

London Climate Action Week 2026

Enhancing Wildfire Resilience in India: Integrating Science, Communities, and Innovation

Luma link: <https://luma.com/nz78gjmz>

Date: 25 June 2026

Time: 12:00 PM – 13:30 PM

Venue: Joseph Rotblat Lecture Theatre, Charterhouse Square Campus, Queen Mary University of London

Moderator: Edgar Godoy, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)

Organizers

- Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)
- Environmental Defense Fund India
- Queen Mary University of London
- CTrees
- Wildfire Action Accelerator Pledge

Background

Wildfires are increasingly recognized as a major threat to biodiversity, climate stability, ecosystem services, and local livelihoods. However, global discussions on wildfire management have traditionally focused on boreal and temperate forests, where significant investments have been made in monitoring systems, fire suppression capacity, and scientific research. In contrast, tropical forests have received comparatively less attention despite facing growing wildfire risks driven by climate change, land-use change, forest degradation, and increasing human pressures.

India's forest landscapes illustrate this challenge. Wildfires affect biodiversity-rich ecosystems, carbon stocks, water resources, and communities that depend on forests for their livelihoods and cultural identity. Addressing these challenges requires moving beyond fire suppression toward integrated approaches that recognize the ecological, social, and cultural and governance dimensions of fire. Effective wildfire resilience depends not only on community action, but also on supportive public policies, institutional capacity, long-term investment, and collaboration across multiple levels of governance.

Through partnerships among government agencies, civil society organizations, researchers, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and technology providers, India is

developing innovative approaches to strengthen wildfire resilience. These efforts provide valuable lessons for other tropical forest regions facing similar challenges.

Objective

To explore the growing wildfire challenge in tropical forests, especially in India's tropical forest landscapes and showcase integrated approaches that combine scientific knowledge, traditional practices, government leadership, community engagement, institutional coordination, and technological innovation to strengthen wildfire resilience.

Session Overview

This session will bring together experts from government, civil society, academia, and the technology sector to discuss the unique characteristics of wildfire management in tropical forests and the opportunities for building resilience through multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The discussion will begin with a global perspective on wildfire trends in tropical ecosystems and the need to increase attention and investment in these regions. Speakers will then focus on India, highlighting community-led approaches, the relationship between fire and Indigenous and local communities, government efforts in Tamil Nadu, and emerging technological solutions that can support prevention, monitoring, and response.

The session will provide participants with practical examples of how science, traditional knowledge, policy, and innovation can be combined to address wildfire risks while supporting biodiversity conservation and community resilience.

Guiding Questions

- Why are tropical forest wildfires receiving less attention than those in boreal and temperate ecosystems?
- What makes wildfire management in tropical forests uniquely challenging?
- How can Indigenous and local knowledge contribute to wildfire resilience?
- What lessons are emerging from India's efforts to address wildfire risks?
- How can technology complement community-based wildfire management approaches?
- What governance, policy, and investment priorities are needed to strengthen long-term wildfire resilience across landscapes and communities?

- What opportunities exist for greater collaboration and investment in tropical wildfire resilience?

Proposed Speakers

Moderator

- Edgar Godoy, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)

Panelists

- Dr. Ane Alencar-Representative from IPAM (Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia) – Global and tropical forest wildfire trends
- Dr. Anita Varghese. Keystone Foundation – Community-based wildfire resilience and the human dimensions of fire in India
- Manjusha Mukherjee, Environmental Defense Fund India – Civil society perspectives and emerging wildfire challenges in India
- Supriya Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department, Government of Tamil Nadu – Government leadership and policy responses
- TBC Janet Smith - CTrees – Technology, monitoring systems, and innovative solutions for wildfire resilience

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the growing wildfire threat in tropical forest ecosystems.
- Greater recognition of the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in wildfire resilience, and how their efforts can be complemented by other stakeholders to support long-term resilience.
- Improved understanding of India's emerging approaches to integrated wildfire management.
- Identification of opportunities to combine science, policy, traditional knowledge, and technology.
- Strengthened dialogue among governments, civil society organizations, researchers, and technology providers.
- Enhanced collaboration to support wildfire resilience efforts in India and other tropical forest regions.

Intended Audience

Government representatives, researchers, conservation organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local community representatives, climate and biodiversity practitioners, philanthropic organizations, technology providers, and participants attending London Climate Action Week 2026 interested in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and wildfire management.