

RAINFOREST FOUNDATION US

Indigenous Logistics Networks

An operational model built for the Amazon

For over 35 years, Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) has supported land rights and forest protection across the Amazon. We understand what it takes to carry out projects in remote territories— and where the work is most prone to stalling.

The plans might be in place. The project might be funded. But getting people, fuel, food, and cash into communities is rarely straightforward; roads wash out, river levels fluctuate, boats are delayed, and cash flow is constrained by local institutions. Time is spent navigating these obstacles, even as the people best equipped to solve them are already there, in the communities themselves.

In 2018, RFUS and our Indigenous partners began reorganizing how logistics are managed—placing that responsibility with those who know their territories best.

Indigenous Logistics Networks emerged from these early, iterative efforts. Today, they provide a critical operational layer that allows land titling, monitoring, and forest protection to move forward consistently and at scale.

Developed from the ground up

Since 2017, RFUS has supported Indigenous territorial monitoring in the Peruvian Amazon through Rainforest Alert, a program that equips community monitors with satellite technology and smartphones to detect illegal mining and logging early. As this work expanded into more remote areas, logistics became increasingly complex. Monitors began taking on more of the coordination themselves—organizing transport, managing supplies, and handling stipends.

Over time, with targeted investment and capacity strengthening from RFUS, these roles became more formalized. By 2024, these same individuals were supporting government land titling brigades in Loreto, where teams spend weeks in communities carrying out mapping, demarcation, and registration processes.

What has emerged are small but highly functioning networks of Indigenous logistics specialists able to operate across territories and support multiple types of work.

> “There were times that [RFUS] would send a staff member, an administrator, who didn’t know the area. After a few days they would get tired, sometimes they would get sick—they weren’t used to the environment. By contrast, we come from communities like these; we stay from the moment we start until the work is done.”
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> **Betty Rubio**
> Indigenous Logistics Network coordinator



By the numbers

2 operational logistics networks in the Napo and Lower Amazon river corridors

2 emerging networks in Loreto and Requena provinces

4 fully dedicated Indigenous logistics experts currently supporting over 280 forest monitors

5 Indigenous peoples supported: Kichwa, Ticuna, Kukama, Urarina, and Matsés

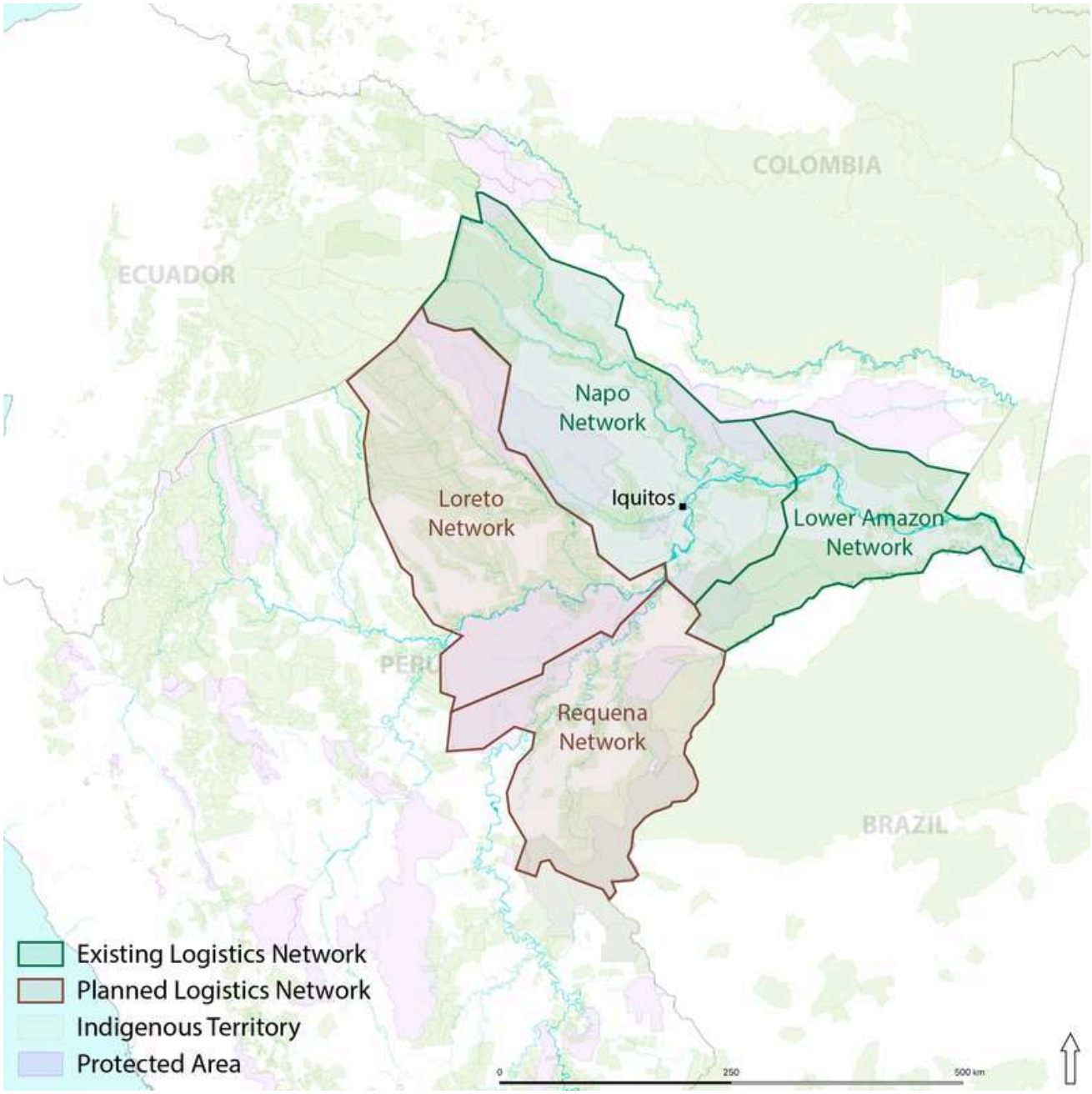

IMAGE CREDIT: Rainforest Foundation US

This approach now underpins RFUS's work in Peru, enabling land titling and Indigenous-led forest monitoring to move forward consistently in complex landscapes.

Between 2023 and 2025, the networks supported RFUS in advancing land tenure security for 40 Indigenous communities across nearly 1 million acres. They also support Rainforest Alert, RFUS's Indigenous-led monitoring program. Currently, 91 communities are monitoring more than 3.2 million acres of rainforest—an area roughly the size of Connecticut—with support from the networks.

Led by Indigenous professionals operating within their own systems and drawing on local knowledge to solve problems in real time, the networks keep fieldwork culturally grounded while strengthening self-governance.

Protecting and managing forests requires the full participation of communities, and that participation depends on trust. Network members build trust by communicating clearly about what work will be done, why it matters, and how people are involved, using language that is locally understood.

> When people in the community see outsiders, they often won't come forward or talk to you. But for us, it's the opposite. When we let people know what work will be done, we do it transparently, using words people commonly use—words we know they will understand.



Betty Rubio
Indigenous Logistics Network coordinator

Today, the networks manage the full logistics chain:

- Coordinating river transport, boats, and fuel
- Procuring food and materials, often directly from communities
- Supporting financial tracking and reporting
- Managing cash for activities and stipends
- Preparing communities ahead of visits and coordinating on-site

Because food and services are sourced locally, more of the budget stays within the community, and the food provided is more culturally appropriate. This keeps more resources circulating locally and supports sustainable family agriculture, creating new opportunities for local livelihoods.

Investment in this model strengthens local systems of production and supply, which over time can support broader Indigenous-led bioeconomy initiatives.

> The money we manage stays in the community—we buy plantains, yuca, chicken, and the other foods that make up the regional diet—while the engineers carry out the titling work.



Otto Cayetano Yumbato
Indigenous Logistics Network coordinator

Ready for the next phase

This model took shape through ongoing co-creation, rather than being built first and tested later. This was only possible thanks to flexible, unrestricted funding that allowed RFUS to follow the logic of the work on the ground, take risks, and invest in what was already proving effective.

As funding conditions shift, that flexibility is no longer guaranteed. Without it, the networks risk stalling just as they are beginning to demonstrate what is possible at scale.



With your support, RFUS can expand and strengthen Indigenous Logistics Networks as a scalable, Indigenous-led operational system by:

- Training and employing 25 Indigenous logistics specialists to establish new regional networks and support ongoing land titling and monitoring work
- Strengthening technical, operational, and business capacity, including digital financial reporting, contract development and pricing
- Providing administrative support to formalize networks as community-based enterprises, enabling them to manage operations and issue invoices directly
- Supporting outreach and client development with other NGOs as service providers
- Reinforcing local supply chains through community-based production, strengthening pathways for Indigenous-led bioeconomy activities
- Facilitating knowledge exchange and replication in other regions

