



Rainforest Foundation US

SPRING NEWSLETTER

APRIL
2024

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we approach Earth Day on April 22, I am filled with hope and gratitude. I'm also excited to share with you our ambitious plans for the coming months and year ahead.

This year got off to an exciting start with the news that the government of Peru will issue permanent land titles to 19 Ticuna and Yagua communities in the Peruvian Amazon. With official rights to their ancestral lands, these communities can better protect 84,509 acres of rainforest, an area slightly smaller than the city of Las Vegas.

Our territorial monitoring program has expanded to cover more than 17 million acres of rainforest. We continue to build new partnerships in Brazil, where we are expanding training and operations into the densely forested territories of the Wai Wai people, and beyond.

Meanwhile, we continue to advocate for more funding to flow directly to the Indigenous organizations that are doing the day-to-day work to protect forests. In January, my colleagues from Rainforest Foundation Norway and the UK and I published [an article in Mongabay](#) in which we argued that governments and donors must make direct and flexible grants more accessible to Indigenous peoples who possess profound knowledge of the natural world and are committed to safeguarding our planet's future.

Earth Day—and every day—is a time to reaffirm our collective commitment to protecting the Earth and learning from those who have nurtured it over countless generations.

Thank you for your unwavering support, belief in our mission, and commitment to a healthier planet. Together, we are making a difference.

In gratitude,



Suzanne Pelletier
Executive Director
Rainforest Foundation US

The Ticuna community of San Juan de Barranco welcomes the authorities who will deliver the long-awaited land titles

Image Credit: Maritza Domper / OIPRO



85,000 ADDITIONAL ACRES OF RAINFOREST PROTECTED IN PERU

Last year, thanks to an innovative strategy devised with our partners in Peru, we were able to secure more land titles in ten months than in the previous three years. Now, in 2024, we are already breaking that record. Nineteen new titles are slated to be secured in the coming weeks. These titles will legally protect 84,509 acres of rainforest, directly benefiting 15 Ticuna and Yagua communities in the Western Amazon. Wendy Pineda,



General Project Manager of RFUS in Peru, shares more about these remarkable achievements below.

How was this achieved in such a short time?

Our success is thanks to an innovative, four-part strategy. First, we teamed up with the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSEP) in the Peruvian Amazon to create a flexible project grounded in respect for Indigenous knowledge. Second, we're providing maps and satellite tech, so the community can lead the process of marking their own territory. Third, given the participatory model, communities are contributing directly to the process through funds, supplies, or labor. And lastly, we're facilitating collaboration between neighboring Indigenous groups to overcome regional challenges together.



Why is obtaining titles so complicated?

The complexity of gaining land titles here arises from high costs and logistical challenges of working in this remote environment, compounded by a lack of government funding to process these Indigenous territorial rights claims effectively. RFUS aims to support our Indigenous partners by providing funding so they can pursue their land rights and providing guidance to ensure their active participation in the titling process.

How do these land titles allow communities to plan for the future?

Land titles are transformative for Indigenous communities and mark the successful culmination of a decades-long battle for rights in the face of adversity. These titles safeguard their cultural heritage, enable them to defend their territories better, and pave the way for their future security, autonomy, and sustainability. This crucial step facilitates the protection of ancestral wisdom and their forests, serving as a shield against illegal logging, drug trafficking, and the broader impacts of climate change.

SUPPORTING PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS IN GUYANA AND COLOMBIA

RFUS is committed to supporting Indigenous peoples' rights, including self-determination. We prioritize following the guidance of our Indigenous partners and avoid perpetuating cycles of dependence common among well-intentioned NGOs. Recognizing the varying levels of experience and knowledge among our partners, we offer trainings and workshops tailored to strengthen governance, communication, administration, management, and financial capacities as requested. Our goal is to support partners in building essential tools and skills necessary for strong and resilient organizations, including managing international funding, advocating

for rights, and preserving cultures and futures. In February 2024, our team traveled to Guyana to participate in yearly planning sessions with the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA), one of the most influential Indigenous organizations in the country. The meetings set clear objectives for the year ahead focused on land management, mapping, and monitoring efforts. Priorities include revising the 2006 Amerindian Act, a legal framework for the governance and land management of Indigenous peoples and to safeguard Indigenous peoples' rights across Guyana.

In the same month, RFUS took part in an important event in Colombia. Organized by Entrepovos, this gathering brought together Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community organizations to strengthen ties and share strategies for common goals. Attended by approximately 50 participants, including many of our Indigenous partners, the exchange facilitated dialogue on institutional strengthening from the perspectives of the organizations themselves, rather than donor-imposed models. This initiative underscores RFUS's commitment to learning from and advocating alongside our partners for more equitable, partner-led processes.



Image Credit: Entre Povos

RFUS participated in an event that brought together more than 50 Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and traditional communities in Colombia in February 2024

SUPPORTING
OUR WORK

One way to honor the Earth on Earth Day is by asking friends and family to donate to RFUS on your behalf. You can create your own fundraising page or just make an ask via social media. All the support you need [to start a fundraiser is here](#).

April is also tax season. Do you know about the many tax benefits of donations? For example, you can [donate your appreciated stock to RFUS](#) 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. Learn more at www.rainforestfoundation.org/give.



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