



Rainforest Foundation US

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

AUGUST
2024

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I am excited to share some of our key achievements from the past few months with you.

After ten long years, justice was finally served in the Saweto case, where four Ashéninka leaders from Alto Tamaya – Saweto were gunned down in 2014 for defending their territories against illegal logging. The Peruvian Court sentenced four men to 28 years for the killing of these leaders. Our organization stood by the families, providing legal representation, advocacy support, and media coverage. This victory is a testament to the power of persistence and collaboration.

We celebrated another landmark in the Peruvian Amazon as 20 Indigenous communities secured legal titles to their traditional lands. This success was made possible through collaboration with local partners and innovative mapping technologies. By equipping Indigenous forest monitors with the tools they need, we helped create a model that accelerates land titling, critical to territorial protection.

We've also made strides in our efforts to bolster the integrity of carbon markets, particularly in Central America. In El Salvador, we facilitated planning sessions and provided key resources and advice to the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB). This meeting united partners to strategize on equitable practices in carbon markets, emphasizing the rights of Indigenous peoples and traditional forest communities. Additionally, we launched a multilingual [animated video series](#) to help Indigenous and local communities better understand carbon markets and protect their rights. These videos premiered at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York in April.

As we move forward, we remain committed to protecting the rainforest and learning from those who have nurtured it for generations. Your unwavering support makes these achievements possible. Together, we are making a significant difference in the fight to protect our planet.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Suzanne Pelletier
Executive Director
Rainforest Foundation US



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon received long-awaited legal titles to their traditional lands.
Image Credit: Sacha Cine/Rainforest Foundation US

A LANDMARK VICTORY: 20 INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN PERUVIAN AMAZON SECURE LAND TITLES

In May, 20 communities in the Peruvian Amazon received long-awaited legal titles to their traditional lands, marking a significant victory in the struggle for Indigenous peoples' land rights and environmental protection.

Encompassing 75,000 acres—an area three times the size of Manhattan or 90 times the size of Central Park—the titles were delivered during a well-attended ceremony in the Huitoto Murui Indigenous community of Centro Arenal, in the state of Loreto. Many Indigenous leaders traveled

from remote rivers that feed into the Amazon to receive their titles in person. **“Today we can say that our lands are indeed ours, and we can defend ourselves from any aggression that arrives at our community,”** said Anibal Oliveira, Indigenous leader of the San Salvador community.

Last year, an innovative strategy devised with our partners allowed Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) to help secure more land titles in ten months than in the previous three years. **Now, in 2024, we are already surpassing**

that record. The strategy involves collaborating with the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSEP) to create a flexible, Indigenous-led project using maps and satellite technology and facilitating regional cooperation among neighboring Indigenous groups.

“By providing tools directly to Indigenous forest monitors, we’ve established a model that not only accelerates the land titling process but also strengthens the communities’ ability to protect their territories,” said Wendy Pineda, General Project Manager of RFUS Peru.

ENSURING INTEGRITY IN CARBON MARKETS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests, in partnership with RFUS and Fundación PRISMA, held a strategic planning meeting in El Salvador in April. The gathering, which assembled representatives and technical experts from community organizations throughout the region, focused on building a joint program of work to ensure carbon markets respect

the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities. It served as a crucial platform for communities to consider how to contribute to the design and implementation of relevant market mechanisms that are poised to sell carbon from forests to companies and countries in an effort to achieve their net zero carbon emissions goals. RFUS was key in facilitating strategic planning sessions and providing essential resources and tools.

Among those tools is a new series of animated videos we created and launched at an event at the UN that are aimed at demystifying carbon markets for an Indigenous audience. This educational, multilingual series will equip Indigenous and local communities with crucial information to safeguard their rights as these markets quickly expand. You can watch the series on our website: rainforestfoundation.org/carbon-markets/.

IN BRAZIL, RFUS JOINED INDIGENOUS PARTNERS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHALLENGES AND COMMUNITY RIGHTS

RFUS recently participated in the annual assembly of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) in Surumu village, situated within the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Territory. This assembly, a cornerstone event for the region's Indigenous communities, brought together about a thousand participants, including leaders, allies, and representatives from organizations such as the Norwegian Embassy and USAID. The discussions were pivotal, focusing on Indigenous peoples' land rights, identity, and autonomy,

and provided an avenue for RFUS to further align our support with the specific needs and priorities of the Indigenous communities.

RFUS Program Director Christine Halvorson remarked on the assembly, "This gathering showcased the resilience and unity of Indigenous communities in addressing environmental and social challenges. It was an opportunity for RFUS to listen, learn, and reinforce our commitment to supporting their rights and protecting their lands."



The Department of Territorial and Environmental Management of CIR monitors fires in real time. RFUS is supporting CIR on several fronts, including forest monitoring.

Image Credit: Christine Halvorson / RFUS

Looking ahead, RFUS is set to expand its initiatives in Brazil, particularly in the northern state of Roraima and the Xingu basin. Our strategy includes defending titled territories and enhancing Indigenous governance and territorial control.

MUYUNA FESTIVAL: THE FIRST FLOATING FILM EXPERIENCE IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

In May, the Muyuna Floating Film Festival illuminated Iquitos, in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon. The largest city without road access, Iquitos depends on its rivers for communication and transport. With its unique floating screen, the 12-day festival brought cinema to the city's most impoverished riverside areas and showcased films on climate change and deforestation in the Amazon and around the world, highlighting the essential role of Indigenous peoples in rainforest protection.

RFUS's support enabled the festival to bring renowned Indigenous workshop facilitators

from abroad to lead a multi-day Indigenous Cinema Workshop. Fifty-six participants—ranging in age from 17 to mid-60s, and including representatives of the Kukama, Ikitu, Mayoruna, Achuar, Shipibo-Conibo, and Kichwa peoples from the Ucayali, Napo, and Madre de Dios Rivers—attended.

Each of these regions has been impacted by extractive economies including illegal logging, gold mining, and oil exploration. Participants learned to gather photo and video evidence to build legal cases and preventive measures for community safety and security. They also explored their unique cultural



In the heart of the Peruvian Amazon, the city of Iquitos hosted the country's first-ever floating film festival, Muyuna.

Image Credit: Luis Chumbe / Sacha Cine & Festival Muyuna

approaches to storytelling and filmmaking.

On the final afternoon, participants formed groups focusing on photography, podcasting, animation, and short films. Their work captured their cultural narratives and territorial concerns.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

If you've read this far, I hope you are patting yourself on the back for all the amazing impact you helped achieve with your most recent gift to RFUS! There are many ways to support our work that reduce your tax burden. These include stock donations, qualified charitable distributions from your individual retirement account, and donor advised funds. It might sound complicated, but we've broken it down for you in simple terms and provided quick tools on our [Ways to Give](#) page.

August is Make-a-Will month, so it's a great reminder and a great opportunity to ensure your loved ones will be cared for--while ensuring your legacy by sustaining the causes you believe in. RFUS has partnered with [FreeWill](#) to make it easier than ever to start your will. It's 100% free to you, and most people finish in 20 minutes or less. You are not required to put RFUS in your will to use this free service--but of course, we appreciate each and every bequest!

Learn more at www.rainforestfoundation.org/give, and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to giving@rainforestus.org. We'd love to hear from you!



4

August 2024



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AUGUST NEWSLETTER | 2024

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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

