCRC is currently leveraging our global relationships within the REDD+ space to form alliances in Asia as well. These partnerships yield access to best practices, innovative thinking, and geographically diverse solutions for clients.