



Rainforest Foundation US Quarterly ▶▶

Third Quarter Newsletter, 2022

It's autumn in the Global North. As we head into the final quarter of the year, we at Rainforest Foundation US are proud to take stock of the work we've done with our partners. And we're excited about the work that still lies ahead.

In July, we coordinated a meeting with the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC)—the largest indigenous rights' alliance in the world. At that meeting, the GATC laid the foundation for the Shandia Platform—a direct finance system that will bring funding to the frontline rainforest communities where it's most sorely needed. And in September, during Climate Week in New York, we co-sponsored the GATC's Shandia Platform launch, an event attended by 150 donors, government organizations, and allies.

We were gratified to see the [New York Times](#) editorial page acknowledge the tremendous importance of the GATC's leadership—and indigenous leadership, more generally—in the fight against the climate crisis. In that op-ed, the *Times* called indigenous peoples “The Guardians of the Future.” We couldn't agree more. **Supporting Indigenous peoples isn't an act of charity—it's an act of self-preservation. To keep this planet healthy, we need to make sure these communities get the support they need.**

That's the guiding philosophy behind all our work, from the results-based payments we've started weaving into our Rainforest Alert forest protection program, to the institutional support work we're doing in Mesoamerica, to our continual legal advocacy in Guyana and Peru. As I argued last month in the [New York Daily News](#), any discussion about mitigating climate change needs to start with protecting indigenous peoples and providing them the resources they need to thrive.

We're excited about the work we've done, much of which is spotlighted in this newsletter. Our work continues to deepen and expand as the pandemic's grip on our lives lessens: For the first time since the initial COVID outbreak, Rainforest Foundation US team members met with community leaders of the North Pakaraimas District Council of Guyana to map out their customary lands—a crucial step for communities seeking to bolster their land rights claims and figure out better shared land-use agreements.

We hope that, in reading these pages, you'll be as gratified to be on this journey with us as we are to have your support.



Sincerely,
Suzanne Pelletier
Executive Director of Rainforest Foundation US

PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS ▶▶



Institutional Strengthening on a Global Scale

Rainforest Foundation US is partnering with one of the world's largest indigenous peoples coalitions as they move towards more effective direct financing for the frontline communities most in need of support.

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Forest Protection in Peru

Rainforest Foundation US has begun an unprecedented program of results-based financing for forest defense, wherein indigenous communities are financially rewarded for successfully protecting their territories against deforestation. In Puerto Alegre, on the Amazon River in Northern Peru, community members speak about the tremendous vulnerabilities they face.

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Advocacy in Panama

The Darien Bioregion of Eastern Panama is being deforested at an alarming rate, driven in part by illegal trafficking. With the support of Rainforest Foundation US, Geoindígena, a civil association led by indigenous youth, is actively fighting to stop rainforest destruction in the region by strengthening relationships with federal environmental protection agencies and thus bolstering indigenous peoples' case for land claims.

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GET TO KNOW US ▶▶

A brief conversation between staffers
Ziv Stern and Kim Chaix



Ziv Stern



Kim Chaix

Hey Kim! You're the Director of Strategic Impact at Rainforest Foundation US. So tell us: What's the strategy?

Well, there aren't many organizations doing the work that we're doing, in the way we're doing it. We partner with indigenous rights organizations at every level: from intercontinental groups like the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities to national level organizations like AIDSESEP in Peru, down to regional, federational, and even individual community level.

And what are we doing at all these different levels?

There are five pillars in our work. We provide technical assistance for our forest patrol program, which is also called community monitoring. We help with land tenure, making sure these communities have their territorial rights recognized. We help support indigenous leaders whose climate activism puts them in danger. We help strengthen the capacity of indigenous-led organizations, so their scope of work can expand beyond our own reach. And we've recently started providing results-based payments to communities that are protecting their forests.

And what's your role in all this?

I'm making sure it all comes together—that the teams on the ground have the resources and tools to think big about scaling our impact. It's incredibly stimulating to think about all the ambitious goals we can advance with our indigenous partners. One of my favorite things to do is attend community assemblies.

Why do you like that so much?

Because it's open to everyone in the community. It's democratic. Young people and elders have equal weight. Women's voices are heard. And I love observing. A lot of my work is about listening: one week I'll observe a community meeting in rural Peru... the next week, I'll speak with a government official, trying to find common ground and a shared vision between her office and that indigenous community. The week after that, I'll talk with a millionaire about why his children's future also depends on the rainforest staying standing and the forest protection work that community's monitors are doing. My role isn't about leading—it's about finding the shared vision and then paving the way.



More of this interview was published in our [Treehouse](#) September monthly update. You can become part of [Treehouse](#) by becoming a monthly donor, which will give you access to monthly updates and additional perks.

GRANT UPDATE ▶▶

Rainforest Foundation US was awarded a \$2.5 million grant by the [William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) to work with Rainforest Foundation Norway and the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities to strengthen capacity of partners in Mesoamerica, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Guyana to address the growing number of national and jurisdictional REDD+ and carbon market projects happening in those countries. Carbon markets are complex and confusing, with a vast set of actors and many different standards for verifying project results and facilitating financial transactions. Corporations are increasingly interested in securing “carbon credits” from nature-based solutions so they can offset their own emissions and claim a “net zero” impact on the environment to their consumers. And nations—such as those in the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Initiative—have the same interest in demonstrating their low carbon footprint to the international community. This has led to a new boom in carbon project development in tropical forests, including in and around the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC), which poses significant risks to their land rights. Representative IPLC organizations need support to get a better understanding of the global carbon market landscape and how it affects their respective jurisdictions, as a first step in developing a strategic response.

This grant will allow Rainforest Foundation US to better support our long-standing partners on these complex issues while protecting IPLC land rights.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT ▶▶

RFUS’s work with indigenous partners in Guyana covers critical ecosystems that are a part of the Guiana Shield, which plays an outsized role in stabilizing weather patterns and protecting forests in the Amazon Basin and South America as a whole. **Guyana is one of the most heavily forested countries in South America with more than 71,000 square miles of forest cover, or 18.4 million hectares**—an area double the size of Indiana. Much of this is on land owned, claimed, and managed by indigenous peoples. However, Guyana also possesses extensive valuable subsurface minerals such as gold, diamonds, and bauxite—which are also found on indigenous peoples’ lands. Mining is the principal driver of deforestation in Guyana and every year, mining pushes deeper into Guyana’s interior. The environmental and socioeconomic impacts are significant.

Recent offshore oil development by the Exxon Mobil company and others are generating new revenues to the historically poor nation. This money could be spent in ways that protect forests and achieve sustainable development goals, or it could expose vast portions of the country’s remote interior to poorly-planned expansions in mining, logging, commercial agriculture, and infrastructure development that could have considerable negative impacts on people and the environment. **The Guyana Land Rights Project focuses on developing land management plans for territories—including monitoring these territories for illegal mining—and advancing an advocacy agenda to ensure proper safeguards such as free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) for projects that impact indigenous peoples’ lands.** It has received multi-year funding from governments and foundations, but an additional \$148,000 would ensure that the project achieves greater success by providing resources to partners for advancing advocacy efforts, travel between communities, developing and implementing land management plans, and ensuring that communities know their rights.

For over 30 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.