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From local healers to international companies and back to affordable local treatments

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Biodiversity is disappearing at an alarming rate. This is compromising potential development of new drugs and cosmetics. It is also posing a threat on local health in developing countries as traditional healers lose their natural pharmacy and as local people are often too poor to afford other drugs. The island of Madagascar is a special case having lost already 80% of its forest cover although scientists recognize the island hosts more than 1000 medicinal plants found nowhere else on earth. It is urgent to enhance the value of a traditional medicinal plant to generate interest for their conservation. An experimental program has been launch 15 years ago to test the potential to develop the use of *Cinnamosma fragrans*, a medicinal plant then only know to the local populations of western Madagascar. Its essential oil has been extracted. Test conducted by aroma-therapists showed very interesting potential and it is now on the market. A next step has been to involve a large cosmetic brand to conduct laboratory research (angiogenesis properties have been demonstrated) and the essential oil has been used in two main brand cosmetic products. After the demonstration of non-toxicity of the product two blends have been made using Saro essential oils for use in local hospitals, one to treat post operation wounds and the other to treat skin diseases. Clinical trial on 503 circumcisions showed on average five days less for cicatrisation with 10 to 25 times less infections. 104 cases of dermatological problems treated with the blend including Saro essential oil have also been documented bringing results equivalent or better that what could have been obtained with classic treatment which are either non available in rural areas or too expensive for patients.

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