

# Annual Report 2013



Rainforest Foundation US





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**SUZANNE PELLETIER**  
Executive Director

“The threats and battle lines are continually changing in the fight for our rainforests.

One thing that is constant is the reality that the people that have the most to gain from forest protection and the most to lose from its destruction are the indigenous peoples whose livelihoods, health and cultures are dependent on healthy rainforest environments.

The Rainforest Foundation has never veered from its mission to conserve the world's rainforests by helping the long time stewards of these forests to secure their rights and sustainably manage their natural resources.

What becomes clearer with every passing year is that this approach is working. The forests that are best conserved are those where indigenous peoples live and have secure rights to their lands and resources. This is not an accident.

That's why we target your support to the people and places that can make the biggest difference: indigenous communities living at the frontlines of rainforest protection.

We have learned that the key to securing rights and maintaining conservation gains is strong leaders at the local level who are dedicated to sustainable management of their resources for their community. You will read in this report how this approach is making a difference.

None of our work could be done without your generous support. You are helping local communities protect their forests, livelihoods and their cultures for generations to come.

Sincerely,



**JOHN COPELAND**  
Chairman, Board of Directors

“The Rainforest Foundation US is a small organization on a big mission: A mission to protect lands, protect lives, protect cultures and traditions, protect our planet. We have a remarkable record of success. How do we do it?

We partner with those people who live in and depend on rainforests for their living, and for their way of life. By assisting these people in securing and maintaining the rights to THEIR lands, we are able to leverage our small resources in a big way.

We fund local organizations of indigenous peoples who are fighting legal and regulatory battles in order protect the rights to their lands – and once secured, we help these people keep their rights, for themselves and for future generations.

In 2013 we focused our work in two countries in Central and South America: Panama and Peru. Each of these countries has a high proportion of at-risk indigenous cultures who live in and depend on unique and irreplaceable rainforest.

How have we done? The following pages share our progress over the past year in greater detail, but in all, we have worked with hundreds of indigenous groups to protect over 28,000,000 acres of rainforest since our founding 23 years ago.

As you can see, we have achieved some extraordinary victories. There is more to be done. And we have a dedicated group of staff and volunteers who are in the trenches daily, fighting to preserve these lands and unique cultures. My thanks to Suzanne, Christine and Tom especially, for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Personally, I have made a significant commitment to the Rainforest Foundation US. Why? I believe we need to protect the remaining rainforest; I believe the best way to do that is to assist indigenous peoples to continue to be responsible stewards of their lands; and I believe that through this partnership, small dollars can be leveraged in ways that achieve impressive results.

Join us on our mission. Your grandchildren will thank you.

# Securing Rights, Protecting Lands

## RAINFOREST FOUNDATION US Mission

To support indigenous and traditional peoples of the world's rainforests in their efforts to protect their environment and their rights.

We believe that forest protection and human rights are interconnected. We believe that the most effective way to protect rainforests is to ensure that indigenous communities who have historically managed and protected these forests have secure and long term rights to their lands and resources.

## How we work

The Rainforest Foundation provides direct financial support and hands-on technical support to indigenous communities and local grassroots organizations. We work with them to:

- **Gain official control of their land and resources.**
- **Participate in the legal and policy decisions that affect their rights and resources.**
- **Build strong local leaders and organizations that can defend their community's rights in the future.**

With secure rights to their land and livelihoods, indigenous peoples are the rainforest's most effective guardians.



## RAINFOREST FOUNDATION US Achievements

For 23 years we have helped protect both the incredibly rich biological diversity of the rainforest and the cultural integrity of the peoples whose lives and livelihoods are inextricably linked to these forests. Together with our partners we have:



**Protected +28 million acres of rainforest.**



**Won several precedent-setting national and international legal battles for the indigenous peoples' rights.**



**Strengthened dozens of local indigenous organizations that are defending their rights and the lands of +200,000 indigenous peoples.**



# FORESTS OF PLENTY

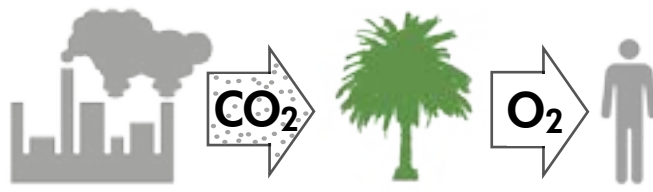
## FOOD



80%

of the developed world's diet originated in the rainforest.

## AIR



30%

of pollution is reduced by rainforests.

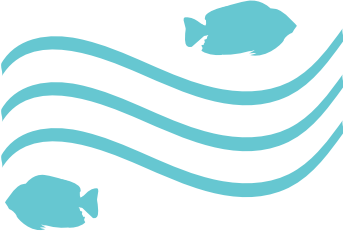
## LIFE



50%

of the Earth's plants and animals live in rainforests.

## WATER



1/5

of the world's fresh water is found in the Amazon Basin.

## INSPIRATION

It is well known that rainforests have served as inspiration for art in many cultures for thousands of years and are central to the spiritual values of the many societies living in them. But more recently rainforests are providing an invaluable source of ideas for technology development, this field is known as biomimicry because nature is imitated to find solutions to human problems, for example solar cells were inspired by leaves. New innovative materials turn to rainforest designs, such as the golden orb spider web, twice as strong as steel.



One single tree in Peru can harbor forty-three different species of ants – a total that approximates the entire number of ant species in the British Isles.



# Securing Rights to Forests



Indigenous peoples are often not recognized as the owners of their land, even if they have lived there for hundreds or thousands of years. Without official titles, many indigenous communities have had little recourse but to watch as government or corporate interventions exploit and destroy huge tracts of their forests without their consent.

With secure rights to their lands and natural resources, indigenous peoples can better defend their communities against unwanted development pressures and pursue sustainable development activities on their terms. Today, most of the world's large tracts of conserved tropical forests today are in the hands of indigenous peoples. With secure rights to their lands, indigenous people are the most effective guardians.

## Challenges

Indigenous groups face significant legal, technical and cultural hurdles to obtaining legal recognition of their land rights, including:

- Inadequate national legislation
- Difficulties with accurate marking of boundaries
- Lack of good maps and documentation
- Historic discrimination
- Unfamiliarity with legal systems
- Geographic isolation

## Our Response

- Providing legal and technical support for the titling and demarcation of indigenous territories, including mapping their boundaries, documenting land claims, and assisting with complex administrative and legal procedures.
- Training and assisting indigenous leaders in negotiating with relevant government authorities to gain formal legal recognition of traditional lands and territories.
- Supporting traditional community decision-making processes relating to protecting and sustainably managing lands.



# PANAMA

## Securing Rights to Collective Lands

The Wounaan and Embera number some 28,000 people living in communities spread throughout the Darién - the largest remaining stretch of tropical forest in Panama. These lands include significant swaths of largely untouched rainforest, some of the most intact mangrove and lowland forest ecosystems in Panama, and ecologically important rivers and estuaries. Both the Embera and the Wounaan depend on their natural environment for their livelihood, as well as their cultural and spiritual practices. They live much as their ancestors did generations before, gathering fruits and medicinal plants from the forests, fishing in the rivers and estuaries, hunting game, farming small plots of land, and making crafts, tools, and houses from a variety of forest products. Recent data has shown that about one third of Panama is indigenous lands (recognized and claimed) and that 60% of the country's rainforests are in these areas. Dozens of Embera and Wounaan communities remain without official title to their collective lands, however, leaving them vulnerable to invasions by cattle ranchers, loggers and others. Without secure title to their ancestral lands, these indigenous communities have had little ability to evict intruders and effectively protect their forests.

## Our Role

The Rainforest Foundation has worked with representative organizations of the Embera and Wounaan on fulfilling all of the legal and administrative procedures related to gaining titles to their lands. With support from the Rainforest Fund and the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation, we've been able to provide these local organizations with the funds and technical expertise necessary to advance their cause.

## Recent results

In 2013 we began working with Embera communities and continued our partnership with the Wounaan for the fourth year. Following the successful titling of two collective lands last year, we continued to focus on land demarcation: including conducting legal work, negotiating with government agencies for the recognition of Wounaan and Embera traditional lands, and verifying boundaries using participatory mapping techniques. We also began supporting a process of land management planning, strengthening partner organizations including through a variety of capacity building workshops.





# Strengthening Local Leadership



Indigenous communities in the rainforest face frequent threats to their homes and livelihoods from land invasions, illegal resource extraction, and the undermining of their rights at the local and national levels. When faced with such challenges, these communities often lack the information and resources necessary to exercise their rights and advocate on their own behalf.

At the same time, indigenous peoples are also increasingly managing health, education, and development initiatives for their communities. To effectively combat these threats while seizing upon these new opportunities, indigenous groups need strong and effective leaders as well as robust and culturally appropriate processes and local institutions.

## Challenges

- In spite of international declarations in their favor, notably the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous peoples are often not respected, nor even recognized, as rights holders.
- Traditional indigenous governance practices and structures are often not respected by local and national authorities, and in many cases have been weakened by outside pressures.
- Many indigenous leaders are not aware of their rights and do not have the technical or professional skills necessary to defend their rights and advocate nationally on behalf of their communities.
- Representative indigenous organizations are often new and under-resourced, in terms of staff, expertise, and funding.

## Our Response

- Providing technical support, legal guidance, and funding for community training workshops. This training helps build stronger and more autonomous local organizations and enables leaders to effectively represent their communities' interests.
- Developing and distributing practical training tools. These customized resources help local leaders build administratively and financially strong organizations that are capable of managing social and economic development projects on their lands.
- Assisting communities in formalizing their traditional governance practices to ensure that they are acknowledged and respected by local and national authorities.





# Influencing Policy



In recent years there has been an increased focus on the development of international and national policies aimed to combat rainforest loss. Indigenous people's lands contain some of the last remaining expanses of intact rainforest, meaning that these communities are suddenly finding themselves at the center of major policy debates on natural resource extraction and climate change.

Indigenous peoples should participate actively in the creation and implementation of policies that will affect them and their resources. In addition, national, international, and private sector development initiatives need to be held accountable to international standards for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights and natural resources.

## Challenges

- Policies designed to protect indigenous lands and resources are often weak and in many cases are simply disregarded.
- Indigenous peoples face strong pressure to participate in development initiatives, but in many countries government consultations are rushed and have not allowed time for the communities to understand complex concepts and programs, seek independent consultations, or have adequate internal discussions to decide if and how they want to participate.
- Many indigenous peoples do not have the knowledge and training required to participate fully and effectively in the design of policies that affect them and their resources.

## Our Response

- Providing indigenous peoples with independent and balanced information about climate change science, development projects, indigenous rights and international policy. We develop and adapt training materials, as well as support and participate in local workshops and national level trainings for leaders.
- Supporting the informed and effective participation of indigenous peoples in local, regional and national policy discussions. We help indigenous leaders communicate and meet with policy makers.
- Providing legal and technical support to indigenous groups as they analyze development programs, define their priorities, and defend their rights to free, prior and informed consent to activities that affect their lands or peoples.



## Recognizing Rights

### Our Role

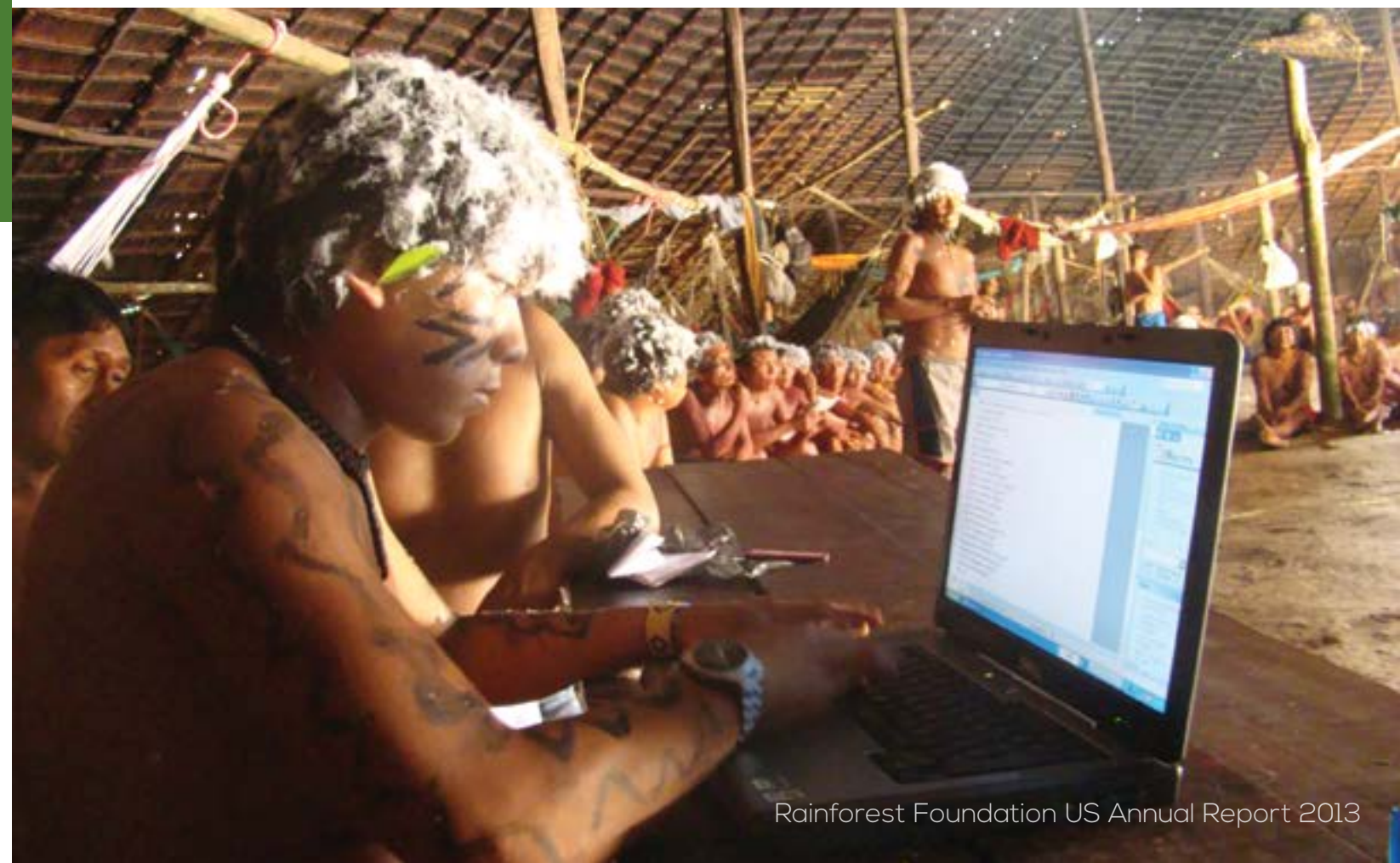
The Rainforest Foundation US provided FEDIQUEP with critical support to continue defending their rights through innovative community environmental monitoring. Rainforest Foundation supported monitors are young people from the indigenous communities impacted by oil exploration that document contamination, spills, and pollution.

### Recent results

The FEDIQUEP monitors documented over 300 contamination sites in 2013, using cell phone mapping systems to systematize and publicize the data. The Rainforest Foundation facilitated a visit to the area by UN Special Rapporteur on indigenous issues, James Anaya. The national government finally agreed to negotiate with FEDIQUEP and have promised to clean up the contamination and discuss compensation for damages, all as a result of the initiative taken by the environmental monitors.

Peru's oldest and most productive oil concession, known as Block 1AB, covers one million acres of Amazon forest around the Pastaza, Corrientes, and Tigre River basins, which are home to several thousand Achuar and Quechua indigenous people.

Oil extraction has been in active development in the Quechua territories of the Pastaza Region – represented by our partner FEDIQUEP – for the past 40 years, enjoying strong support from the Peruvian Government. The concession for Block 1AB expires in 2015, to be replaced by Block 192. In spite of the billions of dollars of oil taken from their lands, indigenous Quechua people still lack access to basic services and potable water, a contrast between their abject poverty and the natural wealth being pumped out at a rate of 15,000 barrels per day. Meanwhile, sediment, soil, and water test have revealed dangerously high levels of toxic metals and oil derivatives. The Quechua and Achuar are demanding that their ecosystem be cleaned up, and that they be consulted prior to the renewal of this oil concession.





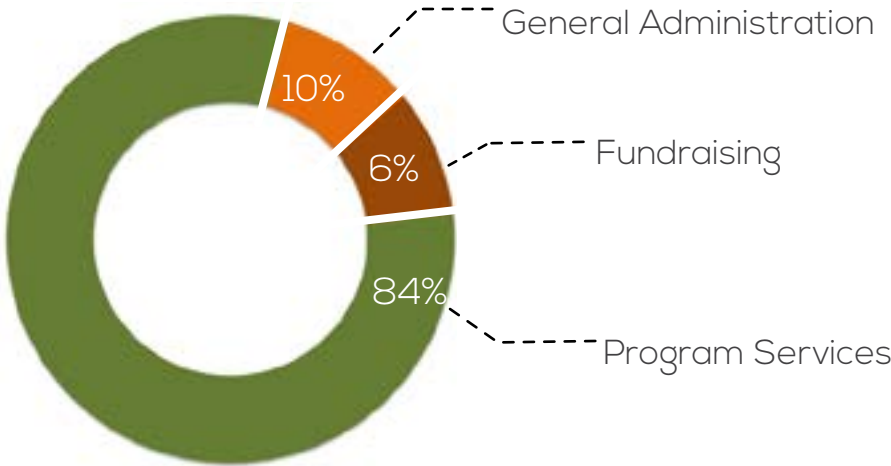
# Statement of Activities

Revenue and Support	2013	Expenses	2013
Individuals	\$ 187,373	Program services	\$ 876,051
Foundation grants	\$ 596,256	General and administration	\$ 101,848
Foundations contributions	\$ 55,765	Fundraising	\$ 67,878
Corporations	\$ 27,237		
Other non-profit support	\$ 15,168	Total Expenses	\$ 1,045,777
Contributed goods and services	\$ 588		
Other income	\$ 3,654	Changes in net assets	\$ 31,691
Increase in Temporarily Restricted Net assets	\$ 189,046	Net assets at beginning of year	\$ 457,408
		Net assets at end of year	\$ 489,099
Total Revenue and Support		\$ 1,075,087	



## Rainforest Foundation US Summary of Expenses

This is how we spend your donations



Rainforest Foundation US is proud to announce that we participate in the BBB Charity Seal Program and are known as a BBB Accredited Charity, which indicates a commitment to the 20 Standards for Charity Accountability. Rainforest Foundation US meets all the Standards, which assess our organization’s finances, governance and oversight, effectiveness measures and fundraising and informational materials.

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