

“I began by setting the bones of people with broken fingers when I was a boy. Now I’m 90 years old and I have been working as a bone-setter for 80 years.”



Bone-setter Lauti Gyellepuo, Tanchara

“To do our bone-setting work we use the bark of a tree that is sacred for my family. Only the men of my family can go to peel the bark from this tree, not the women. Nobody else in our community can peel the bark from this tree.

If somebody comes from a different section to peel off the bark for a different work that is no problem but if they try to use it for the same work as we do, the fixing of bones, then it won’t work.

When I was growing up there were many *tongbo* trees, though this one only started growing recently. You find them by the river. We remove the rough

bark on the outside of the tree, then gather the soft inner bark to use in our bone-setting work.

I have never been to school. Instead I was taught this work by my father when I was young. Whenever he was working I sat down beside him and watched what he was doing and in this way I learned to fix all the bones in the body – apart from the spinal cord that is very difficult to fix once it is broken. If the spinal cord is fractured I can help fix it but not if it is broken.”

CIKOD has identified sacred groves as community resources that should be conserved beyond spiritual purposes. The Sacred Grove Expansion Project is a community-based, socio-cultural and environmental project aimed to conserve existing forest resources and cultural traditions; promote active sustainable forest management; increase forest resources; and promote the use of trees to improve livelihoods.



GUARDIANS OF THE SACRED GROVES