

# Rainforest Foundation US Quarterly ▶▶

First Quarter Newsletter, 2023

The month of April—particularly Earth Day, on April 22—is an important time of year for us at Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS). People around the world unite to celebrate the planet we all call home, and it's a time when people focus more closely on important environmental issues.

Late last month, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its report on the state of our climate and the impacts of global warming. Their message was clear: We must act now and make substantive changes or we will face an irreversible tipping point within the next decade. It's sobering, and it's the most direct warning they've ever issued.

Their message isn't all doom and gloom, however, **provided we act quickly**. One key finding—one that we and our Indigenous partners have known for decades—is that protecting and restoring forests is a key part of combating climate change, and Indigenous peoples must be an integral part of any negotiations or decision-making processes that affect their ability to effectively manage their territories.

Ensuring meaningful participation by Indigenous peoples in decisions impacting the protection of their forests is fundamental to our work. In January, our programs team spent a month on the ground in Guyana with Indigenous partners, supporting them in advancing conservation plans in three key territories. In February, we partnered with 24 leaders and youth from 12 Panamanian Indigenous organizations to conduct a five-day workshop in the Guna Yala region of Panama to strengthen their planning and fundraising skills, which are vital to ensure the survival of the rights-based forest protection movement in the region. And expansion of our land rights, monitoring, and capacity strengthening programs in the Brazilian Amazon are now underway. **All this was made possible by your generous support.**

I hope you enjoy learning about our progress on the following pages.

Thank you as always for supporting our work, standing with our Indigenous partners, and protecting the health of our planet. May every day be a celebration of our beautiful Earth.

In gratitude,



Suzanne Pelletier  
Executive Director  
Rainforest Foundation US

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS ▶▶

## *Bringing traditional lands under Indigenous control in Guyana*

Studies have proven what we've known for decades—that Indigenous peoples who hold title to their land are the most effective stewards of forests, even when compared to nature preserves and national parks. It's been a primary tenet of our work in Guyana and in other parts of South and Central America as well.



In January, RFUS staff spent a month with partners in Guyana, providing training and advancing conservation plans for three key territories. RFUS, with local Indigenous organization Amerindian Peoples Association (APA), has been supporting four Indigenous district councils in securing rights to their lands, monitoring their forests, and advocating for better policies for Indigenous peoples. This year, RFUS partners are focused on completing conservation plans for 1.8 million hectares (nearly 4.5 million acres) of traditional lands.

During this visit, RFUS and district council members conducted a series of interviews with Indigenous community members, including hunters, fishermen, and farmers, to document how they have been using their traditional lands, and to incorporate these uses into the conservation plans. The plans will ultimately act as guides for communities to protect their forests, and will support their bid for extending collective land titles to these areas.

## *Capacity Strengthening Workshop in Panama*

Climate funders have made commitments to increase direct finance to Indigenous peoples to the tune of more than \$1.7 billion in recent years. Historically, Indigenous organizations and communities have received less than 1% of climate-related funding, despite the fact that more than one-third of the world's remaining pristine forests are on Indigenous lands. We're working to change that and ensure more funding goes directly to the people on the ground.

In February, in partnership with local Indigenous-led organization GeoIndigena, RFUS held a five-day workshop in the Guna Yala region of Panama. This workshop engaged twelve local Indigenous representative organizations and the national Indigenous coordination COONAPIP. The workshop covered topics such as strategic planning, project development, and fundraising, and each organization developed their own project proposals to submit to potential funders.

This type of training supports our partners in strengthening their capacity to request and manage national and international funding, to sustain their communities and better protect their forests.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS ▶▶

## *Project Completed – Community Reforestation Project in Brazil*

Thanks to the generous support and partnership of the Caring Family Foundation, RFUS and local partner Conselho Indigena de Roraima (CIR) partnered with ten Indigenous communities in Brazil to construct nurseries for a community reforestation project to address the immediate impacts of deforestation and climate change. Some of these communities have been nearly surrounded by soy plantations, and deforestation has already impacted the local climate, biodiversity, and daily lives of community members. Additionally, these nurseries provide for seed exchanges, crops, medicinal plants, and strategic reforestation, which addresses food insecurity, creates more sustainable incomes, and improves the daily lives of community members while honoring their deep connection to the forests they call home.

Communities were integrally involved in every aspect of the project, from conception to construction to implementation. The structures—built with locally sourced materials—were strategically designed with sustainability in mind. To date, communities have already cultivated over 13,000 seedlings during the construction phase!



# SUPPORTING OUR WORK ▶▶

One way to honor the Earth on Earth Day (or any day!) is by **asking friends and family to donate to RFUS** on your behalf. We have tools and templates for emails and text messages. You can send a quick request by reposting one of our social media posts and adding a donation link, or you could create your own fundraising page. All the support you need is [here](#).

For most of us, April is about more than Earth Day—it's also tax season. Did you feel the pain of paying taxes this year? Next year, why not donate what you would have paid in taxes to RFUS? We have partnered with FreeWill to make it easy. They provide a lot of general information about **the many tax benefits of donations**. For example, you can [donate your appreciated stock to RFUS](#) in just 10 minutes and avoid capital gains tax. And whether you have stocks that have appreciated or not, if you're 70½ or older, the most tax-efficient way to donate is through [Qualified Charitable Distribution](#) through your individual retirement account.

## Donor Spotlight:

**Why I Give:** *I began donating monthly to Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) about a year ago, after reading an article citing various charity evaluators which found RFUS to be one of the most effective and impactful organizations in fighting climate change through their partnerships with Indigenous peoples to combat illegal deforestation. RFUS, and in particular its Development Assistant, Ziv Stern, make even small time donors like me feel like we are integral to their mission through their regular outreach and information sharing, as well as their one-on-one and small group Zoom calls with knowledgeable staff. I would highly recommend RFUS to other potential donors who wish to make a difference in combating climate change and deforestation.*

*H. Martin*

For nearly 35 years, Rainforest Foundation US has worked to address climate change and safeguard biodiversity by promoting the rights of Indigenous peoples and protecting rainforests from further destruction.

