

2023

Year In Review ▶▶▶

IMPACT AT A GLANCE ▶▶▶

- **200+ Indigenous and Local Communities served through representative partner organizations**
- **Conservation plans for nearly 4.5 million acres of traditional lands in Guyana**
- **17 new land titles secured in Peru with 20 more in the works, bringing the total titling work underway to 105,020 acres for 37 communities**
- **Partnering with Indigenous-led monitoring programs to protect 13.7 million acres in the Amazon and Central America**
- **10 new community paralegals trained in Guyana**
- **2 Tech Camps facilitated in Peru featuring 4 new technologies**
- **Together with Indigenous partners we are working to advance land titles for over 8.5 million acres of indigenous lands in Panama, Guyana and Peru**

PROVIDED LEGAL TRAINING FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES' DEFENSE AND ADVOCACY ▶▶▶



With strategic guidance and financial support from RFUS, our partners at the South Rupununi District Council in southwestern Guyana **launched a pilot program to train a team of 10 community paralegals.**

These Indigenous paralegals—experts in the local context and culture—serve as grassroots legal advocates who know, use, and shape the law to defend their rights.

These paralegals fill a vital role in providing legal access to Indigenous communities in remote regions whose interests are often most impacted by decisions made by government officials, but who aren't often consulted in the decision-making process. Specifically, the 10 trained paralegals rotate through 21 communities to build community capacity on legal issues, including the Amerindian Act law reform and community engagement on carbon markets.

SUPPORTED INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO PROVE LAND OWNERSHIP TO PROTECT MORE THAN 105,000 ACRES OF RAINFOREST ▶▶▶

Without legal recognition of their lands, our partners are unable to protect their territory from the devastating impacts of illegal mining, logging, and agribusiness. But, as studies have shown, **Indigenous peoples who hold title to their land are the most effective guardians and stewards of the forest. In fact, titled lands show a 66% decrease in deforestation.**

The Gamboa community in Peru—a part of our Rainforest Alert program—was one of 17 communities receiving land titles through a low cost, high impact model developed in partnership with RFUS and the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSEP). Using funds received through Rainforest Alert for legal fees, these communities collaborated closely with AIDSEP and RFUS to resolve internal disputes. They also developed strategies to provide a unified front in navigating government bureaucracy. **The communities received the titles in 10 months, a process that normally takes 10 years. For the first time, Indigenous partners had a seat at the table during these important negotiations.**

This bottom up approach is one that AIDSEP—in partnership with RFUS—hopes to repeat in communities throughout the Peruvian Amazon.



ADVANCED RAINFOREST MONITORING AND PROTECTION THROUGH TECH CAMPS ▶▶▶

RFUS organized two "Tech Camps" with our partners to share knowledge and provide training to advance forest monitoring, an important part of our Indigenous partners' work in protecting rainforests. Seventy participants, including Indigenous partners from the Amazon Basin, US organizations, government officials, and academics came together to discuss successful projects from their respective geographies and showcase new technologies that can be used by Indigenous partners to protect their rainforests.

Two of the technologies featured were especially exciting: The World Forest ID sampling system—in partnership with the United States Forestry Service—is a technology through which tree samples are entered into the World Forest ID catalog to help trace the origin of wood through DNA and chemical analysis. The Mapbuilder tool from the Environmental Systems Research Institute and our partner Global Forest Watch is a powerful software that allows Indigenous communities to turn their spatial data and imagery into an immersive story with interactive maps. Both technologies will allow our Indigenous partners to improve monitoring and protection of their lands and forests.

Over the past two years these Tech Camps have become a critical venue for Indigenous organizations to share their work with national and international audiences. They have also enabled important cross-collaboration and created opportunities for Indigenous organizations to exchange organizational strategies.

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