

# 20 25

ANNUAL REPORT





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Front cover image:

The Wildlife Conservation Ceremony, held at Ban Huai Khipoe Mae Suek Subdistrict, Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, is a long-standing tradition rooted in the folk beliefs and rituals of the Pgaz K’nyau (Karen) people. It is a ritual where community members make a solemn vow to the guardian spirits—based on the belief that everything in nature has an owner—to protect natural resources. During the ceremony, clear boundaries for a specific forest area are established, declaring that this land must remain entirely undisturbed. This allows the forest to return to its most abundant, pristine, and natural state.

The sacred thread (or holy cord) is an essential element in Buddhist chanting ceremonies. Participants hold onto a continuous, interconnected thread to symbolise unity and oneness. The thread is extended from the Buddha statue to the monks, and finally to the attendees, bringing auspicious blessings, warding off danger, and providing spiritual protection to both the venue and everyone present.

Those present are community members, local leaders, and elders from the Indigenous Pgakenyaw village of Ban Huai Khipoe and neighboring villages, including Ban Namtok, Ban Khun Mae Yot, and Ban Yod Phai. They are pictured collaborating alongside staff from the Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD) and representatives from the Mae Suek Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO), who jointly organised this event. Credit: Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)



In Sembola, a neighbourhood of Pokola, a community artisan, makes a basket from plant fibers used for collecting and transporting forest products. This traditional know-how, is passed down from generation to generation in the Republic of Congo. Credit: Zed Lebon, for FPP

# About us

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) is an international NGO that has been working with Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples for 35 years since it was established in 1990. As of 2025, we work with partners in 18 countries across South and Central America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, based in the tropical forest belt. We work directly and in solidarity with communities and peoples, supporting them to secure their rights to their traditional lands, territories, and resources, protect their forests and ways of life, and choose their own futures.

## Our Vision

Forests are owned and controlled by forest peoples in ways that ensure sustainable livelihoods, equity and well-being based on respect for their rights, knowledge, cultures and identities.

## Our Mission

Forest Peoples Programme supports the rights of peoples who live in forests and depend on them for their livelihoods. We work to create political space for forest peoples to secure their rights, control their lands and decide their own futures.

## Strategic Priorities

In collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, forest peoples, civil society partners and allied networks, we are working towards the following strategic priority outcomes:

- Strong peoples and communities
- Just, diverse, and sustainable economies
- Effective, accessible, and just legal systems
- Resilient networks and movements

# Where we work





“The most powerful part of our partnership with FPP is not the funding, but the people behind it. FPP didn’t just offer money—they came with genuine concern for our plight.”

Peter Kitelo, Chepkitale Indigenous Peoples Development Project (CIPDP), Kenya. FPP has been working with CIPDP for 15 years, and he has been an FPP Board of Trustees member for three years





# 35 YEARS

OF WALKING ALONGSIDE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND FOREST PEOPLES

More than half of our partnerships with rightsholder communities have been nurtured over **twenty years or longer**

We continue to forge new relationships too — one in ten of the communities we support are **new to FPP within the last five years**

Working with Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples whose traditional territories span **in the region of 100 million hectares**

FPP first supported legal action in 1997 — the landmark *Moiwana v. Suriname* case. Today we support legal processes **across four continents**

The Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI) network of territorial, human rights and environmental defenders has grown from an initial **38 members in 2019 to 125 today**

Increasingly, the communities we accompany are **forming their own organisations** — a mark of deepening, self-sustaining resilience. We will continue to accompany them on their journeys



# Strong peoples and communities

In 2025, Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples advanced their efforts to sustain and defend their lands, territories and resources, and assert their rights to decide their own futures. FPP's country teams stood alongside them across four continents, drawing on and reinforcing relationships of trust built over many years. The year brought real gains - Kaliña fishing villages secured a seat at the decision-making table in Suriname (page 10), and the flourishing 'School for Learning to Think' welcomed 40 young Kichwa future leaders in Peru (page 13).

Communities also strengthened one another. FPP supported regional exchanges such as the East African Women-led Assemblies and a meeting of Indigenous Guards which brought together 23 communities from Peru, Ecuador and Colombia to share strategies and strengthen collective self-governance. Through the Global Network on Indigenous-led Education, FPP backed grassroots language and culture initiatives, keeping diverse knowledges and identities alive.

Forest Visions, FPP's allyship and small grants mechanism, continued to provide unrestricted, self-determined funding alongside non-financial support directly to Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples, placing decision-making power where it belongs; with communities themselves.

FPP supported a diverse range of partner-led initiatives to bring gender justice to the fore of Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples' movements for collective land rights and self-determination, including support for Indigenous women's solidarity-based responses to climate change in Bangladesh, the creation of the Be-əng Network of Indigenous women urban gardeners leading food sovereignty in the Philippines, meetings to address gender-based violence and territorial rights of Indigenous women in Peru, and more.



Reclaiming the land, planting hope. Indigenous women of Sihaporas rise to manage communal land for coffee and the life of their community. From the reclaimed soil, new hope grows, as they prepare the land to be planted with coffee, managed together, and shared together. Photo taken on July 29, 2025, in Sihaporas, Simalungun, North Sumatra. Credit: Khairul Abdi, for FPP



# In memory of Chief Tony James Kokoi

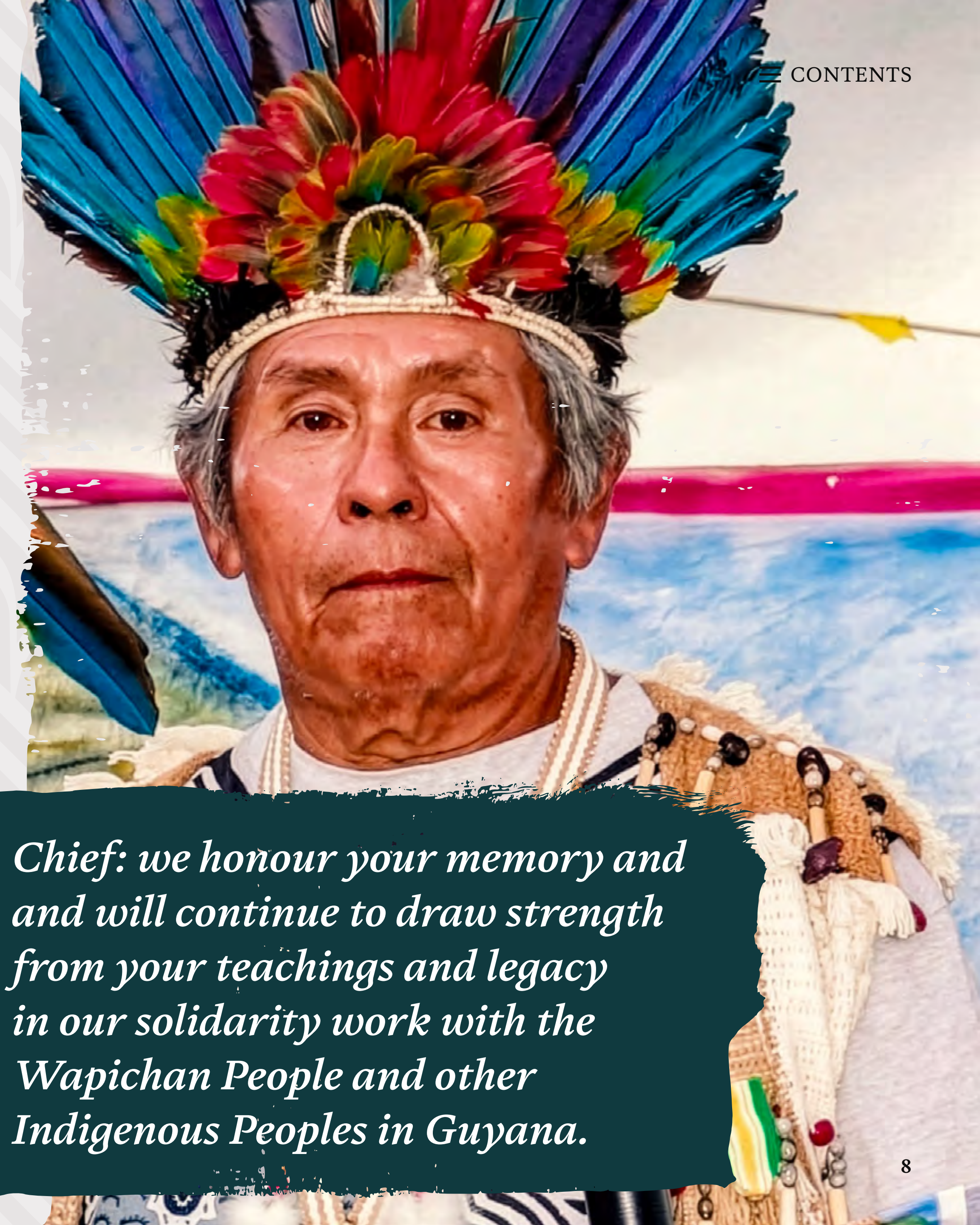
● Oda Almas and Tom Griffiths on behalf of the FPP family

It is with deep admiration, respect and love that we bid farewell to historic Indigenous Wapichan leader Chief Kokoi (Tony James) who passed to the benab (communal house) of his ancestors in Aishalton Village on 12 October 2025. Chief Kokoi will be remembered in Guyana and globally for his advocacy demanding full respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights over many decades. It has been a true honour to walk beside Chief from the paths of his territory (Wapichan Wiizi) in the south of Guyana to the halls of UN conferences as he restlessly and fearlessly championed for the rights of his and other Indigenous Peoples.

Through his lifetime, in different capacities, Chief served as an unwavering and trusted leader for his community, his people and for Indigenous Peoples in Guyana more broadly. Undoubtedly his unstinting and fearless determination and perseverance has inspired upcoming leaders within and beyond Guyana to

continue the struggle for full recognition and respect of Indigenous ancestral territories, self-determination, languages and traditional knowledge. The truth is that Chief, in many different ways, deserves some of the credit for influencing activists and advocates in the Indigenous rights movement – including several of us in FPP – in deciding to dedicate their lives to the same cause. He was a true friend and mentor of many in FPP and we will miss him dearly. Those of us that knew and worked with him will carry his inspiring example and guidance in our hearts and in our work.

Chief: we honour your memory and and will continue to draw strength from your teachings and legacy in our solidarity work with the Wapichan People and other Indigenous Peoples in Guyana.



*Chief: we honour your memory and  
and will continue to draw strength  
from your teachings and legacy  
in our solidarity work with the  
Wapichan People and other  
Indigenous Peoples in Guyana.*



## Addressing illegal fishing and offshore oil extraction in Suriname: Kaliña fishing association secures its seat at the table

For the Kaliña people of Galibi, on the north-eastern tip of Suriname, fishing is a way of life deeply entwined with their culture, local economy, and the health of their territorial waters.

But the sustainability of Galibi’s fish stocks and the Kaliña way of being are under increasing pressure from illegal fishing, polluting boats from Guyana and Brazil, dead fish washing up on shore, and the prospect of offshore oil extraction following the discovery of huge off-coast oil reserves in 2020.

The community had been raising these concerns with authorities for years, without result, until a breakthrough occurred in 2025.

The Galibi fishermen’s association, Woto Poko Noko, has been steadily building its capacity to monitor fish stocks, develop community-based fishing plans, and generate a sustainable community income, with support from the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS), backed by FPP’s long-term SwedBio-funded partnership on cultural and biological diversity.

It has also been pushing for the Surinamese fisheries ministry to more seriously consider the knowledge and experience of its members, and afford them a greater say in regional and national fisheries decision-making, based on the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

On 1 April 2025, following years of advocacy and capacity strengthening, Woto Poko Noko signed a formal agreement with the fisheries ministry securing the association’s direct participation in the development of two regional fisheries projects being developed in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). At Woto Poko Noko’s insistence, the ministry agreed that the principles of FPIC would be applied. The agreement was signed only after ministry representatives visited Galibi to present the plans, and the village councils and communities discussed and consented to the proposals.

This outcome stands in stark contrast to events from just a year earlier, when Woto Poko Noko was asked to attend a validation meeting for a national plan of action to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, despite the community having no involvement in developing the project. Woto Poko Noko, VIDS, and a delegation of chiefs from the Lower Marowijne region highlighted that the project had been designed without community involvement, in breach of the FAO’s own FPIC requirements.

The 2025 agreement is a concrete sign that the Surinamese authorities have begun to recognise the Galibi fishermen’s association as a legitimate actor, with the fisheries ministry now supporting this strengthened community organisation. It has also boosted the fishermen’s confidence in their own organisation’s power to strengthen fishery practices and influence outcomes in Galibi.

With much more to be done, and people outside of the fishing association also being affected by the problems dogging Galibi waters, Woto Poko Noko has joined a national collective of fishing associations, strengthening their collective voice on fish stock monitoring, sustainable livelihoods, and the protection of their territorial waters.

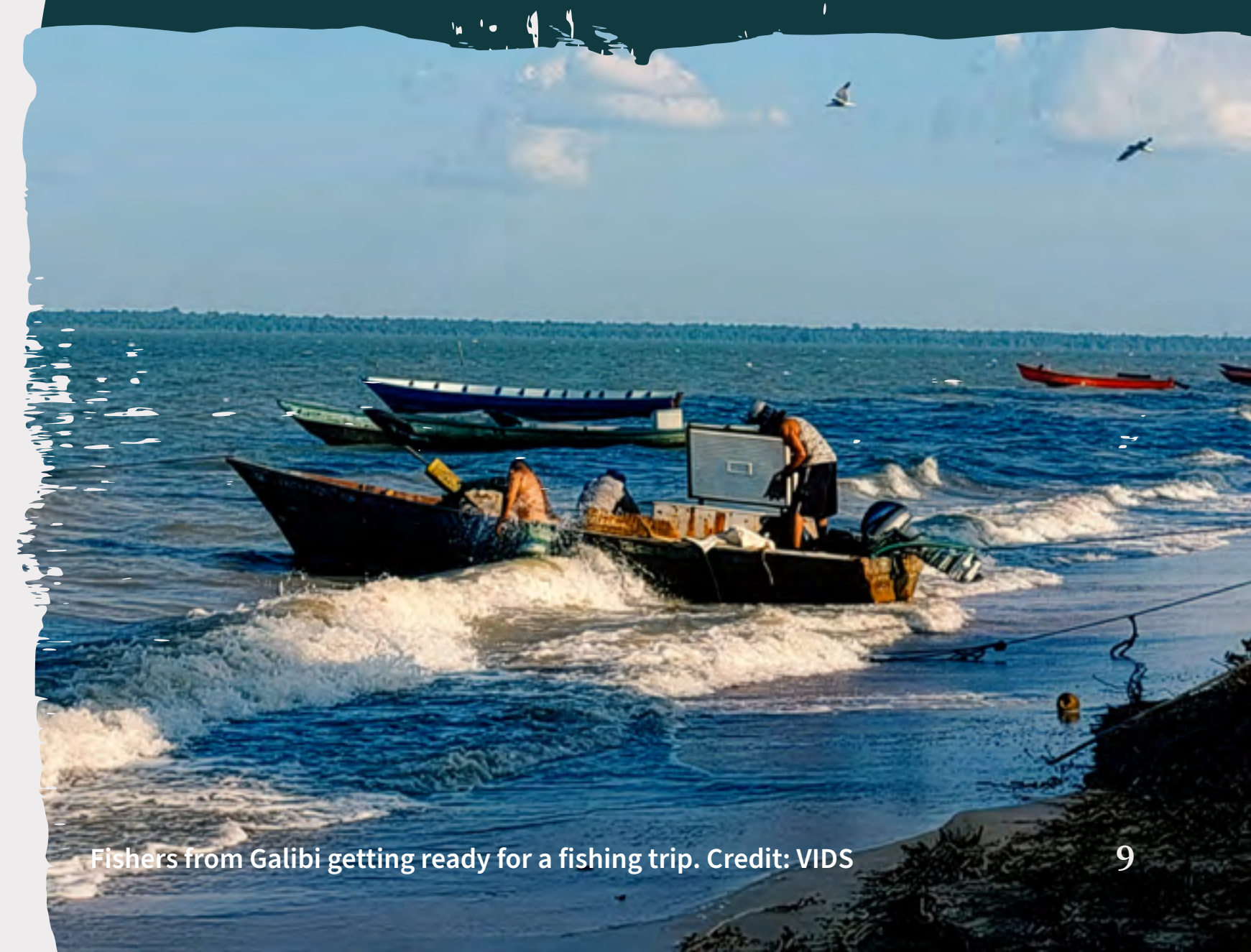
The association also continues to engage, alongside VIDS, with TotalEnergies and its consultant firm to discuss potential impacts of offshore oil extraction following the 2020 discovery of oil deposits off Suriname’s coast.

“

*Galibi is a fishing community. Our ancestors were fishers, fishing is part of our cultural heritage and our tradition, as well as our livelihood.*

*We worry about overfishing from the sandbanks in front of the coast. We told the Ministry we need to monitor the fish and crab according to the fish seasons; we have submitted our demarcation maps and data. The challenge is that, it’s not an automatic or smooth collaboration yet; we have to stay alert and vigilant.”*

Village leader Selowin Alamijawari



Fishers from Galibi getting ready for a fishing trip. Credit: VIDS



## ‘Hidden hunger’ triggers women in Sumatra to recuperate traditional crops

**Women in South Sumatra, Indonesia, have begun to grow their own organic food – in their yards, on village land and in community forests – following a startling revelation that dietary changes were stunting their children’s growth.**

The women are from farming households in the Rejang Lebong district of Bengkulu – households that were granted permits under social forestry schemes between 2009 and 2015 to manage and make use of community forests.

These women once sourced all their household food from the forest. But, to meet the demands of the market, their farming husbands have shifted from agroforestry to growing homogenised agricultural products or commodities, leaving the women with no access to nutritious food sources.

Recent research by the Bengkulu-based Akar Global Initiative on the well-being of these farming families focused on the women and children, whose needs and interests tend to be marginalised by forest management policies. Several children were found to be suffering from malnutrition and many women were experiencing obesity and high blood pressure. This form of malnutrition, in which a person gets enough calories but lacks essential nutrients, is known as ‘hidden hunger’. A change in women’s tastes was also detected – from sour, spicy and sweet to savoury.

Looking after the land is the key for food security. By growing their own organic food, the women are not just ensuring they have a source of healthy food options. They want to demonstrate that if women are not involved in land management the consequences can be profound.

While Akar is supporting the women, ensuring they have the skills and capacity to manage their food gardens, the initiative is entirely led by the women.

A pilot project has been extended to two coastal villages, managed by three groups of fisherwomen, and to 10 villages in the forest region, seven of which are managed by Redjang Indigenous women’s groups.

In total, Akar has already supported 28 women’s groups in Bengkulu, with FPP helping consolidate the groups and building solidarity among the women.

Akar’s next steps are to strengthen evidence, expand to more villages, and secure sustainability. Strong evidence of nutritional outcomes is critical, especially on child growth, dietary diversity and women’s health.

The long-term goal is a more resilient local food system, reduced dependence on markets, and better health conditions for women and children.



Community member taking care of the collective garden in Air Lanang Village, Rejang lebong District. Credit: Akar



## Shipibo and Kakataibo women forest guards unite to be heard

Indigenous women forest defenders in Peru took a historic step in 2025, coming together for the first time to raise their voices in defence of their territories, their autonomy and their rights.

Indigenous guards have become an important part of how Indigenous Peoples in Peru organise to defend their communities and their territories against external threats, and recover their autonomy and self-government. But women leaders are often underrepresented and for some time women guards had been expressing a desire for spaces to address challenges they face as women leaders – challenges they said were not adequately addressed in mixed-gender community forums.

The 2025 meetings were conceived as a way to recognise the role of women in defending their territories and building lives free from violence, through popular education methods such as forum theatre, drawing and intercultural dialogue.

The first gathering took place in March in the native community of Santa Teresita de Cashibococha, Ucayali, in the Peruvian Amazon. It was convened by women of the Shipibo Guard, and brought together women leaders from five Indigenous Peoples including the Shipibo-Konibo, Kichwa, Kakataibo, Awajun and Shawi.

In May, the Kakataibo Guard Women’s Gathering assembled in the native community of Santa Martha, Huánuco, on the eastern slopes of the Andes. The Kakataibo women were joined by women from San Martin and Ucayali.

FPP supported both convening organisations through funding from our gender justice programme, helping to co-design the methodology and facilitating cross-regional exchanges.

The gatherings highlighted the importance of the women’s unique perspectives and insights. Through forum theatre, art and storytelling, they documented threats to their territories – legal and illegal logging, illicit economy expansion, institutional corruption, cultural identity loss, and multiple forms of violence against women.

They discussed legal frameworks, Indigenous justice systems, and strategies for navigating community governance structures where women’s participation is often marginalised.

“The forest is very important to us. It is our life – our market, our medicine, our hospital too. And if we don’t protect it, then who will? No-one,” said Kelly Sabrina, President of the Shipibo Indigenous Guard and co-facilitator of the first gathering.

In their declaration from the Ucayali gathering, participants stated: “We announce our intention to continue strengthening our political involvement in our communities. Only when we are the ones making the decisions will there be peace for our sons, daughters and families.”

They further affirmed: “We are life and we defend life, here where the state does not reach or where it is complicit with those destroying the Amazon. We want to protect our forests, rivers and lakes for the coming generations.”

A second Shipibo Guard women’s gathering has already taken place in 2026, with a second Kakataibo gathering planned for the coming months.



“*The forest is very important to us. It is our life – our market, our medicine, our hospital too. And if we don’t protect it, then who will? No-one*”

Kelly Sabrina, Vice-President of the Shipibo Indigenous Guard

A participant explaining the properties of a medicinal plant. First Shipibo Guard Women’s Gathering, March 2025. Credits: Angela Mera, FPP





Yachaykuna Yuyay Wasi Kichwa youth gathering for preparing themselves for future leadership roles. Credit: Matias Perez Ojeda del Arco, FPP

## Kichwa young people prepare for future leadership roles

In October 2025, 40 young Kichwa people from communities belonging to three local Kichwa federations of Peru gathered in Mushuk Belén for the inaugural *Yachaykuna Yuyay Wasi*, or School for Learning to Think. The week-long training aims to prepare young people for political leadership roles in their communities and federations.

The school was designed and led by three Kichwa federations – the Ethnic Council of the Kichwa Peoples of the Amazon (CEPKA), the Federation of Indigenous Kichwa Peoples of Chazuta, Amazonia (FEPIKECHA), and the Federation of Kichwa Indigenous Peoples of the Lower Huallaga San Martin (FEPIKBHSAM).

The idea for the school emerged from agreements reached by Kichwa organisations as they advance their self-governance and territorial recovery following years of struggle to reclaim dispossessed lands.

Sessions addressed three core areas: territory, rights and cultural identity, with the curriculum emphasising intergenerational dialogue between emerging leaders and those with extensive experience defending Kichwa territories and livelihoods.

The students examined Indigenous rights frameworks at national and international levels, including:

- free, prior and informed consent
- territorial rights
- autonomy and self-determination
- Indigenous justice
- the political role and rights of Indigenous women.

They explored practical engagement strategies with state institutions through simulations of technical and political negotiation roundtables and judicial forums – contexts many will navigate as future federation leaders.

Community governance was addressed in contexts where state presence is minimal or absent, covering skills such as documenting threats amid territorial threats and implementing territorial recovery strategies. The students reviewed approaches taken by Kichwa organisations, including strategic litigation against exclusionary conservation measures and self-demarcation processes within protected natural areas.

The cultural transmission sessions emphasised their role in strengthening personal identity, self-esteem, and pride in their Indigenous heritage, as they explored the Kichwa language, traditional weaving, and medicinal plant knowledge. They discussed community leadership models appropriate to current challenges, recognising that effective governance requires a combination of technical expertise and cultural grounding.

The young students established an ongoing network to keep the dialogue going with their mentors and federation leaders. Another school is planned for the second half of 2026 in the Kichwa community of Callanayaku to continue strengthening their commitment to their communities, organisations, and pathways towards autonomous development.

Alongside FPP’s sustained, long-term allyship, we provided funding and helped with planning for the school, with FPP staff accompanying the event and supporting facilitation by Kichwa leaders. The Instituto de Defensa Legal also participated in the initiative alongside the three Kichwa federations.



“For me, being a good ally to Indigenous Peoples means truly walking hand in hand, over time and with consistency, toward a shared goal, whether that’s protecting land rights, advancing Indigenous Peoples’ rights, or climate resilience.

It’s not about one-time support, providing funding and waiting for reports; it’s about shared ownership of the successes, and the mistakes. And it’s about trust, which takes years to build.”

Joyce Godio, an Indigenous woman from Ibaloi-Kankanaey-Kalanguya of the Igorots of the Cordilleras in the Philippines



# Just, diverse and sustainable economies

In 2025, FPP continued to work with communities towards a transformed global economic system rooted in equity, cultural diversity and ecological limits, and which enables Indigenous and forest peoples to flourish. One aspect of this involved supporting community efforts across countries - including Indonesia, Colombia, Peru, Guyana, Liberia, Cameroon and DRC - to defend their lands against industrial agriculture and extractive industry developments (increasingly including in the transition mineral sector), as well as top-down conservation, climate and nature finance failing to respect their rights.

This work took place at community level as well as through international advocacy, such as via the Zero Tolerance Initiative actions at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva (see page 29); strong advocacy for rights-based approaches to conservation at the World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi; the launch of a position paper on corporate accountability laws, co-authored with Indigenous, Afro-descendant and local community leaders, at London Climate Action Week (see page 16), and the publishing of research targeting discussions at COP30 in Belém on rights-based ways to generate and channel climate and biodiversity finance, with a focus on the UK. The important element of alliance building to increase the volume of rightsholders' voices was seen through a Global Convening on certification, auditing and verification,

where 32 Indigenous representatives from 13 countries came together and demanded reforms to such systems to align their implementation with international human rights law (see page 19). In 2025, FPP was also excited to prepare for further dedicated efforts to work with peoples and communities towards resilience of their own local provisioning systems and economies, which will continue to develop in 2026.



## Key report: Filling the right finance gap

World leaders tell us that there is not enough finance to tackle the ever-escalating climate and biodiversity destruction. The narrative presented is one of scarcity.

Published to coincide with the 2025 Climate COP, this report argues that there is an abundance of finance that could be used to fill the estimated finance gap. It calls on world leaders to pick up the key to unlock it from current uses that harm climate, nature and people and to ensure a dramatic improvement in Indigenous Peoples' access to such finance, via modalities best suited to their circumstances.

> [Read the report](#)



Portrait of Herman Supriadi Siburian tapping palm sap. Herman is one of the palm tappers who process the sap into tuak, a traditional drink widely enjoyed in Natumingka, Borbor Subdistrict, Toba Regency, North Sumatra. For Herman, palm sugar trees are a promising livelihood to support his family. Credit: Khairul Abdi, for FPP



## Wampís Nation leaders visit UK with call to protect forest defenders from corporate harms

In June 2025, representatives of the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation (GTANW) travelled from the Peruvian Amazon to the United Kingdom to advocate for Indigenous autonomy, direct climate finance, and corporate accountability legislation addressing threats to their territory.

Pamuk (elected president) Teófilo Kukush Pati and Director of Justice Tanim Evaristo Wajai Asamat participated in events in London, Edinburgh, St Andrews, the Isle of Eigg, and Aberdeen, meeting with government officials, parliamentarians, academics, community organisers, and activists to build alliances and strengthen solidarity networks.

FPP, the Royal Anthropological Institute, and GTANW jointly hosted a session entitled ‘Just alternatives for climate finance’, during London Climate Week. There, Pamuk Teófilo emphasised that far too little climate finance reaching Peru is used to support Indigenous territories. He argued that climate funding should go directly to Indigenous Peoples on the frontlines of forest protection. “Our policy is well-being, Tarimat Pujut, or good living in harmony with nature”, he stated. “We demand funds to support us to protect our territory, our forest, which is 82 per cent intact.”

The following day, Wampís representatives met with officials from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for Business and Trade. They outlined the principal threats to Wampís territory – oil and gas concessions, illegal gold mining, and balsa wood extraction – highlighting links to multinational businesses and financial actors based in the UK.

During these meetings, they presented a [position paper](#) co-authored with Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community leaders calling on the UK government to:

- introduce mandatory corporate accountability legislation
- formally recognise Indigenous Peoples’ collective rights
- increase flexible direct funding to Indigenous Peoples

In Scotland, Wampís representatives raised concerns about illegally sourced balsa wood in renewable energy supply chains at an event with/hosted by Friends of the Earth Scotland.

On the community-owned Isle of Eigg, they explored how a long land struggle has resulted in greater community governance and control, visiting a series of grassroots sustainability initiatives, including a renewable energy cooperative and a tree nursery that has planted over 16,000 native trees. A solidarity ceilidh where the Wampís leaders and islanders shared stories, music and food underscored shared values of self-sufficiency, mutual care, and a deep connection to Wampís land.

In Aberdeen, the Wampís leaders were welcomed by members of the Save St. Fittick Park Group in Torry, a community which has faced decades of environmental injustice including from oil infrastructure. The Wampís expressed solidarity with Torry’s resistance to land grabbing for industrial expansion and drew parallels to their own struggle to defend ancestral territories in the Amazon.

Before returning to Peru, they met with Member of the Scottish Parliament Martin Whitfield to discuss environmental abuses and river contamination threatening Wampís food and water supplies, and presented the position paper, received by Martin Whitfield on behalf of Douglas Alexander (then Minister of State at the Department of Business and Trade).

The visit strengthened networks between the Wampís Nation and UK-based organisations, raised the profile of Indigenous-led territorial governance and autonomy, and the need for countries such as the UK to introduce corporate accountability laws among policymakers, and demonstrated models of solidarity linking Amazonian and Scottish community-led climate solutions.



**Position Paper: Protecting and Realising the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples and Local Communities in the Context of Business and Human Rights**

> [Read the position paper](#)



Pamuk Teófilo Kukush Pati, Pamuk (elected president) of the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation and Tanim Evaristo Wajai Asamat, Director of Justice of the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation following a meeting with UK government officials held at The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, June 2025. Credit: Jake Randall, FPP

“*The message I want to leave with you is to support the guardians of the forest, help us preserve Indigenous Peoples’ ability to protect life.*”

Tsanim Evaristo Wajai Asamat



IN FOCUS

# Twenty years of engagement with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), some reflections on progress

● Marcus Colchester, Senior Policy Advisor, FPP

At the end of 2025 Marcus Colchester, FPP's founder, and Senior Policy Advisor, stepped down from the RSPO board. Here, he reflects on his twenty years of engagement with the RSPO.

Oil palm remains one of the world's most controversial and lucrative crops. Its social and environmental impacts are often severe: requiring vast areas of tropical forest to be cleared to make way for plantations, causing rapid land use change, biodiversity loss and many other environmental harms.

Well-documented social problems caused by oil palm monoculture include, amongst others, the displacement of communities, widespread land conflicts, exploitative labour conditions, food shortages and the denial of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

RSPO was legally established in 2004 and Forest Peoples Programme began working with it that year as a human rights advisor to the Indonesian NGO, Sawitwatch. By 2013, since we were active on numerous RSPO committees in our own name, we were asked to become a Social NGO member, a role we have maintained ever since. All this work has been funded by grants and none by money from corporations.

Over these years we played a central part in: embedding key social requirements and procedures in RSPO's performance standards for both companies and smallholders developing norms for upholding rights to customary lands; and Free, Prior and Informed Consent and for protecting Human Rights Defenders; ensuring community engagement in High Conservation Value and High Carbon Stock assessments and; building social safeguards into the 'Jurisdictional Approach' – which means making RSPO's voluntary standard legally-binding in jurisdictions which agree this path.

It's all quite technical stuff but done right should uphold forest peoples' human rights and provide mechanisms by which they can hold companies active on their lands to account. In recent years, we have been seeking to persuade RSPO to adopt adequate measures to ensure the credibility and independence of audits ('quality assurance') and to adequately address complaints, notably about corporate groups' 'shadow companies' and corruption.



Industrial oil palm plantations replace natural forest and grab community agro-forestry land in Merauke District, Papua Province, Indonesia. Credit: Auriga Nusantara





RSPO Board of Governors wishing Marcus goodbye in Kuala Lumpur, 2025

In 2019, I was elected as one of two social NGO representatives onto RSPO's Board of Governors – a position I fulfilled for 6 years. The role is a very demanding one as the Board is the body that holds RSPO – staff and members – accountable and sets strategy between the annual meetings of the General Assembly of members. As an active Board member I became involved in solving complex disputes about staff dysfunction, recruiting new CEOs and overseeing the functioning of the numerous membership committees dealing with all those matters listed above and many more. All this involves the art of compromise, as the RSPO is a multi-stakeholder body which seeks to reconcile the views of oil palm planters, palm oil processors, traders, manufacturers, retailers and financiers, as well as social and environmental NGOs. Even when all NGO representatives agree, they are in a minority in decision-making, so they have to be well briefed and persuasive to carry the corporate representatives with them. The hardest challenge we still face is getting RSPO to up its game so it really upholds its

excellent voluntary standards in practice. Even when companies do get found out for failures to adhere to RSPO standards, through audits or complaints, all too often they dodge their obligations by revoking their membership or divesting 'non-compliant' estates.

## RSPO now certifies some 19% of globally traded palm oil.

RSPO now certifies some 19% of globally traded palm oil. Can we say that all this oil is sustainably produced in conformity with the RSPO standard? Unfortunately not. So why do we stay involved? Because up to now our partner NGOs and the peoples we support urge us to stay in. Despite its well documented weaknesses, RSPO remains one of the few means forest peoples have of being heard and getting their rights taken into account.



### Community guide: The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Grievance Mechanism

This guide is for communities facing problems with an RSPO-certified member palm oil company. It provides essential guidance for affected Indigenous Peoples and local communities on the RSPO complaints process and its steps.

> [Read the guide](#)



## Indigenous voices unite to drive change in sustainability certification

Indigenous Peoples from across the world have come together and created a unified voice calling for adequate sustainability certification standards and their effective implementation. Their collective call is already opening up new conversations vital for strengthening certification schemes’ respect for Indigenous Peoples’ and forest peoples’ rights.

Thirty-two Indigenous representatives from 13 countries – across Asia, North, Central and South America, and Africa – gathered in Jakarta, Indonesia, over three days in March 2025. Together, they critically examined how certification systems, and the audit and verification processes relied on to assess them, impact Indigenous Peoples’ rights.

Their collective experiences evidence an urgent need to significantly improve implementation, and in certain cases the content of the standards themselves. There are cases for instance where auditing practices systematically fail to meet human rights and environmental due diligence requirements, including those set by EU legislation, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and international human rights law. During the convening some positive examples were [also] shared and explored, including examples of certification supporting self-determined development, and effective use of grievance processes to help delay or halt problematic projects.

The convening culminated with a joint declaration recommending changes to improve implementation, especially around auditing, and the development of standards, grievance mechanisms and governance, in order that the outcomes that sustainability certification produces are aligned with respect for Indigenous Peoples’ rights, including those of Indigenous women.

In the lead up to the Jakarta convening staff from five major certification standards – covering the sectors of palm oil, timber, mining, aluminium and carbon credits – took part in online meetings with Indigenous representatives to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their standards and implementation processes. This direct engagement strengthened understanding and connections between all parties, with scheme officials being open to discussing further improvements, including based on issues raised by the [joint declaration](#) produced in Jakarta.

The declaration is already providing an important counterweight to industry perspectives and agendas in the context of standard revision processes and is opening up spaces for new dialogue about structural issues with auditing that are common across all schemes. These are important steps towards increasing the accountability of certification schemes.

With the declaration alongside additional materials developed for and during the Jakarta convening, a powerful evidence base is being built that can be used by Indigenous organisations, certification schemes, and policymakers to aid advocacy and oversight in the months and years to come.

The online meetings and the Jakarta convening were funded by FPP and co-organised by FPP, Right Energy Partnership with Indigenous Peoples (REP), Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE), the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, and local host Yayasan Masyarakat Kehutanan Lestari (YMKL).



Representatives at the Global convening in Jakarta, March 2025. Credit: FPP

“

*In too many cases, these certification seals are being used as rubber stamps for human rights abuses. While companies display these badges of honour, our communities face increasing violence, land grabs, and the destruction of our sacred sites.”*

Robeliza Halip, Executive Director of the Right Energy Partnership with Indigenous Peoples (REP), speaking at the launch of the Declaration.

### Indigenous Peoples’ Declaration:

Following the convening, 32 Indigenous representatives from 13 countries issued a declaration calling for fundamental reforms to global commodity certification schemes.

➤ [Read the Declaration](#)



## Land rights before carbon finance: Indigenous resistance in East Kalimantan, Indonesia

In November 2025, the provincial government of Indonesia’s East Kalimantan formally verified and approved the customary land recognition proposals of the Dayak Bahau communities of Long Isun and Long Pahangai 1 – an area of more than 108,000 hectares. The formal decree handover is likely to occur in 2026.

This result has been achieved in the context of an ongoing struggle for accelerated recognition of Indigenous customary lands, including those which span areas falling within the World Bank-funded emissions reduction program (ERP) - Indonesia’s first jurisdictional REDD+ initiative. The ERP began in 2019 and has been implemented across formally unrecognised customary lands, without a process capable of ensuring free, prior and informed consent of impacted rightsholders.

As one of its core components, the ERP had promised to accelerate recognition of the more than 200 Indigenous groups in East Kalimantan. In fact, very few communities have received recognition, in part due to the onerous administrative barriers they face but also because the highly political process creates bottlenecks that last for years.

Seeking to dislodge themselves from one such bottleneck, in March 2024, with FPP’s assistance, the Long Isun community submitted a complaint to the World Bank’s Grievance Redress Service documenting unresolved customary land claims, discriminatory benefit-sharing arrangements, coercive consultation practices, and the heightened risk of conflict and dispossession created by the ERP because their land continues to lack State recognition.

As Long Isun community representative Theodorus Tekwan stated, “We cannot talk about carbon while our land boundaries are still disputed and our rights remain unrecognised.”

When the grievance process failed to deliver meaningful progress, FPP supported the community to escalate the case to the World Bank Inspection Panel in November 2025. Alongside formal accountability action, we supported advocacy with district, provincial, and national authorities responsible for customary land recognition. The message was clear: climate finance initiatives must not proceed at the expense of Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination.

Despite meeting the eligibility criteria, in 2026 the World Bank Inspection Panel concluded that the case did not warrant further investigation. For Long Isun, the decision is part of a broader pattern of decision-making that fails to fully recognise Indigenous Peoples’ rights in large-scale carbon initiatives.

Nevertheless, the collective sustained strategy has led to measurable impact as it catalysed the formal recognition of the lands of the Long Isun and Long Pahangai 1 communities. The renewed scrutiny on the ERP also forced the government to revise the safeguard documents of its ERP to allow Indigenous Peoples to directly access carbon revenues and to reduce discrimination against communities without formal land recognition. A special working group has been established to accelerate recognition of ‘Indigenous law communities’, or Masyarakat Hukum Adat, in which our partner, Perkumpulan Nurani Perempuan, is a key member.

Critically, in 2025 the Long Isun community formally asserted their right to withhold consent and opted out of the ERP, establishing an important precedent within jurisdictional carbon finance. Yet, their customary forest remains included in the project’s emissions accounting. This means their territory contributes to climate benefits recognised by the ERP while the community remains excluded from decision-making and receives no share of the benefits.

The Long Isun community’s complaint has exposed how jurisdictional carbon finance can exacerbate Indigenous rights violations when implemented prior to land recognition, challenging assumptions that REDD+ programs inherently deliver positive social outcomes.

“  
*We cannot talk about carbon while our land boundaries are still disputed and our rights remain unrecognised.*”

Theodorus Tekwan – Long Isun community representative

Representatives of Long Isun attend a consultation with the World Bank’s Inspection Panel regarding their complaint against a jurisdictional carbon project affecting their lands. Credit: Angus MacInnes, FPP



“Our strength is not in working alone.  
It’s in partnerships and sharing roles  
across trusted allies - international,  
national and local.”

Emil Kleden, Director of Yayasan Masyarakat Kehutanan Lestari (YMKL), Indonesia



IN FOCUS

# Revitalising Indigenous food systems: a story from the Cordillera region of the Philippines

● Florence Mayocyc-Daguitan

Florence Mayocyc-Daguitan is a Kankanaey Igorot from the Cordillera Philippines. She has been working in sustainable agriculture in the Philippines for many decades, and now works with Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP) as Focal Person of the Food Stream of the Transformative Pathways project. The Transformative Pathways project is a collaborative project implemented by FPP together with 7 Indigenous partners and 3 technical partners, supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities to lead and scale up the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

PIKP's work on food systems started during COVID times. At the time, the chair of PIKP – an Ibaloy elder, and resident in Loakan, Baguio City – the most populous city in the Cordillera region of Luzon Island in the Philippines – saw children roaming around, playing, and thought of the idea of using this time to mentor children to have home gardens. The children willingly cooperated and collectively learned and set up their home gardens. It was also during this COVID time that the home gardeners' network in Baguio City organised themselves as a loose network, to advocate for urban gardening. With the travel restrictions, home gardens were very relevant, because it meant having fresh vegetables in your own garden, so you didn't have to go to the market. Some members of the network were supported by PIKP.

And so when we at PIKP conceptualised the [Transformative Pathways project](#), a partnership with FPP and Indigenous organisations across five countries,

food systems were very much on our mind and became a central part of our work within that project.

The reality is that since colonial times, there has been a lot of interference with our food systems in the Philippines. In spite of this, Indigenous Peoples in particular persevered with Indigenous food systems – although these were also slowly weakened. Our work seeks to support communities to strengthen them.

My role is more of a facilitator of participatory action research. I facilitate a process that allows a community or group to look at what's happening in their food system. From there, they define what pathways to take.

For example, in Besao, Mountain Province, we work mainly with the Payaw Indigenous community within their ancestral domain. When we started research there, the community told us that as late as the 1980s they had been food sovereign and food sufficient.



Collective work in producing food for animals from greens around the community, Barangay Payeo, Besao, Philippines. Credit: Payaw Indigenous Farmers' Organisation (PIFO)



**Faced with this situation, for convenience, farmers in the community embraced the use of synthetic fertilisers, although fortunately they didn't also adopt monoculture planting. Then later, in the 21st century, people also started using more chemicals - pesticides and herbicides.**



Children helping in organic feed making in the nursery, in Barangay Payeo, Besao, Philippines.  
Credit: Payew Indigenous Farmers' Organisation (PIFO)

Whereas now in the 21st century there is the import of food, canned goods, frozen foods, agro-chemicals, animals feeds, even fresh vegetables, fruits, rice. They now depend on the stores and market for food they had been able to supply for themselves in the past.

During the 1970s, things started to change as able-bodied (male) members of families were recruited for paid work in the mines, leaving behind women and children to take care of the farms and household work.

The community in Besao still had food security – because they had the purchasing capacity, because of the income from the mines. But people continue to leave the community to search for cash-based occupations, and few people are left to manage all the farmlands.

Faced with this situation, for convenience, farmers in the community embraced the use of synthetic fertilisers, although fortunately they didn't also adopt monoculture planting. Then later, in the 21st century, people also started using more chemicals – pesticides and herbicides.

When the community reflected on the status and trends in their food systems, they realised – yes, we have plenty of choices nowadays, but can we say it has increased our wellbeing? While there was no explicit answer, they all agreed that illnesses have multiplied – high blood pressure, cancer, kidney trouble; that the change in diets had negative impacts on health.

The community feels that solidarity is weakening, the values associated with food systems are weakening. They felt that the changes were not all progress – some are bad.

So, after reflecting on this, the Payew community resolved to revive their Indigenous food system. What they did immediately was to revive soil fertility, using green manure. The elders wanted to just go back to what they had been doing – green manuring and incorporating compost from plants and animal manure. The younger farmers want to innovate as things have changed – there are far fewer people, the traditional agro-calendar has changed and so some innovations are needed.

When people moved to natural farming after the soil has been degraded, it didn't work well straight away. For some who experimented on biofertilisers, it took three croppings for them to see their crops being vibrant and happy. Some people in the community were discouraged. But others persevered and were able to show that farming systems rooted in Indigenous wisdom of making use of resources within the community – for example using animal manure as fertilisers and using diverse plants as animal feeds – can be competitive with farms based on commercial farm inputs. Now more people are becoming interested.

In PIKP we believe with conviction that that Indigenous knowledge can be part of solving the multiple crises of this globalised world. We also recognise the need for partnership with others. The work we do, in partnership with FPP, allows us to provide spaces for discussion and reflection with communities, enable farmers to learn from one another, link with other groups, support their advocacy work. These are the kinds of work that the government usually does not support. We also provide groups with seed capital to revive, innovate and develop Indigenous food systems. But sharing knowledge, building networks, and providing communities with space for reflection is a key element in enabling them to exercise their autonomy.



# Effective, accessible and just legal systems

In 2025, FPP’s Strategic Legal Response Centre supported 14 strategic litigation test cases against Governments and multinational companies in 9 countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia, advancing the individual and collective rights of 20 Indigenous Peoples before legal systems that too rarely serve them. A court in Peru ordered the titling of Kichwa ancestral territory that had been enclosed within a National Park without free, prior and informed consent — a significant step towards justice for rights long denied (see page 27). In Uganda, evidence gathering for a constitutional case challenging fortress conservation was initiated and a complaint also filed before the Forest Stewardship Council in relation to the practices of the Ugandan Wildlife Authority. Urgent legal support reached human rights defenders in countries including Peru, Colombia, Uganda, Kenya and Indonesia.

FPP also engaged with UN Special Rapporteurs and human rights mechanisms, and with standard-setting processes in mining and agribusiness sectors, pressing for legal and regulatory frameworks that respect, protect and fulfil Indigenous and forest peoples’ rights, including the rights of women and girls. FPP supported partners

to highlight Indigenous women’s role and knowledge in achieving Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services’s (IPBES) aims, engaged in the 69th Session on the Commission on the Status of Women and participated in the Women’s Land Rights Initiative, organised by The Transdisciplinary Think Tank (TMG) Research, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and co-hosted by UNCCD, UNFCCC, and UNCBD.



## **Briefing paper:** “It is the way we live that conserves”: Legal models for rights-based conservation

Part of FPP’s Transforming Conservation briefing series, this paper reviews legal models for rights-based conservation from Australia, Tanzania, Kenya, Guyana, Brazil and Canada. It highlights some general points of good practice for successful rights-based conservation.

> [Read the briefing paper](#)



Indigenous Peoples from the Peruvian Amazon came together in Satipo, Peru to discuss their autonomous self-protection and Indigenous justice mechanisms, and to call on the Peruvian state to approve a bill that would recognise their right to exercise their own security systems. Credit: Matías Pérez Ojeda del Arco, FPP





A member of the Baka community practices using Mapeo to take georeferenced territorial data, Republic of Congo. Credit: Audrey Versteegen, FPP

## Differential mapping shapes Congo's draft land tenure decree

Years of groundwork on participatory mapping are reshaping how Indigenous Peoples' land rights are understood at the national level in the Republic of the Congo, with the country's first piece of detailed legislation that protects Indigenous Peoples' land rights in the process of being adopted.

The *Draft Decree on Special Measures for Securing Indigenous Peoples' Customary Land Rights* is one of the most significant outstanding implementation decrees not yet adopted under the 2011 *Law on the Rights of Indigenous Populations*, an advanced draft is now close to adoption.

Underpinning the draft decree is an inclusive approach to participatory mapping that recognises overlapping Indigenous and local community territories and supports joint governance arrangements. The approach was pioneered by FPP in collaboration with the Centre d'Encadrement Communautaire pour le Développement (CECD), the Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH) and the Direction Générale pour la Promotion des Peuples Autochtones (DGPPA).

Tested by Baka and Bakwele communities in the Messok-Dja forest landscape in the country's north, the approach documents shared use, sacred sites and customary boundaries, showing that mapping is not only a technical tool but an instrument of legal recognition and collective self-determination.

In June and October 2025, multi-stakeholder workshops co-hosted by FPP, CECD and OCDH brought together Indigenous leaders, civil society representatives and government representatives to review and refine the draft decree. This engagement continued in December 2025, when CECD, with FPP support, organised a preparatory meeting with Indigenous representatives, on the sidelines of the national validation workshop, to help consolidate Indigenous Peoples' priorities and support their effective participation in the formal decree validation process held in Brazzaville on 22–24 December.

Through clause-by-clause inputs and a legal gap analysis grounded in field evidence and international jurisprudence, the process has successfully bridged customary systems and national law.

The revised draft decree now enshrines collective tenure recognition, community-led participatory mapping, interim protection of customary lands, and the principles of free, prior and informed consent at every stage. Evidence gathered during the pilots with Baka and Bakwele communities in Messok-Dja was crucial for enabling the DGPPA (the government directorate responsible for Indigenous Peoples within the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights) to integrate these principles into the draft decree. It also includes, for the first time in the country's legal framework, specific provisions on cohabitation in shared territories.

In another national first, through this collaborative process differential mapping has been formally recognised in the draft decree as a legitimate legal instrument. This sets a precedent for inclusive law-making and for bridging customary practices with formal land administration. Before this process began, the country had no legal mechanism to secure Indigenous customary tenure.

Trust and collaboration between state actors (especially the DGPPA) and civil society actors has also improved through this process, which strengthens the conditions to sustain long-term participation of Indigenous organisations in law-making. A new permanent platform for joint dialogue between the DGPPA and civil society has also been created.

At the community level, the process has increased women's participation, inter-community cooperation, and awareness of legal rights.

Overall, the process demonstrates that Indigenous land-use systems can be documented, recognised and governed through inclusive, rights-based approaches.





Digna Rivera and Lucy Rojas at a women's gathering held on 16 April 2025, where they met in person to unite their efforts. It was a deeply symbolic and moving moment of collective strength and intergenerational commitment to justice. Credit: Nathalia Ulloa, FPP

“

*It is about recognising what happened to our people and ensuring it does not happen again. We carry this struggle not only for our families, but for the future of our territory.”*

Digna Rivera

## Indigenous women take charge in seeking accountability in the Brörán and Bribri territories of Costa Rica

In the aftermath of the killings of Indigenous leaders Sergio Rojas in 2019 and Jhery Rivera in 2020, Indigenous women – mothers, daughters, community leaders – have emerged as central actors in the defence of territory, justice and collective dignity in the Brörán and Bribri territories of southern Costa Rica.

The men's families and communities have been denied justice following the killings. Despite precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, impunity persists in both cases.

The killings reveal the brutal reality of Indigenous Peoples in this region – one of violence, dispossession, and institutional discrimination that targets their collective rights and governance systems.

Indigenous women in these communities are now reshaping the meaning of accountability.

In 2025, FPP worked alongside these women leaders to strengthen their capacity to engage with accountability mechanisms. This accompaniment took multiple forms:

- legal solidarity in domestic court proceedings
- technical assistance with submissions to international human rights bodies
- support in documenting institutional failures
- facilitation of collective spaces where women could develop advocacy strategies grounded in Indigenous governance rather than imposed frameworks.

A core focus has been strengthening their role as political actors – not merely as relatives of victims, but as leaders shaping collective responses.

Throughout the year, the women have grown more confident in engaging with national authorities and international human rights mechanisms, articulating demands rooted in their own governance systems. They have strengthened collective protection strategies within their communities, transforming grief and sustained institutional failure into organised, strategic action.

For many of these women, the struggle is profoundly personal. Digna Rivera, mother of Jhery Rivera, and Lucy Rojas, daughter of Sergio Rojas, have continued to speak publicly about the pursuit of justice, even as they navigate judicial processes marked by delays and procedural uncertainty that prolong trauma rather than provide redress.

“Justice is not only about a sentence”, Digna Rivera has said. “It is about recognising what happened to our people and ensuring it does not happen again. We carry this struggle not only for our families, but for the future of our territory.”

The courage of women like Digna and Lucy is forging new pathways toward justice that formal legal systems have failed to provide – pathways grounded in Indigenous territorial autonomy and collective protection.



## Landmark advances in the decades-long struggle to secure land rights in the Peruvian Amazon

The recognition of Indigenous land rights in Peru has been strengthened in 2025 with ten community-level titles being secured and a precedent being set by a court ruling declaring the state’s inaction on Indigenous land titling to be unconstitutional.

These advances follow decades-long struggles for formal recognition of collective land rights by Shipibo-Konibo and Kichwa communities in the Ucayali and San Martin regions. While these land rights recognition advances are encouraging, the struggle continues as they work to translate strengthened tenure security into lived improvements.

In Upper Ucayali, the Shipibo-Konibo community of Nueva Villasol obtained a 327-hectare communal land title over their ancestral territory surrounding Lake Yacumama. Three other communities, Nueva Betania, Santa Isabel de Bahuanisho and Santa Lucia, completed georeferencing and placed boundary markers around their territories, spanning around 2,036 hectares, to deter land invaders. These are all critical steps toward more secure community land titles.

The Kichwa people secured land titles for six communities - Pongo del Huallaga, Las Mercedes, Winkuyaku, Shimi Shambuyaku, Atun Mayo Puerto Mercedes, and Allima Sachayuk Siyambayok Pampa - covering areas amounting to 838 hectares of their ancestral territories in San Martin. These achievements are the result of sustained participation by Kichwa Indigenous organisations and their communities in land-titling technical committees and determined public advocacy. It is worth noting that the communities have been prevented from obtaining title to the entirety of their territories due to the fact that they are overlapped by state-run protected areas.

In October 2025, the Fourth Constitutional Court of Lima issued a landmark ruling: the court declared that the state’s failure to adopt and implement a national public policy for the titling of Indigenous communities’ territories constitutes an “unconstitutional de facto situation”. The ruling recognises that state inaction represents a systematic violation of Indigenous rights and establishes an important precedent in the struggle for land tenure security across the Peruvian Amazon.

The ruling responded to a constitutional protection application filed by four Indigenous organizations:

- the Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSESP)
- the Coordination for the Development and Defence of the Indigenous Peoples of San Martin (CODEPISAM)
- the Ethnic Council of the Kichwa Peoples of the Amazon (CEPKA)
- the Federation of Indigenous Kichwa Peoples of Chazuta, Amazonia (FEPIKECHA).

These organisations received strategic legal and technical support from FPP throughout the litigation and titling processes.



Members of the Nueva Betania shipibo community (Ucayali) georeferencing their territory with technical and legal assistance by FECONAU. Credit: Fioreny López



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# Allyship in action – supporting environmental human rights defenders

**Across the world, land and environmental human rights defenders are among the most at-risk groups of defenders. They face escalating violence, intimidation, criminalisation and even murder for speaking out against the harmful impacts of agribusiness, extractive industries, logging, infrastructure and energy projects.**

The collective response of Indigenous Peoples was stressed by Colombian Indigenous women leaders in an exchange on extractive industries they held with Canadian Indigenous Peoples.

“Violence has become normalised in an alarming way, and so the elders say ‘I’d rather die speaking out than die in silence.’ Territory is defended, protected, and safeguarded collectively by communities and leaders who raise their voices... we have strengthened our defence mechanisms ... revitalising our Law of Origin and establishing our Indigenous Guard.”



First Indigenous Guards Meeting in Caimito on the shore of Lake Imiria, Ucayali, Peru. Credit: Gavin Fielding, FPP

Globally every year, the number of attacks and killings is staggering. Between 2012 and 2024, at least 2,100 environmental human rights defenders were killed, with Indigenous Peoples bearing a vastly disproportionate burden, accounting for over 40 per cent of all killings.

In 2025 alone, the [Business and Human Rights Centre](#) documented 790 attacks against defenders raising concerns about business, across 80 countries, 30 per cent of them against Indigenous Peoples.

At FPP, we are clear: Indigenous Peoples are land and environmental human rights defenders. Every community we stand alongside is defending their rights, their lands, and their ways of life. Their struggles to secure land rights, ensure free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), and exercise self-determination are not only about protecting forests – they are acts of collective human rights defence.

Given the disproportionate extent to which Indigenous Peoples and their representatives are victims of violence and criminalisation, and the profound impact this has on their struggles to protect territories and life, the rapid response and reactive support we provide through the FPP Strategic Legal Response Centre are vital to the communities we work with.

However, to disrupt the cycle of violence, reactive responses alone are not enough. Prevention is key. This means supporting peoples’ and communities’ self-determined protection mechanisms while also tackling the structural causes of violence which include discrimination, insecure collective land tenure, and the failure of states and corporations to respect FPIC and self-determination.





Meeting of the Indigenous Mosopisyek of Mt. Elgon, Uganda, discussing their goal to secure their rights to their ancestral lands after being forcefully evicted from the lands, which were turned into a national park without free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). Credit: Justin Kenrick, FPP

Research and lived experience show that the most effective ways to prevent attacks on Indigenous rights defenders combine two long-term allyship strategies, which our [Strategic Legal Response Centre](#) supports:

- self-determined, community-led and community-controlled territorial protection mechanisms, with solidarity, network building and exchanges between Indigenous Peoples
- sustained advocacy to tackle discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, secure land rights, advance gender justice, and strengthen community governance systems.

FPP's work is fundamentally about protecting and supporting environmental human rights defenders. Every action described in our [Strategic Framework Plan 2025–2030](#), whether advancing land rights, strengthening FPIC, amplifying Indigenous voices, or promoting gender justice, is an allyship strategy to protect and support them. This is reflected in our four strategic outcomes:

**Outcome 1: Strong Peoples and Communities** contributes directly to rapid response support and self-protection mechanisms by strengthening community governance.

**Outcome 2: Just, Diverse and Sustainable Economies** challenges exploitative economic models that drive land-rights violations and promotes self-determined alternatives.

**Outcome 3: Effective, Accessible and Just Legal Systems** drives compliance with human-rights obligations, including land rights and FPIC, through legal empowerment and strengthening Indigenous and customary law.

**Outcome 4: Resilient Networks and Movements** builds solidarity and facilitates sharing of lessons learned and mutual support between Indigenous Peoples defending their territories and ways of life.

**“Defending life can cost us our lives. We all need to unite our spiritualities—rooted in our own territories—to defend Mother Earth as a single, unified whole.”**

The [Zero Tolerance Initiative](#) (ZTI), founded and hosted by FPP, lies at the heart of our approach to protecting environmental human rights defenders and complements our Strategic Legal Response Centre. ZTI is a global network led by rightsholders from the Global South, dedicated to building international solidarity and collective actions to end attacks on environmental human rights defenders. It promotes collective protection strategies and advocates for a zero-tolerance approach from corporations to such abuses.

Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples the world over have developed their own collective protection systems to resist violence, criminalisation

and displacement, the Indigenous Guard being one example. These community-led approaches to collective protection must be supported and strengthened, building on the knowledge, capacities and strategies communities already have. They need agile and flexible funding, prioritising long-term community resilience. ZTI has an urgent response and prevention fund that does this. It is the only such fund that is both created and managed by environmental human rights defenders.

The need for such support and allyship is more urgent than ever. As noted by the Colombian Indigenous women leaders “Defending life can cost us our lives. We all need to unite our spiritualities—rooted in our own territories—to defend Mother Earth as a single, unified whole.”



### ZTI Impact Report: The Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI)

The Zero Tolerance Initiative is a global coalition made by and for Indigenous Peoples, local community representatives, grassroots organisations and supportive NGOs and CSOs, working collectively to stop killings and violence against human rights defenders in global supply chains. FPP has hosted the ZTI network secretariat since its foundation in 2019.

[➤ Read the Impact Report](#)



# Resilient networks and movements

In 2025, FPP's network and movement-building work delivered vital support to our partners, ensuring rightsholders opportunities for collaboration, exchange, and meaningful and effective participation at all levels. We facilitated exchanges between 31 partners from 8 countries, enabling peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of strategies to defend rights and strengthen grassroots movements. For the first time, this included exchanges between Indigenous leaders in Peru and communities in Scotland, building solidarity across cultures and continents (see page 16)

Support for partners to participate in global fora went beyond travel and logistics to include preparatory meetings, accompaniment and networking support — spanning COP16 in Cali, COP30 in Belém, the World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, and New York Climate Week.

At New York Climate Week, FPP took steps towards more clearly articulating our understanding of what it is to be an ally to Indigenous Peoples, their networks and movements, through structured exchanges around our report, Valuing Allyship (See page 32).

By bringing constituencies together, backing existing institutions, platforms and networks, and creating the conditions for new Indigenous leaders and organisations to emerge, FPP helped ensure that movements for forest peoples' rights are more resilient at the close of 2025 than at its start.



Act of Possession before the community of the traditional authorities of the Cañamomo Lomapieta Indigenous Reserve of colonial origin, Colombia. Credit: Hector Jaime Vinasco



## Weaving alliances between the Upper Amazon (Colombia) and Turtle Island (Canada) in defence of territories of life

New bonds have been forged between territorial defenders of the Upper Amazon in Colombia and of the unceded Indigenous territory of Turtle Island in British Columbia, Canada, establishing the groundwork for continued collaborations and alliances.

In June 2025, Waira Nina of the Inga People and Jani Silva of the Zona de Reserva Campesina Perla Amazónica travelled from the Putumayo region of the Upper Amazon to British Columbia, where the Haida, Wet'suwet'en, Gitksan, and Gitanyow nations hosted them for dialogues on territorial defence strategies and the impacts of extractive industries.

The visit was prompted by escalating threats to Indigenous and campesino territories in the Colombian Amazon from oil, gas and mineral extraction projects – many financed by Canadian banks and investors.

Investments in transition mineral development (minerals needed to transition from fossil fuels to 'clean' energy) pose severe risks to the headwaters of the Putumayo River basin, including potential harmful impacts on water, biodiversity, and the physical, spiritual and cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples' and other rightsholders living there.

The Colombian territorial defenders shared information about these risks, and about Canadian companies operating in biodiverse and sacred territories, including Copper Giant Resources and Alberta-based Gran Tierra Energy, whose extractive investments and activities threaten the collective ancestral territories of the

Inga, Kamëntsá, Siona, and Secoya peoples, and lands held by Indigenous Councils of the Nasa People and smallholder farming communities.

Their hosts shared their own experiences of territorial defence, contributing time and knowledge to the exchange while hosting cultural dialogues that addressed not only extractive threats but also initiatives to revitalise Indigenous languages, spirituality, legal traditions and governance systems.

"What happens in the South, you feel in the North", stated Waira Nina. "Because we are only one people. And we are also women of the turtle."

Jani Silva emphasised the interconnected nature of extractive impacts: "The Earth is the Mother who gives life. The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth [...] Extraction isn't only associated with the damage to Amazonia. We in all countries are related; we are all connected."

Gaagwiis (Jason Alsop), President of the Haida Nation, reflected on the exchange: "We strive for the betterment of the Indigenous Peoples, of all peoples across the world. It's our mandate [...] The call from the south has come here, and we've offered to share our experience anyhow it helps. Our work is recognising the whole, the interconnected. We recognise supernatural presences."

These valuable intercultural exchanges have laid a foundation for deepening alliances and enabling greater collaboration, including reciprocal visits, youth exchanges, and the development of joint advocacy strategies aimed at defending territories and advancing Indigenous sovereignty.

FPP supported the exchange with technical, logistical and funding support, with assistance from Peace Brigades International Canada, Peace Brigades International Colombia, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, MiningWatch Canada, and Amnesty International Canada.



### **We are all connected: Forging Peace and Unity between Extractives-Affected Peoples from Colombia to Turtle Island (Canada)**

This report documents the deep and rich exchanges that took place in the "Sharing Knowledges, Weaving Alliances in Defence of Territories of Life" Tour, June 18-June 28, 2025, between territorial defenders from the Colombian Amazon and members of the Haida, Wet'suwet'en, Gitksan and Gitanyow Nations hosting them.

> [Read the report](#)



Visiting Haida Gwaii's Old Growth Forests, sacred sites and waterways on a boat tour with Haida youth. Credit: Viviane Weitzner, FPP

**“  
The Earth is the Mother who gives life. The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth...Extraction isn't only associated with the damage to Amazonia. We in all countries are related; we are all connected.”**

Jani Silva, territorial defender from the Zona de Reserva Campesina Perla Amazónica



IN FOCUS

# Beyond the intermediary role: What good allyship with Indigenous Peoples looks like

Reflection on how to be the best possible ally for Indigenous Peoples has preoccupied us for years, with our understanding evolving through countless conversations with Indigenous collaborators, from the Amazon, across Africa to Southeast Asia.

During New York Climate Week in September 2025, we dived deep into the question, working alongside Akar Global Inisiatif (Indonesia) and the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation (GTANW, Peru) to convene an event designed to make space for the voices best positioned to articulate the answers – those of Indigenous Peoples.



Shapiom Noningo, representative of the The Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampis Nation (GTANW), and Marisol García, representative of the Federation of the Kichwa Indigenous People of Chazuta (FEPIKECHA) in New York, September 2025, during their participation in the event about good allyship at the New York Climate Week. Credit: Andrew Miller, Amazon Watch



The event, entitled “[Enabling a win-win-win for rights, climate and nature: What does good allyship with Indigenous Peoples look like?](#)” coincided with an important moment for the donor and solidarity ecosystem. Amid proliferating calls for providing direct support to Indigenous Peoples, and a tendency for international organisations to be grouped together under the “intermediary” label, we found ourselves asking: what forms of added value do Indigenous Peoples actually need from their allies? And how might the support architecture be shaped to provide those enabling conditions, rather than merely transferring funds from point A to point B?

With the best arbiters of what constitutes good allyship being Indigenous Peoples themselves, the event centred on Indigenous analysis and strategic vision through the perspectives of Shapiom Noningo (Wampís Nation), Pramasti Ayu Kusdinar, known as ‘Dinar’ (Akar), and Marisol García Apagueño (a Kichwa leader and President of [FEPIKECHA](#) – the Federation of Indigenous Kechua Chazuta Amazonian Peoples), among others. It was facilitated by Joyce Godio, herself an Indigenous Ibaloi-Kankanaey-Kalanguya of the Igorots of Cordillera, Philippines.

Appearing by video were Mt Elgon Ogiek leader Peter Kitelo (Director of the [Chepitkale Indigenous People Development Project](#) and an FPP Board member) and Nipodimaki leader Omar Castro Suárez from Colombia.

Their message was clear: effective solidarity encompasses far more than the transfer of funding – it requires relationships, political accompaniment, technical capacity where invited, and a trust grown from years spent working side by side.

Joyce’s role merits particular attention because of her contribution to the learning journey we at FPP have been on. Prior to the event, she conducted in-depth research and interviews with a range of FPP’s Indigenous partners to better understand what our direct support has meant to them in practice – not what we assumed it meant, but what they experienced and needed. Her insights shaped both the event and the report we launched in New York

later that week: [Valuing allyship: The case for pairing direct and unrestricted funding with solidarity-based allyship for grassroots Indigenous Peoples and forest peoples.](#)

At FPP, we now more clearly understand the niche within the allyship ecosystem that organisations like us are best placed to fill, with our role extending well beyond the transactional re-granting role commonly associated with the term “intermediary”. As a result, we have steered away from that label to instead emphasise our relational approach, rooted in solidarity, and the multi-faceted nature of the added value that Indigenous Peoples value from us, which includes:

- providing legal and technical support such as territorial mapping and monitoring
- accompanying new and resilient Indigenous institutions and leaders
- supporting national, regional and international networks and Indigenous platforms.

The Indigenous speakers affirmed that the conversation must go wider and deeper than the mechanics of funding. Money matters profoundly, since control over how it is used is a fundamental indicator of power relations. But not in isolation from the full spectrum of enabling conditions that Indigenous Peoples need from the allyship ecosystem if they are to flourish and achieve transformative change.

The event in New York and the research underpinning it form part of a broader, ongoing inquiry: to make visible those dimensions of support that are routinely rendered invisible when solidarity collapses into dollar amounts.

We now understand better the contribution we can and so often do make, not as intermediaries who “deliver” to communities, but as allies committed to the power-equalising, reciprocal and long-term relationships on which transformative change depends.



Joyce Godio facilitating the event



### Key report: Valuing Allyship

This briefing presents six stories from longstanding partners of Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Each case highlights how transformation is made possible when financial resources are coupled with context-specific, responsive and long-term non-financial support underpinned by deep-rooted, trusting and transparent relationships.

> [Read the report](#)





Participants gather to celebrate the opening day of the gathering; song and dance continued to be woven through the programme throughout the week. Credit: Macnight Nsioh, FPP



### Position Paper: La conservation menée et dirigée par nous, les Peuples Autochtones des forêts

This position paper (in French only) presents the vision for rights-based conservation as articulated by the Indigenous Peoples of the Congo Basin who took part in the regional assembly.

> [Read the Position Paper](#)

## First ever regional assembly of Congo Basin Indigenous communities

In 2025, Indigenous communities from both sides of the Cameroon–Congo border gathered in Ngbala in the Republic of the Congo to define a shared agenda for community-led conservation and sustainable natural resource management. The gathering concluded with validation of a joint position paper calling for a shift from exclusionary conservation models toward rights-based, community-led approaches.

More than 120 representatives of the Baka, Ba’Aka, Mbenzele, and Bagyeli communities attended the five-day event which was the first regional Indigenous assembly to be held within customary forest territories rather than in an urban conference setting.

The assembly was convened by the Centre d’Encadrement Communautaire pour le Développement (CECD) with support from FPP.

Delegations from the Congo included Baka communities from the Messok Dja region in Sangha; Mbenzele communities from Kabo and Pokola; and Ba’Aka representatives from Mbandza in Likouala. From Cameroon, Baka communities travelled from Lobeke National Park and the Djoko community forest, alongside Bagyeli representatives from the Océan region.

Partner organisations ASBABUK, BACUDA and ADEPA from Cameroon, and APEM from the Democratic Republic of Congo, also participated.

In a significant departure from standard practice, sessions were facilitated by Indigenous leaders, with interpretation provided in multiple Indigenous languages. This approach ensured that discussions on conservation, governance and cultural transmission were shaped by participants’ own knowledge systems rather than external technical frameworks.

Elders and young people exchanged perspectives on land stewardship and intergenerational learning, and working groups developed proposals for sustainable management of traditional territories.

The assembly addressed valuing culture, harmful narratives affecting Indigenous identity, and collaborative approaches to territorial governance. Participants discussed strategies for strengthening self-esteem through Indigenous cultural pride, and redefining relationships with neighbouring communities.

ASBABUK, a Cameroonian Baka organisation, committed to supporting the formation of a Congolese Baka association.

The gathering concluded with validation of the joint position paper, which continues to be used as an advocacy tool to ensure that policymakers and donors increasingly recognise the need to move away from harmful fortress conservation models.

Since the Ngbala gathering, two further cross-border exchanges have taken place – one in the Congo and one in Cameroon – with communities hosting each other and reinforcing the collaborative relationships established at the initial assembly.

FPP provided funds for the Ngbala assembly alongside technical and logistical support to CECD throughout the planning and implementation process.



# Joji Cariño receives the Frankfurt Conservation Award

After a lifetime of human rights advocacy for Indigenous Peoples, Joji Cariño, Senior Policy Advisor at the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), was awarded the Frankfurt Conservation Award 2025 by the Bruno H. Schubert Foundation.

Joji comes from a prominent family of Igorot Indigenous activists from the Central Cordillera of the Philippines. As a young person, she was shaped by her community's resistance to the Chico Dams project under the Marcos dictatorship, when Indigenous opposition was met with militarisation, mass arrests and violence, including the assassination of the respected leader Macli-ing Dulag. These experiences confirmed Joji in what was to be a lifetime's dedication to the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

From the 1980s onwards, Joji has played a leading role in international advocacy. She worked closely with Survival International, co-founded the London-based PIPLinks to support Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, and helped establish the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, bringing Indigenous voices into multiple international fora including the World Bank, the United Nations, the Rio Earth Summit on Environment and Development and more.

As a Commissioner of the joint IUCN and World Bank's World Commission on Dams, Joji provided critical leadership in advancing sustainability standards in the hydropower sector. Through close collaboration with FPP and Indigenous Peoples' organisations, the Commission adopted the requirement that dams should only be developed in Indigenous areas subject to their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), consistent with emerging standards in international human rights law. Joji later joined FPP and served for several years as its Director.

She has continued to influence global policy through engagement with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Conservation Congress and IPBES, helping to secure recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge in conservation and natural resource governance.

Joji's achievements and recognition through this award are a demonstration of the importance of long-term advocacy. Her work demonstrates that lasting change is built through long-term commitment to justice, equity and Indigenous leadership.



“

*Indigenous Peoples' advocacy to embed justice and equity in our everyday struggles, goes hand-in-hand with working alongside other social movements and all peoples for human rights, dignity and greater freedoms. Self-determination calls forth global solidarity to meet the challenges of our times.”*

Joji Cariño





## SNAPSHOT FROM COP30

# Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples at the UN global climate summit in Brazil

In November, FPP accompanied Indigenous delegations from Colombia, Peru, Guyana and Suriname in their participation in UNFCCC COP30 in the Amazonian city of Belém do Pará with FPP providing technical, logistical, communications and funding support. In conjunction with enabling side events and intercultural exchanges between delegations on the climate crisis and just transition, FPP facilitated a high-level meetings with the UK delegation and director of the International Forest Unit of the UK government, in which Indigenous delegates sought UK solidarity and advice on pathways to improved direct Indigenous access to UNFCCC Green Climate Fund resources.

1. Left to right – delegations of Association of Village Leaders (Suriname), the Wampis Nation (Peru), the Wapichan People and South Rupununi District Council (Guyana); and the People of the Centre and Regional Indigenous Council of Middle Amazonas (Colombia). Credit: Ligia Baracat, Head of FPP delegation to COP 30.
2. Robie Halip's opening remarks at the Right Energy Partnership with Indigenous Peoples' event "Indigenous Peoples Leadership and Innovations Powering Equitable and Sustainable Energy Transitions", 18 Nov 2025. Credit: Ligia Baracat, FPP
3. Marisol García Apagüeño and Idris Fredison at the COP do Povo, Belem. Credit: Ligia Baracat, FPP



“We always have faith in our arutam, our spirits, our ancestors who are in the waterfalls and cascades. That is why we will always emerge victorious from our struggle to rebuild our autonomy.

We have faith that various allies will collaborate with us because this work is not for one people alone, but for the benefit of the nation and the world.”

Alfonso Flores, Director of the Environment, GTANW, Peru



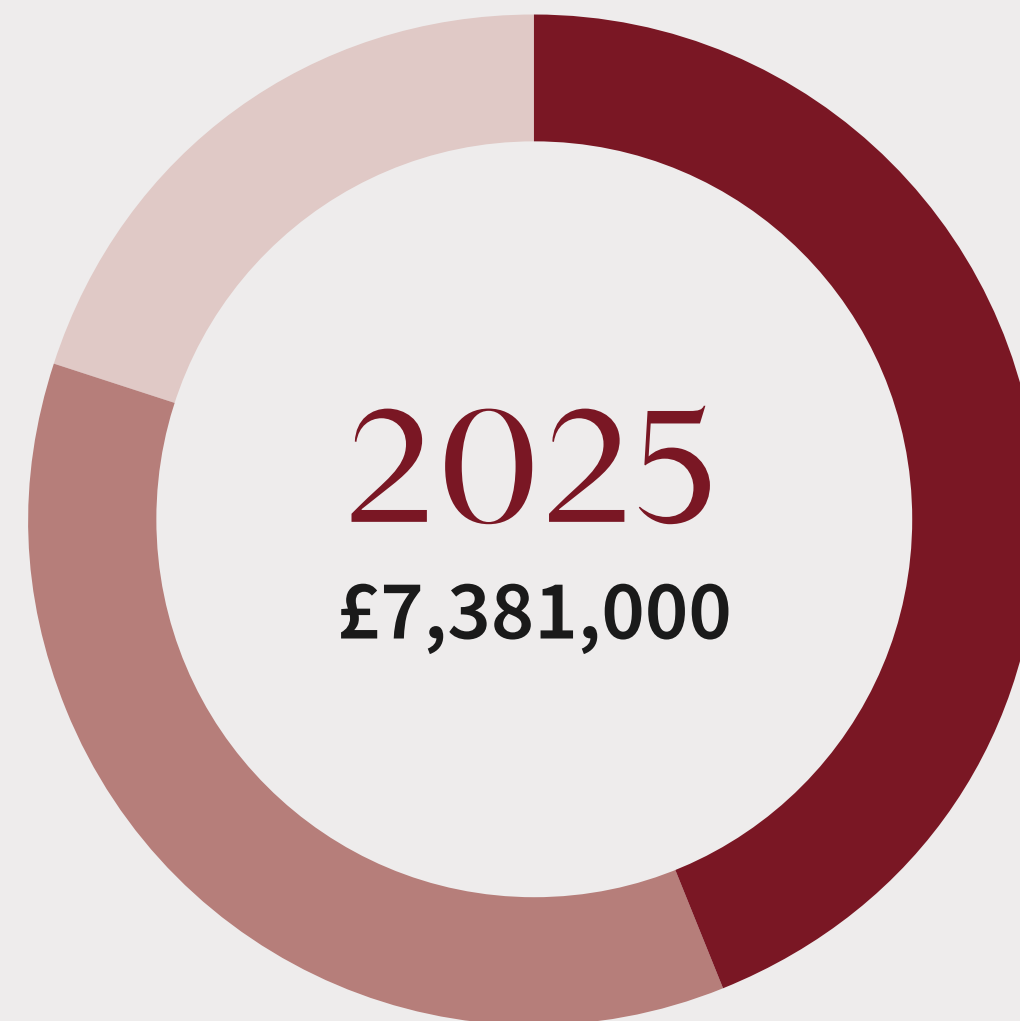
# Financial summary

Sources of Funding 2025



|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Trusts and foundations    | 72% |
| Non-UK Government Funding | 19% |
| Grants from other NGOs    | 9%  |
| Other                     | 1%  |

How the funds were used



|                                             |            |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|
| Support for partner-led and global advocacy | £3,274,000 |
| Transfers direct to partners                | £2,632,000 |
| Organisational costs                        | £1,475,000 |



# Board of trustees and staff

FPP has a decentralised structure and a diverse team of over 70 staff, across 20 nationalities, from all the regions where we work, with team members based in Asia, Africa, South, Central and North America, Europe, and Australia. Women make up over half the organisation at all levels, including board and senior management.

FPP has international and country teams that are composed of social anthropologists, lawyers, experts in environmental policy, land and natural resource governance, gender, GIS and mapping, political ecology, among other areas, who are experienced in accompanying communities on their journeys and struggles for rights. We aim to reflect that diversity on our board, with around half of board members being Indigenous.

## Board of Trustees:

**Marie-Josée Artist**, Association of Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS). Expertise: Gender and women's rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights, international advocacy, climate change and Indigenous Peoples.

**Kevin Currey**, Independent consultant on forest tenure, human rights, and climate change.

**Séamus P Finn**, (*Treasurer*), OMI Director, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate; Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

**Patricia Borraz Fernández**, Independent consultant on human rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights and the United Nations system, and Senior Advisor for Latin America, Global Research and the United Nations at Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI).

**Robie Halip**, Coordinator, Right Energy Partnership with Indigenous Peoples (REP) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE).

**Áslat Holmberg**, Áslat is a salmon fisher, teacher and holds a master degree in Indigenous studies. He is a former member of the Sámi parliament of Finland. Served as the President of the Saami council in the period 2022-2024 and works with various processes dealing with Indigenous knowledge and rights.

**Carol Kalafatic**, Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (Coventry University), and a Research Fellow at the Resistance Studies Initiative (University of Massachusetts).

**Peter Kitelo**, Strategic Director and co-founder of the Chepkitale Indigenous People Development Project (CIPDP).

**Michel Pimbert** (*Co-Chair*), Professor of Agroecology and Food Politics and Director, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR), Coventry University.

**Sarah Roberts**, Chartered Accountant. Expertise: Charity Finance and Governance and General Institutional Management.

**Richard Williams**, (*Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee*), Chartered Accountant and Chartered Member of the Securities Institute.

 [Our team](#)



FPP staff and Board members at the Annual General Meeting, July 2025





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