



AIDSESP
ASOCIACIÓN INTERÉTNICA DE DESARROLLO
DE LA SELVA PERUANA

SECURING THE AMAZON: Indigenous Land Tenure and Forest Protection in Peru.

A Report on Communal Land Tenure Security and the SI-TIERRA Model in Loreto, Peru

Executive Summary

Research consistently shows that securing Indigenous peoples' land rights is among the most cost-effective ways to protect forests, reduce illegal activities, and strengthen biodiversity. Where communities hold formal rights to their territories, deforestation rates are lower, governance is stronger, and cultural systems are more resilient.

Across Peru's Amazon rainforest, an estimated 20 million hectares (49.4 million acres) of Indigenous peoples' lands remain unrecognized—an area larger than the state of Washington. Loreto, the region highlighted in this report, is the largest region in the Peruvian Amazon and a major center of this land-tenure gap. Without secure tenure, communities remain exposed to land invasions, environmental degradation, violence, and organized crime.

Over the past decade, Peru has received significant public and international funding for land tenure initiatives. Between 2011 and 2020, approximately USD 158 million was allocated to titling programs. By 2022, fewer than half of 1,209 targeted communities had completed key stages of the titling process.

Land titling, or land tenure security, is a multi-step legal and administrative process requiring technical studies, field verification, community agreements, boundary demarcation, and formal registration. Each stage carries distinct procedural and financial requirements. Delays at any phase can halt progress and increase overall costs.

To secure land titles, Indigenous communities may face up to 22 administrative steps and must engage with multiple government agencies. In contrast, clearing forest for agricultural use may require only two or three steps.

Fragmented institutional responsibilities, limited field operations, weak coordination between public agencies, and shifting political priorities have all contributed to reducing the effectiveness of many land tenure programs.

Drawing on historical records, academic research, field documentation, and interviews with Indigenous leaders, public officials, and technical specialists, Part I of this report analyzes persistent implementation gaps and identifies practical lessons for strengthening land governance in the Peruvian Amazon.

Part II focuses on SI-TIERRA, an innovative Indigenous-led initiative in Loreto that demonstrates what coordinated land tenure implementation can achieve through collaboration between Indigenous organizations, civil society, and regional government institutions.

The program has contributed to conflict prevention, strengthened community governance, and improved the institutional capacity of Indigenous organizations. Indigenous-led logistics and coordinated documentation preparation have reduced reliance on external contractors and supported long-term territorial management.

This report was produced by the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSESP), in partnership with Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS), and in collaboration with regional authorities and technical partners. It aims to inform public policy, strengthen institutional coordination, and support efforts to accelerate secure land recognition for Indigenous peoples.

Key Findings

This report finds that, in Peru's Amazon region:

1. Overlapping concessions create long-term territorial risk.

More than 9 million hectares of forestry concessions and 15.4 million hectares of oil and gas blocks overlap with Indigenous lands. These overlaps undermine tenure security and contribute to local and regional conflict.

2. Funding alone cannot deliver land tenure security.

Despite more than \$158 million in public and international investment, fewer than half of 1,209 targeted communities completed titling processes.

Fragmented institutions, shifting political will, and weak interagency coordination have limited the impact of past programs.

Lasting results require an integrated, end-to-end, field-based model with Indigenous leadership and coordinated government action.

3. SI-TIERRA shows that targeted resourcing and coordinated, field-based approaches, combined with political will, can dramatically reduce delays.

By strengthening Indigenous organizations' operational capacity and providing sustained field and administrative support, SI-TIERRA improved coordination among public agencies and technical partners, even in contexts with differing institutional priorities.

The political commitment of regional authorities, including the Regional Management of Agrarian Development and Irrigation (DIRDAGRI), formerly known as GERDAGRI, and the Regional Government of Loreto (GOREL), has been a critical factor in accelerating land recognition processes.

This approach reduced processing timelines from multiple years to 8–18 months, demonstrating that practical, Indigenous-led coordination can deliver faster, more reliable results.

4. Strong institutional capacity of Indigenous representative organizations is critical to sustaining results and accelerating processes.

Community-led logistics and governance systems have reduced reliance on external contractors and enabled inter-community boundary negotiations, and allowed administrative steps to be completed in advance, speeding up implementation.

By strengthening local coordination and decision-making capacity, these systems improve the efficiency of formal land recognition processes and reinforce long-term territorial management.

5. Long-term partnerships are essential for durable land tenure security.

SI-TIERRA has strengthened dispute resolution mechanisms, improved territorial governance processes, and enhanced coordination among Indigenous and public institutions.

Rainforest Foundation US supports this Indigenous-led process through long-term financial and technical partnership with AIDSEP and regional authorities.

Key data

Administrative Process Comparison

- Indigenous communities face up to 22 administrative steps across 12 government agencies to secure land titles, while clearing forest for agriculture can require only 2–3 steps.

Public Investment and Implementation Gaps

- USD 158 million was invested in land titling between 2011 and 2023.
- By 2022, fewer than 50% of the targeted communities had completed the titling process.
- There are cases where titling has taken decades.
- SI-TIERRA reduced timelines to 8–18 months.
- Since its inception in 2023, SI-TIERRA has titled or advanced land tenure security for more than 40 Indigenous communities, covering 77,265 hectares (approximately 191,000 acres)—an area slightly larger than the city of Chicago.

Legal Framework

- Peru's legal framework classifies forested lands as state-controlled, meaning Indigenous communities receive title primarily to agricultural areas rather than across the full extent of their forested ancestral lands.
- Overlapping concessions on Indigenous lands include:
 - 9 million hectares of forestry concessions
 - 15.4 million hectares of oil and gas blocks

Scale of the Titling Gap

- Approximately 20 million hectares of Indigenous lands in the Peruvian Amazon remain untitled or without full legal security.
- Around 700 communities are stalled somewhere between recognition, titling, and registration.
- SI-TIERRA closes this gap through Indigenous-led, end-to-end coordination with public agencies and technical partners.

Recommendations



Simplifying legal and administrative procedures



Strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms



Securing long-term funding for field operations



Investing in Indigenous institutional capacity



Improving coordination among public agencies and partners



Conclusion

Recent experience in Loreto shows that Indigenous-led coordination, backed by sustained political commitment and institutional support, can significantly accelerate land recognition. This shared responsibility model—linking Indigenous organizations, public institutions, and technical partners—is essential for closing Peru’s land tenure gap. To succeed, the state must simplify procedures and ensure stable financing for field operations, providing a scalable roadmap for forest protection across the Peruvian Amazon.

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