

INTERGENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP
TOOLKIT FOR CONSERVATION

GROWING
REACH
OUR

Photograph by Bruce Miller/AWF

Growing Our Reach:

A toolkit enabling effective intergenerational leadership for advancing conservation

Defining

Intergenerational leadership: Leadership defined by conscious generational awareness; by clear identification of leaders from various generations; by proactive, meaningful engagement between leaders across generations; by cross-generational partnerships on thought leadership and practice; and by mutual respect between leaders. Intergenerational leadership is politically horizontal, not vertical.

Young people: This is a complicated category to define. We acknowledge that youth intersects with identity, is variably understood across cultures, and has categories within it. For the purposes of practicality, however, young people are defined here as people below the age of 35.

Young professionals: Young professionals in conservation are typically understood as qualified/degreed, early career environmental researchers or practitioners. The writers of this toolkit, all members of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas Young Professionals Group, amongst many others, fit this description. We believe the definition needs to be broader, however. We acknowledge the vast income inequality that exists across the globe which limits professional development opportunities for many young people. There are many young people who are pursuing environmental conservation on the ground without a degree or certificate. There are also many young people pursuing positive environmental change who are qualified and working in areas outside of the typical environmental disciplines. We take our cue from the etymology of the word professional – “to declare openly.” A young professional is defined here as anyone in their early working life who consistently and openly promotes and/or practices environmental conservation.

Senior professionals: These are professionals with more than 15 years’ experience in environmental conservation. Senior professionals are typically responsible for mentoring young professionals.

Institutions: Institutions in this toolkit are not limited to ‘conservation institutions’ – such as NGOs and state nature agencies. We recognize that there are many institutions that deal with environmental issues and are committed (or should be) to environmental improvement but come from different angles – whether it be policy, economics, infrastructure, development, or education.

Introduction

We’ve noticed a few things. The conservation sector is beginning to make a deliberate effort to engage young people. Young people are, after all, due to inherit the earth. It is the nature of the earth to be inherited, however, which makes youth engagement more important now than at any time in history. The diagnostic refrains are familiar by now: the earth is ailing; we are in a global environmental crisis; the planet is at a crossroads. There is a need to build a stronger constituency of young people for conservation to face the mounting challenges in the future; to recognize the unique skills and perspectives that younger generations offer due to their uptake and contributions to various levers of global change, such as technological innovation and social media; and to incorporate young people’s solutions now so that we secure a sense of ownership over actions which protect the integrity of the earth into the future.

In recognition of this, initiatives have been sprouting up across the globe which aim to invest in young professionals’ leadership on the environmental issues of our time. Yet, there is some inertia. Institutions supporting environmental conservation have historically been technocratic, hierarchical, and gerontocratic. The legacy lingers. The overall gains that are being made in developing young professionals’ environmental leadership can be described as surface-level.

Our proposed solution is to revitalize and generate a substantive intergenerational leadership agenda. We need to open the window to an atmosphere change which resets the possibilities for meaningful intergenerational leadership for the environment. We need to reflect on what long-standing cultures - beliefs, biases, practices - are holding us back from achieving this.

An international team of Young Professionals from the World Commission on Protected Areas has embarked on a process to identify practical recommendations for developing intergenerational leadership. To inform this work, the team consulted early career professionals and conducted in-depth interviews with selected senior professionals. The result, this toolkit, aims to inform a process of self-reflection for individuals and institutions who/which are invested in creating positive environmental change. It is not simply for young professionals, but rather a roadmap for all sides to engage with for a multifaceted and multi-dimensional look at integrating long term leadership and assimilation into the environmental sector. It is for all interested in advancing conservation - in Growing Our Reach.

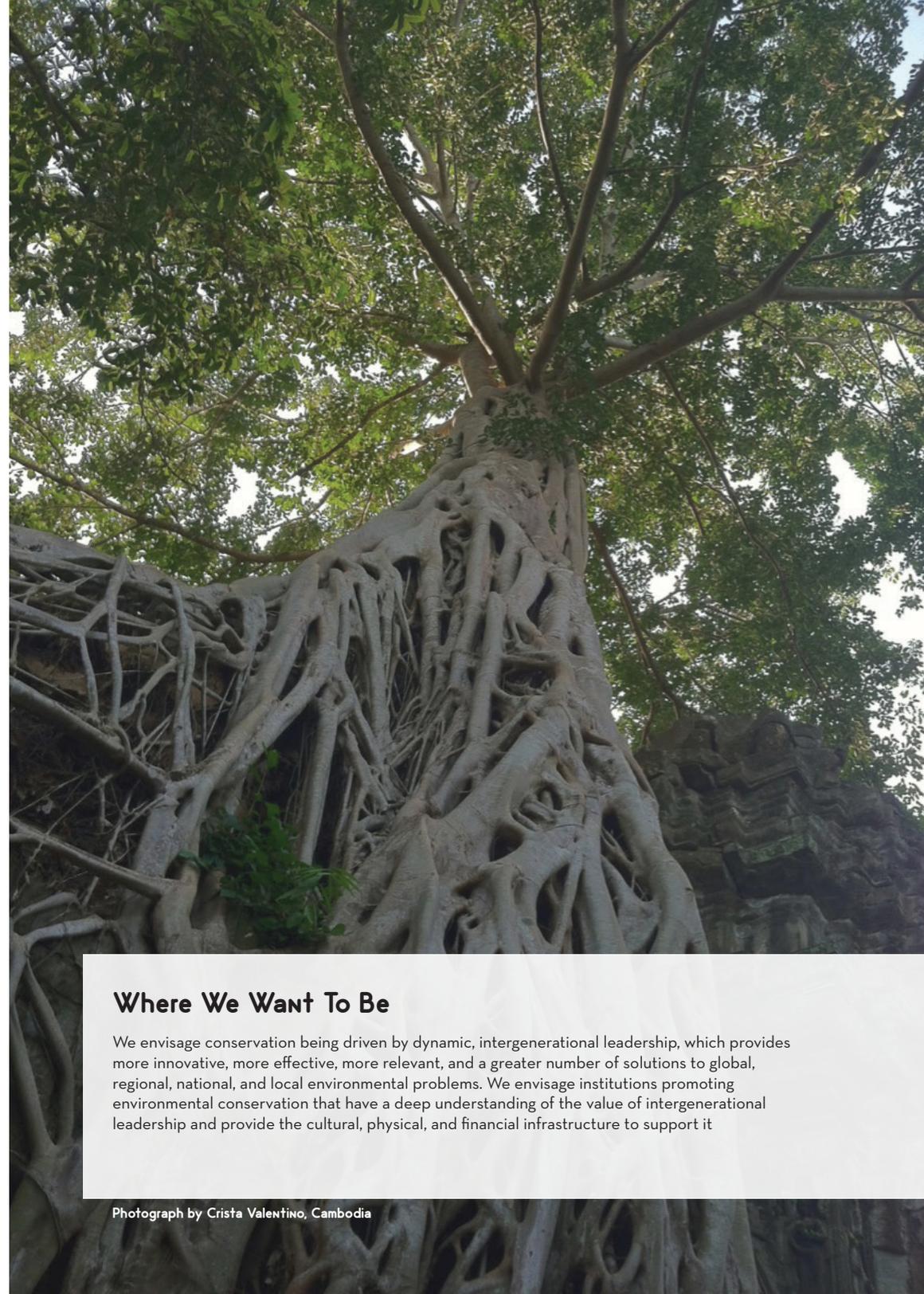
Where We Are Now

There are several activities and programs across the globe promoting young professional conservation leadership. Many have excellent elements and need to be promoted further. We have, however, identified an issue thread, which exists to varying degrees across these programs. There is a disproportional focus on investing in the young professional, to the extent that the agenda is becoming silo'd, and the approach one-pronged. There are several issues related to this.

- The focus can be almost entirely on building the capacity of young professionals without acknowledging that young professionals can build the capacity of senior professionals.
- The model can inculcate a false belief in young professionals that they are rightful recipients of investment, rather than being investee-investors.
- Senior professionals are investing in the same ways that they were invested in, with limited self-reflection on the needs and perspectives of younger generations, and of their own capacity building needs.
- There is a failure to acknowledge some of the institutional cultures which promote a shallow, silo'd approach.
- Programs can be risk-averse; by delimiting “young professionals programs,” institutions can inadvertently limit young people to the realm of theory or research support. They do not allow young professionals to be exposed to design or management (of funds or people) in meaningful ways, or to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Due to limitations in activities, the role of young professionals cannot be truly understood or appreciated, which leads to a vicious cycle of shallow investment, both financially and programmatically.

Where We Want To Be

We envisage conservation being driven by dynamic, intergenerational leadership, which provides more innovative, more effective, more relevant, and a greater number of solutions to global, regional, national, and local environmental problems. We envisage institutions promoting environmental conservation that have a deep understanding of the value of intergenerational leadership and provide the cultural, physical, and financial infrastructure to support it



How We Get There

Theory Of Change

We believe that cultural change is needed on three levels – for young professionals, senior professionals, and institutions. We believe a three-pronged, and relational approach will promote intergenerational leadership more effectively.

IF young professionals can be invested in while becoming more proactive, IF senior professionals can foster young professional development while receiving support and being open to change, and IF institutions can create environments supportive of intergenerational leadership, THEN intergenerational leadership can be meaningful and effective for advancing the conservation agenda.

The Toolkit As Part Of The Theory

This toolkit is composed of three sections and is structured around a metaphor for conservation advancement – a forest. On the surface of things, our metaphor may appear to be token or cliché, however, we conceptualise it as an effort in biomimicry. Biomimicry is “an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature’s time-tested patterns and strategies. The goal is to create products, processes, and policies—new ways of living—that are well-adapted to life on earth over the long haul” (the Biomimicry Institute). Our effort in biomimicry is not perfect, and not scientifically rigorous, but aims to tease out key lessons.

Growing: This section tells the story of a seed-turned-seedling-turned-sapling, which needs environmental inputs for growth, but is equally a revitalizer of the forest. In the same way, young professionals need investment, but are equally providers of new energy and perspectives.

Our: This section tells the story of managing the enabling environment for the growth of trees – the common resources or natural infrastructure needed, such as the atmosphere, soil, water etc., which enable the growth and spread of forests, supporting both saplings and maturing trees. In the same way, institutions invested in environmental conservation are the common ground where young and senior professionals meet, and are responsible for managing and providing the cultural, physical and financial infrastructure to support the effectiveness of professionals as a whole for the environment.

Reach: This section tells the story of a tree that has reached its maximum height but its canopy is still extending outwards. In the same way, many senior professionals may have reached their goals in terms of expertise and experience, but are now maturing and reaching out to invest in young professionals while extending their own capacities and effectiveness.

GROWING

How young professionals can become better recipients of investment and more proactive in environmental leadership

Know Where You Come From

A seed cannot escape its origin or its species. Know the story of how you became passionate about nature. Our discussions with young professionals reveal that those who can articulate clearly the reasons why they believe in what they're doing, work with greater conviction and energy. They are also more likely to excel in a job interview or develop their own initiative. Generalised stories of how nature is important are not compelling or catalyzing enough. Your story will be unique, whether you grew up in a city, near the ocean, or on a farm.

Task: Write a list of the people who inspired you. Write a list of the places that inspired you. Write a list of the experiences that inspired you. Then connect the dots and create a precise story of your beginnings. Practice articulating your story to different audiences.

Be Willing To Travel

All seeds travel, whether they fall directly beneath their parent tree or are dispersed by the wind, by a bird, by an antelope, or by an elephant. Seed dispersal is critical for forest growth and expansion. Young professionals need to be willing to travel – not necessarily physically, but conceptually. You might have always dreamed of getting a job with an environmental organization outright but this may not be possible. You might end up doing something that that you didn't imagine you would do, something seemingly unrelated to your environmental interests. This can, however, be to your and the environment's benefit. The conservation sector requires people with varied perspectives and experience for the simple reason that the environment is relevant for everyone, everywhere. You can catalyse change for the environment whether you work in the finance sector, in policy, or in urban planning, etc. and equally bring your experience to the conservation sector.

Task: Map out your professional experience, future goals, and environmental interests. Like nature, these things are often interconnected. Find 5 actions you can take to integrate your environmental interests into your life and/or career.

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”
(Theodore Roosevelt)

Recognise Good Ground For You

Each tree in a forest requires its own space, and each tree species requires unique conditions. Based on our research, many young professionals tend to burn out quickly after entering the 'traditional' conservation sector e.g. working for a nature agency or conservation NGO. We believe that this is partly due to the fact that young professionals assume that contributing to the conservation mission in any way will sustain their passion for the environment. Young professionals need to be self-reflective and recognize the specific way(s) in which they can contribute to the conservation mission. They need to overlay their environmental interest with an understanding of personality. We acknowledge that in practice, finding a job which fulfills your personality needs and environmental values is difficult. With a conscious understanding of your needs and the ability to articulate them, however, you can both become better at finding positions in which you thrive, and actively create good ground for yourself where there is none.

Task: Identify your unique condition requirements and conduct a 'soil pH test' for your current work environment. There are a myriad of vocational tools and personality tests out there. Take a few tests to discover yourself, make a list of the ideal work environment for you, and then compare your current work profile with the kinds of work your personality might suit.

Get Your Head Above The Ground

A seedling requires energy to break the soil barrier. In the same way, young professionals need to demonstrate initiative in order to kick start their professional growth. The word “initiative” has its roots in the Latin “initium” meaning “a beginning.” Taking initiative therefore means beginning something. For this, you will need to believe in your ability, and by this, you will be able to demonstrate your worth.

Task: Identify 5 immediate projects or tasks in your unique context that you can initiate. Think outside the box. These don't need to be new or novel concepts, rather a different way of doing things that respect past endeavors and increase efficiency and effectiveness.

“Before going into the workforce, it's imperative that people take the time to learn about themselves and do some self-work so they can understand what gifts they have to offer, what they are interested and passionate about, who they want to become and where they want to go in their life. By doing that self-work first, they have so much more to offer to a work place, and will also know so much more quickly if a job or a work environment is one they want to work in or with.”
(Tim O'Donoghue)



Enjoy The Energy Of The Understory

A forest understory is a lively and hopeful place. When young professionals collaborate and combine their energy, they can produce hopeful and refreshing work. The experience of the authors of this toolkit is a good example. The many midnight or early morning international group calls needed to discuss the development of the toolkit became bright spots for us in the midst of our various jobs. We developed a unique and lively working style over time, sharing life and jokes. We didn't feel any pressure to adopt formal work etiquette but were simply ourselves, and that freed up a lot of energy. Despite our being scattered across the world, we developed strong relationships which provided the basis for this toolkit.

Task: Dedicate time to building a network which you can lean on and thrive from. Dare to expand this network to those outside of your normal comfort circle: those from different countries, cultures, ways of thinking, generations, and expertise.

"Whatever you do in life, surround yourself with smart people who'll argue with you."
(John Wooden)

Be Resilient To Disturbance

A young sapling is vulnerable to many forms of disturbance. Many of the young professionals who formed part of this research process indicated that their enthusiasm has at times been quashed by a bad management experience, criticism, or discouragement. Resilience means staying encouraged and true to your values and motivation. In order to achieve this, you need to be purposeful about staying connected to nature, and to other young professionals who can relate to you and encourage you.

Task: Do one thing every week to connect with nature. Make a point of it. That's 52 experiences a year which should help you sustain your enthusiasm. Identify like-minded peers, even from different sectors, with whom you can talk about your experiences and who can offer encouragement.

"One of the most important things is to be with nature, understand what you are fighting for. Whether it's a mountain, urban creek or local park, maintain a connection with nature and it will help you believe and continue to believe."
(Bob Brown)

Identify Your Unique Growth Pathway

Just as a sapling needs to find an optimum growth path, a young professional needs to set out a personal and professional growth path. In order to do this, you need to acknowledge where you are now, where you want to go, and how you get there. This is something that you need to reflect on independent of your current job context.

Task: Write your personal and professional growth path down, or draw it. Set meaningful goals that are time bound. Share it with your colleagues, ask for help accomplishing these goals, welcome ongoing feedback, and continue to move towards growing yourself from the ground up.

"How you hold yourself and what you feel the meaning of what you do is, is not something that you can look to your job to provide. You have to work it out for yourself as to what it means to be who you are and what you're trying to do."

"The most important thing is to completely separate what the outside world tells you, [and to] cultivate your own sense of professional career."
(David Galbraith)

Be Ready To Adapt Your Growth Curve

Saplings sometimes hit growth obstacles and have to change direction. In the same way, young professionals need to accept that they will hit obstacles and fail. But instead of viewing these failures as dead-ends, view them as opportunities to adapt and innovate. Look for new ways of doing things; think outside of the square.

Task: Write a list of your perceived failures, or potential failures, and identify the related opportunities for innovation.

"Don't be afraid to fail. The learnings gathered through failure will be the catalyst for many more successes."
(James Hattam)

Grow Up

There comes a time when a sapling must be considered a tree. Young professionals can only be net receivers of inputs for so long. When you feel prepared, you need to show leadership in all that you do, commit to quality, say yes to opportunity and strive for excellence.

Task: Write a list of ways that you can be more responsible in the work place. Write a list of ways that you can improve the quality of your work and seize opportunities to make it happen when they appear. Continue to push your own goalpost further away in order to continue progressing.

"Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognize them."
(Ann Landers)



Look Down As You Grow Up

Forests are in a constant revitalization and succession mode. There are always younger trees, younger saplings, younger seedlings, younger seeds. In the same way, young professionals need to demonstrate commitment to supporting younger professionals, students, or children. Young professionals are as responsible for developing a culture of constant growth and capacity building as senior professionals. We need to accelerate the process of passing down knowledge to those who are younger than us.

Task: Identify at least one opportunity a year for mentoring someone younger than you. Write down three things that you have learnt throughout your career. These lessons are often not communicated and can be the most powerful way to exchange knowledge across generations.

“Life is a moving footway and I’m about to step off, so it’s great to share my experiences with young people. I’m not sure if I’ve provided much to them but they have to me.” (Bob Brown)

Look Up As You Grow Up

Young trees aim to reach the heights of mature trees. Young professionals need to look up to senior professionals, learn from them, build trust with them, respect them, and support them. It is critical that young professionals take initiative to find opportunities to be mentored. Many young professionals take a general or vague approach to mentorship, however, our research has shown that this should be coupled with a more focused and mutual approach. Young professionals need to justify not only why they should be mentored but how they can support their mentors.

Task: Write a list of five senior professionals who inspire you and list their characteristics that you admire. Aim to emulate these professionals. Approach a potential mentor(s) in a mutually beneficial manner. Write a list of ways you can positively affect a mentor’s life. Feel confident in your ability to contribute in a mentor/mentee relationship.

“Mentors are hugely important, even not in a formal sense. I always consulted widely to gauge support and test my ideas.” (Bob Brown)



OUR

How institutions can create and manage environments which enable effective intergenerational leadership

Conduct A Census

A biodiversity survey or census is typically conducted to understand the health status of a forest, before actions can be designed or taken. Similarly, institutions need to review and interrogate existing intergenerational cultures. What programs does your institution run that are aimed at young professional development? Does your institution run internships? How effective are these for meaningful capacity building? What else could your institution do to promote intergenerational leadership?

Task: Send out an organisation-wide survey that seeks to understand the intergenerational health of your organization. Provide evaluation forms to interns, young professionals etc. at the end of any program they might be part of. Take the feedback seriously, and adapt or design programs based on the feedback in a transparent way. Foster a culture of open discussions and two-way dialogue between staff and management, welcome feedback, develop open door policies, and create on-going institution 'vision' sessions. Don't fear change; rather, manage for it.

Develop A Shared Ecosystem Understanding

It is critical that all staff in an institution understand the value of intergenerational leadership, and contribute to it. Our research shows that in some capacity building programs, young professionals are not perceived as 'full' staff members, and are treated accordingly. This may be due to an ingrained perspective at many institutions that young professionals are simply there to learn, and cannot provide support or build capacity in their own right. It is important that institutions find ways to allow young professionals to contribute meaningfully, in a way that shifts institutional culture.

Task: Hold an in-house intergenerational dialogue series. Ask early career professionals and experienced staff to share stories, pose solutions to problems and speak freely about future directions. Think blue-sky.

Justify A Conservator

In the literal sense, this is something that conservation organisations are very good at. It is a no-brainer to appoint a conservator to manage a complex forest ecosystem and mitigate the threats that it faces. With regards to young professional development, it is often the case that this is integrated under existing programs or staff responsibilities. Our research shows, however, that clear and expert management of capacity building is necessary. Ensure that someone with expertise is overseeing young professional development and that there is a clear, well-defined, well-resourced, and transparent management structure.

“Ensure success by engaging leaders in your institution. Offer incentives, be a cheerleader, and commit to working as a team to achieve institutional goals that better the workplace environment.”

Task: Find a way to provide for a focused capacity-building role in your institution. Find someone with expertise, enthusiasm and an understanding of the need for intergenerational leadership. Then encourage all staff members to support this person and champion the relevant program, letting them inform it, and support implementation. This will create both focused management, and a sense of ownership and empowerment for all - the conservator, young professionals, and other staff.



Identify Ground For Growth

We mean this literally. The physical layout of offices, and the spaces available for collaboration are critical for developing positive intergenerational culture and leadership. Young professionals and senior professionals alike tend to value flexible and creative work environments. Consider consistent evolution of the workplace and be open to rearranging spaces, and related routines and systems to enhance collaboration, inspiration, efficiency and effectiveness.

Task: Systematically assess your office layout, routines, and systems for whether they provide optimal 'space' for collaboration, inspiration, efficiency and effectiveness. Send out a staff survey to invite ideas for improvements. Challenge the status quo and redesign the workplace where possible. On a routine basis encourage staff to change their working environment and work alongside others within the organisation, whether it be in the field or in the office. Seeing others operate in their surroundings builds understanding, mutual respect and fundamental learnings which can be applied across working environments.

Maintain Corridors

Just as forest ecosystems require the maintenance of corridors to support ecological viability, institutions need to ensure that they maintain the connections between them, and work jointly to advance the intergenerational leadership agenda for the environment. There is territorialism both in the conservation sector and in other sectors. The conservation sector has also been silo'd. This needs to be overcome to make sure that young professionals can connect across institutional and sectoral divides to think collectively and in cross-disciplinary ways about environmental solutions for the present and future.

Task: Identify institutions to partner with, both in the conservation sector and outside of it. Develop knowledge-sharing and discussion platforms for young professionals across institutions.

“Conservation success depends on our collective strength.”
(Innocent Maloba)

Monitor And Adapt

Evolution is imperative for long-term sustainability. Be dedicated to reflecting on and re-evaluating current statuses, and adapt when and where necessary. Encourage feedback from within. All too often established programs for young professional development can quickly become dated, redundant and lacking in direction. In the same way a forest needs to be systematically monitored to be understood and for possible threats to be identified, established programs require consistent review and refinement to maintain relevance within the sector and to deal with current demands on organisations and individuals.

Task: Establish a robust monitoring protocol for performance of programs, not people. Define clear objectives, feedback loops and adaptive opportunities. Use it, test it and refine it.



Photograph by Sarah Chiles, Budongo Forest Reserve

REACH

How senior conservation professionals can foster intergenerational leadership and be better supported

Remember Your Roots

Show leadership through a strong and clear mission that appeals to values and ethics, not money. Remember where you came from and refresh your story of how you became passionate about the environment. Through research, we have found that young professionals who are energised by the value they place on the environment can at times feel unsupported by, or a lack of camaraderie with, senior professionals who have grown weary from time in the field, institutional bureaucracy, etc. and who have lost their vision. Support a tangible connection to nature that acknowledges shared values and commitment to make a difference. This will create a positive work environment for young professionals, and reinforce and increase momentum for conservation action.

Task: Rarticulate the story of your conservation origins and journey so far. Find an opportunity to communicate this to young professionals. Think of your specific work context and list 5 ways in which you can support a tangible connection to nature for yourself and the workplace. Think: walking meetings, outdoor lunches, group outings, volunteer days and community involvement.

Provide Light; Cultivate Growth

Seedlings need to receive light to grow. In order to create space for light to get through the canopy and reach the understory, some branches need to fall away. Most senior professionals wish to develop early career individuals, however can sometimes neglect to create the adequate environment or utilize tools that support this development. Young professionals can be left to mature in 'the dark', which becomes a futile project. Light for young professionals can be viewed as a sum of investment of time and encouragement. Encouragement can range from an email acknowledging work effort or quality, to investing in continual personal development through structured and informal learning.

Task: Identify ways you can better invest adequate time in, and provide encouragement to, young professionals. With your early career professionals, together create a list of how you can encourage them more systematically. Develop strong and meaningful professional and personal growth goals with young professionals that align with shared values and motivations and dedicate the time and energy to help them meet these goals.

Facilitate A Noisy Forest

Mature canopy trees allow for arboreal species to travel and communicate across vast distances. Noisy forests are healthy forests. In the same way, senior professionals need to provide structures for effective communication. In an era of instant and fast-paced social media-based communications, young professionals need more opportunities for communication with senior professionals. Err on the side of too much communication rather than too little. Develop structures and processes for two-way dialogue, and communicate regularly and through various mediums. There is evidence to suggest that short feedback loops are creating innovation. Increase your adaptive management and innovation capacity by promoting effective communication across all generations.

Task: Work with young professionals to develop effective communication tools for two-way dialogue and commit to upholding consistent communication check-ins. Identify 5 ways that you prefer to give and receive feedback, and share it with your team. Encourage them to do the same in order to create a foundation of understanding personal communication styles.

Be Conscious Of Unique Growth Below

Saplings are collectively unique in the forest structure in terms of their growth stage. Sapling species are individually irreplaceable. Think about young professionals collectively as a generation with a sense of both local and global citizenship. Many young professionals can be considered millennials, and according to social analysis, millennials typically look for ways to create change through networks and community; they find that they are more connected to their passions when engaging with others and being intellectually challenged by peers. Similarly, think about each young professional as exclusive in terms of personality. We live in a diverse world. Everyone has value in the pursuit of environmental solutions. Find the specific value that each young person can offer and ensure that you manage them according to their individual needs.

Task: List specific ways in which you can allow young professionals in your work context to engage both locally and globally. List specific ways in which you can build young professional teams and networks. Take the time to understand a young professional's personality and interests by investing in a personality or vocational assessment.



Listen To New Growth

Trees produce sounds, even if many are undetectable to the human ear. Saplings contribute to the hum of the understory. Young professionals have many ideas to communicate and it is up to senior professionals to listen and acknowledge them. Many young professionals feel that their voices will not be listened to unless someone senior adopts their ideas or acts as a conduit. It is important to legitimize young voices by providing meaningful platforms for discussion, debate and presentation. Provide opportunities to communicate, share, and solve problems collaboratively. Foster innovative thinking and welcome new ways of doing things. Often fresh perspective on a challenge will bring a new solution to light.

Task: Create think tank platforms which allow young professionals to challenge ideas, review programs, and communicate suggestions to senior professionals. Most importantly, act on what comes out of discussion.

“Fresh eyes are always important regardless of age. It's really terrific to have a lot of knowledge and experience in a field. But very often real advances come, real progress comes when someone takes a fresh look. They don't just assume that the way it is today is the way it always was and the way it always will be.”

Welcome Design Of New Growth Pathways

Saplings are in dynamic design mode. Senior professionals interviewed for the toolkit consistently indicated that they felt they 'made it' as young professionals when they were given opportunities to design activities or programs. Providing creative legroom for young professionals, and allowing them to help develop strategies and actions for conservation is more important now than ever. Young professionals need to feel ownership over strategies that will determine their future, and that of younger generations. In order for this to take place, senior professionals need to set the status quo aside, risk and invest in young professionals' designs for conservation – both conceptually and financially. Young professionals will not get it right always but creative risk-taking should be rewarded.

Task: List five key issues in your organisation or organisation's work and provide ways for young professionals to design solutions to these issues. Choose at least one strategy or action design by a young professional a year which you or your organization can invest in.

“Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable.”
(William Pollard)

Produce Fruit

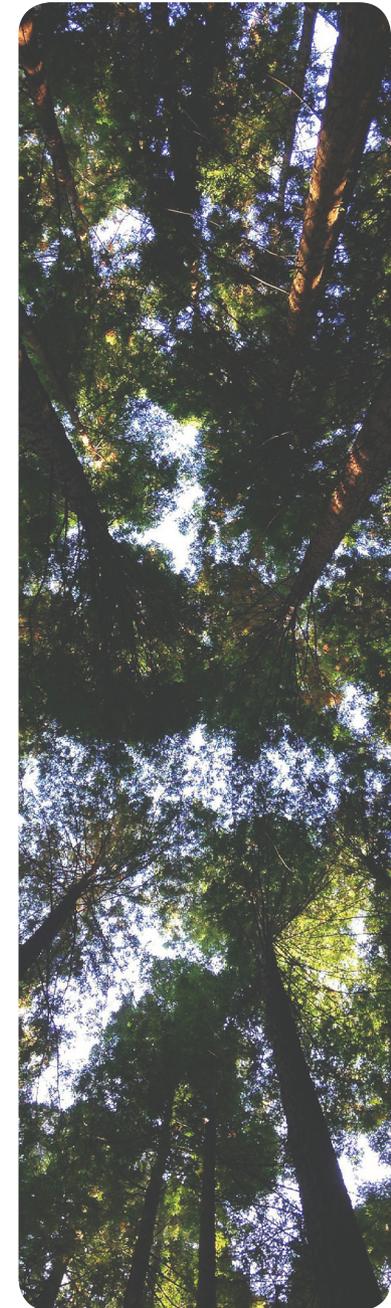
The legacy of a tree lies in the fruit it produces. Senior professionals need to keep in mind what professional products they are producing, and how these link to their long term legacy goals. Questions you can ask include, “How will my professional achievements create a springboard for young professionals?”, and “Am I effectively communicating and passing my professional achievements/products on to young professionals?”

Task: Identify what your professional achievements and products are. Think about and describe your intended legacy. Then, link these products with your legacy. If your intended legacy does not align with your current professional achievements, write a list of the kinds of actions you need to take and the products you need to produce in order to create the legacy you desire.

Expand The Horizon

Canopy trees have the privilege of perspective. They can both 'see' the extent of the forest, as well as the threats to the forest beyond its boundaries. Senior professionals need to provide the perspective and vision to expand the environmental agenda beyond the conservation silo in order to mitigate threats and provide solutions. Welcome young people with different skills and from different sectors. Provide meaningful exposure for young professionals to different sectors, and dialogues.

Task: Think of one idea for meaningfully pairing and building collaboration between young conservation professionals in different sectors. Find professional development opportunities which stretch young professionals, and expose them to new ways of thinking.



Protect Growth

As much as seedlings require light to grow, they also require shade and protection from harsh elements. It is the canopy trees which provide this. Many young professionals indicate a tendency to be overworked and to burn out in the early years of their careers. This has much to do with the junior burden to prove oneself, the under-resourcing of activities, and over confidence to take on too much at one time. Senior professionals have the ability to recognise these patterns and potential 'burn out behaviors' before they get critical and should look to identify where a young professional could use support, guidance, and insight.

Task: Think of 3 examples of when you have felt stressed, disempowered and the quality of your work compromised. Under each example write down one thing that would have helped you cope with such situations on reflection. Find opportunities to communicate these learnings to young professionals within your organisation and, where possible, enact them.

Continuously Hand Over Forest Custodianship

Forest succession does not happen in a singular event; it is continuous. Capacity building for young professionals can tend to happen in training events. Senior professionals can also often be reluctant to include young professionals meaningfully in activities until a formal handover process takes place. In order to 'hand down' custodianship, senior professionals first need to have an idea of where they are g(r)o(w)ing next - no longer growing upwards but outwards. Then they need to create an active plan for handing down skills and responsibilities.

Task: Chart out a personal career timeline, and think through how you might want to grow once you've reached your goals in a particular position. Identify and mark down on the timeline the skills and responsibilities that you need to hand down to young professionals over time in order to create smooth succession.

There is no conclusion to Growing Our Reach because it forms part of a process already underway. We hope it can help to inform a new season of advancing the intergenerational leadership agenda for the environment even further. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the toolkit and to the agenda so far. We look forward to hearing your stories of how you've applied the toolkit and any suggestions for its improvement.

Please contact us at GrowingOurReach@gmail.com

“We are constantly changing over generations and that will be forever a constant. Continual communication of ideas will also continue because at the end of the day we are just a combination of genetic material and nature.”
(Bob Brown)

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Photograph by Sarah Chiles, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest