We continue to support forest peoples in Africa, Asia, and South and Central America in their struggles for self-determination, secure land rights and control over their traditional territories. This year there has been substantial progress in gaining recognition of their ownership of their customary lands, despite significant challenges caused by the global COVID-19 Pandemic. FPP has continued to help to create spaces for forest peoples’ voices to be heard across complex local, national, and global political and social landscapes. This report sets out the ongoing challenges of this work, as well as gains and achievements, and we would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have made our work in 2020 possible.

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FPP and the Amerindian Peoples Association supported Bethany Village Council in Guyana to pilot community monitoring of commercial logging within titled lands and on customary untitled lands under claim. Bethany, Guyana 2020. Credit Vicki Brown FPP.
We are a human rights organisation supporting forest peoples around the world to secure their rights, control their lands, and decide their own futures. We support forest peoples to protect and restore the well-being of their communities, lands, and forests.

Nearly all forests around the world are inhabited
In the 21st century forests are still commonly treated as empty lands controlled by states and available for commodity extraction and ‘development’ (including for logging, dams, mines, oil wells, gas pipelines, industrial monoculture plantations, and pasture), or for wildlife conservation as national parks, forest reserves and other ‘protected areas’. The indigenous and other peoples who live in these forests have developed cultures and traditional knowledge systems that are often well-attuned to their environments as evidenced by the overlap between those lands and areas with high levels of biodiversity. Despite having rights to own, use and occupy those lands and resources – rights rooted in their long-standing occupation of their territories – forest peoples’ lands are all too frequently encroached on and exploited against their wishes, communities are forcibly evicted, and community members subject to violence and criminalization.

Our Vision
We support forest peoples and indigenous organisations to promote an alternative vision of how forests should be managed, based on respect for the rights, knowledge, cultures and identities of the peoples who know them best. This work includes advocacy, litigation, practical projects and capacity building, working alongside more than 60 partner organisations in around 20 countries. We do this so that forests can be owned and controlled by the people within them, ensuring sustainable livelihoods, equity and well-being for future generations and for the protection of the forests and the biodiversity which they support.

Strategic Approaches

Self-determination
Supporting and advancing the exercise of self-determination by indigenous and forest peoples by strengthening territorial governance, mobilisation and representation, and the creation and use of political spaces where indigenous and forest peoples’ voices can be heard.

Access to Justice
Ensuring access to justice by developing and using accountability and redress mechanisms in both public and private institutions that are directly accessible to indigenous and forest peoples and their communities.

Legal and Policy Reform
Partnered advocacy towards legal and policy reform and the development of best practice and standards consistent with indigenous and forest peoples’ rights in international law.

Building Solidarity
Networking, sharing information and building solidarity for coordinated action among a wide range of actors.
Director’s message

Times remain uncertain for forest peoples

With the turmoil and uncertainty of the global pandemic, life has changed for everyone, not least for indigenous peoples and local communities.

During 2020, working closely with our local partners and global allies, we have seen how governments have used the pandemic as a cover to roll back existing human rights and environmental protections. These include the deregulation of damaging industries, the lowering of protections for human rights and the removal of environmental regulations. This has allowed for the expansion of harmful business practices, repression of the rights of forest peoples, and increased deforestation.

Throughout the pandemic, forest peoples have demonstrated huge resilience. We have documented examples from across Africa, Asia and Latin America of how communities have been affected by COVID-19 and how they have responded with creativity and determination – from increased patrolling of their territories to strengthening their food sovereignty.

Yet it remains clear that without security of tenure and self-determination, including full participation in decision-making processes, events such as this pandemic will continue to have disproportionate impacts on indigenous peoples and other marginalised forest peoples and their communities.

Looking Back

Despite the pandemic, the work of partners and FPP has continued at every level.

This ranged from pressuring a sovereign wealth fund to cut ties with a company linked to indigenous land rights violations, to repealing an ordinance that threatened 3.5 million hectares of indigenous land in the Amazon.

We continued to advocate for and support territorial management by forest peoples, including community-led conservation, across the globe. We are working with our partners in Belize to secure land titles for 41 Mayan communities. Together with local partner organisations in Indonesia, we challenged regressive laws and highlighted the devastating effects that government plans could have across large parts of Borneo.

In September, we launched Local Biodiversity Outlooks 2 – a major report produced with the indigenous caucus that represents indigenous peoples from seven continents and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. It demonstrates the massive contributions that indigenous peoples and local communities already make to biodiversity and their centrality to protecting nature.

We have also supported the Zero Tolerance Initiative, a rightsholder-led initiative challenging killings and violence in global supply chains, through engaging with investors and major global brands.

Through our Legal and Human Rights Programme, including our Strategic Legal Response Centre, we have continued using legal routes to fight for land and human rights and given legal support to forest peoples, including communities in Kenya forcefully evicted during the pandemic.

Looking forward

This will be my last Director’s message as I am stepping down from the Director role in 2021 for pastures new. However, I am glad that we will go into 2021 in a reasonable financial position, with a strong leadership team, better systems, more effective internal coordination, and deeper external collaborations. In the current context, FPP’s work is more important than ever. FPP will be working with our partners and allies to continue responding to the urgent needs that communities are facing on the ground, as well as pushing for systemic change at the global level.

James Whitehead
Director, Forest Peoples Programme

“The respect and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories and resources, and to self-governance, is indispensable for the sustainable management of our planet’s limited resources.”

Joan Carling, Director, Indigenous Peoples Rights International
Our global reach at a glance

**Event**
- Zero Tolerance Initiative: Supported human rights and environmental defenders and coalition members to engage international investors, target EU policy makers and conduct joint advocacy on supply chains and human rights

**Costa Rica**
- Provided legal support for Bróram and Britiri peoples; the IACHR declared admissible the Bróram’s petition for recognition of their ancestral territory

**Belize**
- Support provided to 41 Maya villages to draft legislation and secure title to 550,000 hectares of forest; the Government of Belize agreed delimitation principles and methodology in respect of Maya lands and this was endorsed by the Caribbean Court of Justice

**Guna Yala, Panama**
- Supported documentation of Usub indigenous knowledge and strengthened food security

**Guayaquil, Ecuador**
- Study carried out on Social aspects of the Pilot Project for Jurisdictional Certification of the Ecuadorean Amazon

**Peru**
- Collaboration with Shipibo organisations in Ucayali, the Institute for Legal Defence (IDL) and human rights bodies to repeal state ordinance threatening to open up 3.5 million hectares of rainforest for agribusiness
- Halted oil drilling on lands of Wampis, Achuar, Ashaninka, Shipibo and Awajun peoples in the Amazon

**Guyana**
- Supported the Wapichan to map sacred mountains, monitor impacts of illegal gold mining and protect their land titles
- Cabínet approved a land title application for Pararabo Village, one of the largest land titles in Guyana (new government has delayed implementation of the decision)
- Support provided to VSIS and Saamaka with respect to the drafting of framework legislation to recognize indigenous and tribal rights
- Provided support to VDS and Saamaka for the development of a SRD Cultural Heritage Policy
- Submitted additional information to the IACHR in the Akawao Indigenous Community of Finnemare case

**Uganda**
- The long-awaited final hearing of a landmark case brought by the Batwa and the United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (JOBUD) took place in the Constitutional Court in October 2020
- Inclusion of the Kisoro Memorandum in government policy

**Sudan, Bangladesh**
- Supported the Munda Cooperative to regain indigenous land and continue biodiversity restoration

**Liberia**
- Scoped out options for rights-based conservation in Liberia where 11 new protected areas are being proposed which could threaten to dispossess communities of large tracts of their customary lands
- Helped partners obtain COVID-19 response funds

**Kenya**
- The Ogiek used new technology to collect data to map their territories and resources
- Provided legal support for five court cases defending Sengwer, Mt. Elgon Ogiek and Mau Ogiek peoples’ land rights and Mau Ogiek supported to seek implementation of their successful African Court ruling
- Supported community radio to assist community COVID-19 responses

**DRC**
- Supported partners to secure convictions and a decision in favour of community compensation in a case of abuse and murder of community members by Kahuzi-Biega park guards

**Southern Africa**
- Trained lawyers from southern African countries in litigating indigenous peoples’ rights. This involved lawyers from southern Africa including Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa

**U.S.**
- Co-hosted a global webinar with the Tropical Forest Alliance sharing lessons of FFP and partner case studies of jurisdictional programmes for sustainable commodity production in Indonesia, Malaysia and Ecuador

**Event**
- Supported indigenous and local community inputs into the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

**Event**
- “Breaking the heart of Borneo” campaign to expose threats to indigenous peoples’ territories and forests stemming from mega infrastructure projects including the Trans-Kalimantan Road Network project

**Event**
- Supported indigenous and local community inputs into the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

**Event**
- Convened conference on human rights in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

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Recognising land rights is vital for the security, livelihoods and prosperity of forest communities, and the ecosystems on which they depend. We support partners and indigenous communities to secure their land rights in practice by equipping them with tools to manage and safeguard their territories and create the political spaces to assert their rights at the national, regional and international levels.

Monitoring of threats to community and indigenous territories and lands was progressed in Colombia, extended in Guyana and supported in Indonesia in 2020. In east Africa, we continued to support communities to use the TIMBY and Mapeo monitoring tools, to track and report on human rights violations and map ancestral lands in support of claims before the National Land Commission and domestic courts. Our team has helped to visualise deforestation of indigenous lands over decades of encroachment by palm oil expansion in Indonesia, Colombia, Peru and Liberia. In Guyana, we helped to map the interconnection of sacred mountains and their importance for Wapichan nao culture as well as collated and mapped historical Wapichan settlements (1769 to present). This information is crucially important to substantiating relations to land as part of Guyana’s land titling process.

Partners proactively monitored human rights conditions and development indicators in their territories and areas. Using the Indigenous Navigator (a global set of tools for tracking and assessing violations of basic rights) indigenous peoples in Suriname and Cameroon developed their own projects to tackle persistent violations of their human rights. FPP and partners also worked with Navigator partners on global assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on indigenous peoples and the roles of indigenous women in supporting self-determined development initiatives.

Our long-term efforts for human rights to be made a central plank of conservation agendas continued with dedicated support to Batwa communities impacted by the Kahuzi-Biega National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, including supporting the Batwa to present a resolution pathway that secures their forestlands and their rights. We also provided legal support to communities impacted by the Salonga National Park in the same country. In Cameroon, the Gbabandi launched a Declaration from Gbabandi, Cameroon’s national platform of forest indigenous peoples. In Kenya we supported the Elgon Ogiek and Sengwer communities in negotiations that led to the EU cancelling its €31 million climate adaptation and mitigation WaTER project when the Government was unable to guarantee the project would secure rather than violate community rights.

At the international level, following the release of an independent report into human rights violations at sites managed by World Wide Fund for Nature, the team advocated for urgent reform of conservation practice, particularly in East, West and Central Africa. We sounded an alarm on the potential implications of a target for 30% of the world’s terrestrial and marine area to be converted into protected areas, highlighting the need for secure tenure and partnerships with indigenous peoples and local communities.
Country focus

**Cameroon**
Based on Indigenous Navigator surveys revealing the widespread lack of citizenship papers, indigenous communities trained community midwives and relays in Boumba-and-Ngoko Province to register over 300 birth certificates. Our partners produced a legal guide for community members on how to establish a birth certificate.

**Democratic Republic of Congo**
We assisted Batwa communities to write a detailed memorandum expressing their frustration with the series of unmet promises made by the Kahuzi-Biega Park management, as they were finding themselves sidelined from decision-making about their land and livelihoods. Our Strategic Legal Response Centre provided legal representation for a Batwa chief and Batwa community members convicted for entering their ancestral lands in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, following a hasty military trial replete with irregularities. We also supported partners in a successful appeal against Salonga National Park that resulted in park guards being found guilty of torture and gender-based violence.

**Liberia**
While customary land rights are recognised in the 2018 Land Rights Act, these rights are threatened by continuing moves to gazette large parts of the Liberian forest for conservation purposes. This risks compounding an already precarious situation for communities facing dispossession and destruction of forests as a result of extractive industries and agroindustries. We carried out legal analysis and Free Prior and Informed Consent evaluations to assess the opportunities for a new community and rights-based model of conservation to be successful in Liberia.

**Kenya**
The Ogiek community of Mount Elgon, with support from FPP, obtained a pilot project funded by VOICE, combining their immense knowledge of managing their customary land with a new GIS app. The Ogiek will now be able to collect, manage and apply data on land and resource use to advance their land rights, feeding directly into the ongoing court cases and claims before the National Land Commission using the 2016 Community Land Act.

**Colombia**
The Emberá Chami people of the Cañamomo Lomaprieta Indigenous Reserve in Caldas obtained with support from FPP, a preliminary delimitation of their collective territory by the National Lands Agency, using community mapping data. We also supported the creation of hydrology and terrain models and other base data, and an animated series of forest loss data, which partner organisations were able to use in court and on social media.

**Suriname**
Communities used data from the Indigenous Navigator tool to map territorial boundaries. Our partners submitted a petition to the government demanding recognition of community land rights in Wit Santi territory, backed by a new map.

**Peru**
Local partners FECONAU used animated forest loss data from the community of Santa Clara de Uchunya’s customary territory, shared on social media and combined with testimony and investor research, to illustrate the Shipibo community’s struggle against oil palm.

**Indonesia**
Forty-seven maps analysing forest loss were submitted by FPP and a coalition of local NGOs to the RSPO as part of a complaint documenting the destruction caused by ‘shadow companies’ of the Fangiono group in Kalimantan, in contravention of the standards agreed by the parent company, First Resources.

“Protected areas in Democratic Republic of Congo will cease to exist in the future unless their management programmes are decolonized.”

*Dominique Bikaba, Bashi Tribe, Democratic Republic of Congo*
FPP continued to focus on **the critical role of robust protections for human rights** to ensure the sustainability of global supply chains. We supported forest peoples and environmental defenders to challenge destructive development and illegal land acquisition by loggers, miners, cattle ranchers, oil palm growers, and extractive projects. Connections between these commodity sectors and illegal land traffickers and the narcotics trade were highlighted in reports and communications. FPP and partner evidence also continued to put the spotlight on private international finance, which drives commodity production on the ‘extractive frontier’, is largely unaccountable and ignores gross violations of human rights, land conflicts and forest clearance.

We documented the **impact of agricultural commodity supply chains and international finance** on human rights and forests in Colombia, Peru and Indonesia (see, for example, FPP report “Ending Impunity”). We researched and advocated against the rollback of environmental and social safeguards caused by commodity production in Peru, Colombia, Indonesia, Brazil and Democratic Republic of Congo. We also collected evidence on mega infrastructure projects in Borneo and the Amazon basin.

The **Zero Tolerance Initiative to end killings and violence in global supply chains** continued with support to environmental defenders, enabling them to make direct inputs on supply chains, deforestation and human rights at the EU, the UN and the Consumer Goods Forum – a key platform for retailer producers of products from palm oil and soya. We continued to collaborate with the Accountability Framework Initiative on ethical supply chains by providing training for communities and companies in Colombia.

Our work to **protect the rights of communities affected by palm oil plantations** continued at the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), High Conservation Values Network and the High Carbon Stock Approach, including closing loopholes in the RSPO and FSC systems. With our partners, we made detailed inputs to the Consumer Goods Forum ‘Forest Positive’ commodity road map for the palm oil sector, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Implementation Reporting Framework of the Palm Oil Collaboration Group. In June, we and local partners co-hosted an international webinar with the Tropical Forest Alliance on emerging lessons from the ground on jurisdictional programmes for sustainable commodity production in Indonesia, Malaysia and Ecuador. Companies like Unilever, Cargill and Wilmar are taking the issues that we have raised with them seriously thereby increasing the pressure they exert to raise standards upstream.

We pressed for **improved corporate governance and due diligence in EU forest policy** through sustained inputs together with allied NGOs and southern partners. This resulted in strong language on customary land and resource rights and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in EU Parliament own-initiative reports and resolutions. As a result of intense advocacy by NGO coalitions of which FPP is a member, the European Parliament endorsed proposals for mandatory due diligence by businesses and investors whose operations and supply chains involve the production, harvest or extraction of ‘forest-risk’ commodities.

We contributed to the **UK Government’s policies on sustainable trade, ‘forest-risk’ commodities and UK finance for forests, biodiversity and climate change mitigation**. At a high-level ministerial roundtable, indigenous leaders from Asia and the Amazon alongside FPP and other NGO allies urged senior British government decision makers to prioritise the rights of indigenous peoples in the UK’s proposed laws on sustainable commodity supply chains, and to make companies and financiers accountable to affected communities overseas, with proper enforcement mechanisms.
Country focus

Cameroon
The indigenous Bagyeli organisation BACUDA and civil society organisation APED submitted an early warning request to the UN Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination concerning the threat to Bagyeli customary lands from a CamVert oil palm plantation.

Colombia
Significant work was undertaken in Colombia in support of collective community-based systems for the protection of land and forest defenders. In the Caribbean region, FPP and local partner Corporación de Desarrollo Solidario (CDS) continued to assist peasant and Afrodescendant communities in Montes de María to develop internal early warning systems for threats of violence and intimidation against communities in the context of increasing presence of illegal groups and powerful agribusiness and extractive industry interests. FPP and local lawyers additionally accompanied the Guardia Indígena in the Cañamomo Lomaprieta Reserve (Caldas) and the Guardia Cimarrona in Northern Cauca to strengthen their internal communication systems in their territories with repeater antennae and associated equipment. Technical FPP assistance with collective self-protection protocols was also provided to both guardias in 2020 and is ongoing.

Peru
Our partners in the Peruvian Amazon succeeded in getting the Regional Government of Ucayali to repeal a regional ordinance that would have removed protections on 3.5 million hectares of rainforest and opened up indigenous lands to invasion. In July we obtained the temporary withdrawal of the Geopark oil company, whose presence on the Wampis and Achuar peoples’ lands has for years threatened their cultural survival. We are now working to ensure this change becomes permanent.

In 2020, after seven years of sustained pressure, the Shipibo-Konibo community of Ucayali succeeded in getting the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund, Norges Bank Investment Management, to divest from Alicorp, a Peruvian consumer goods giant. Alicorp was buying palm oil from the Ocho Sur company which, in December, was ordered by Peru’s environmental regulator to halt operations on Shipibo lands and pay $2.5 million for environmental damages.

Indonesia
The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) accepted our complaint against Golden Agri-Resources (GAR) that GAR is illegally operating oil palm plantations inside Indonesia’s protected Forest Zone, violating Indonesian law and RSPO standards. The complaint also cites evidence that the company was aware of this, and corruptly tried to cover its tracks. Our previous complaints about GAR remain unresolved, and we are again calling on RSPO to investigate these serious violations of RSPO standards and to suspend GAR’s sustainability certificates.

Our briefing on the Dayak Bekati’ of Indonesian Borneo highlighted the takeover of their lands by a transmigration model called KotaTerpadu Mandiri – integrated self-sustaining townships. KTM are designed to totally transform both human and biological landscapes through deforestation, industrial developments such as mines and plantations, colonisation and cultural assimilation. Dozens of KTM schemes are being implemented all across the archipelago.

The Forest Stewardship Council agreed to investigate Long Isun’s complaint about the Roda Mas Group forestry company. The company has violated human rights since 2013, including the intimidation and criminalisation of community leaders and destruction of thousands of hectares of rainforest, ancient burial sites, hunting grounds and water sources.
We worked with community and civil society partners to use legal tools effectively so they can gain greater control over their traditional lands, territories and resources. Despite COVID-19 restrictions FPP’s international team of 10 lawyers from eight different countries including Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Australia, the US and the UK provided advice and assistance to partners through grassroots capacity-building and regional sharing meetings, often working alongside in-country lawyers. We also supported partner communities to access justice through domestic courts and the use of regional and international human rights law and complaint mechanisms, and to contribute to shaping domestic legal and policy reforms.

We continued to build our Strategic Legal Response Centre (SLRC) which works in alliance with leading academics, legal practitioners, land rights experts and others to provide more flexible legal support. The SLRC supported 12 strategic legal cases with partners seeking recognition of their ancestral lands and protection from incursions, intimidation and violence. For example, Colombia’s Uitoto people formulated a critical assessment of obstacles to implementing their human rights safeguard plan as part of the state’s fulfilment of a landmark 2009 Constitutional Court Order protecting Colombia’s indigenous peoples whose survival was threatened by the country’s armed conflict.

In Belize, the Caribbean Court of Justice judgment in favour of the Maya of Toledo is being implemented, which will secure title for 41 Maya communities covering 550,000 hectares of forest. We helped the Maya Leaders Alliance and Government of Belize agree Delimitation Principles and Methodology for the auto-delimitation of Maya lands. In Cameroon, we continued to represent the Bagyeli indigenous people in their administrative Court action challenging the grant of a 20,000 hectare palm oil concession on their ancestral lands to the Biopalm company, which remains pending.

We advanced the case (ongoing since 2008) of two villages in Guyana seeking full titling and extension of title, and expect this to be completed in 2021.

The SLRC offered rapid response legal support for urgent threats or key opportunities to advance rights on eight occasions. We assisted the Cañamomo Lomaprieta Indigenous Reserve In Colombia to counter illegal and physical threats to derail a landmark Constitutional Court ruling in their favour. FPP provided legal support to five leaders of Colombia’s Montes de María community who were unjustly criminalized for trying to access clean water. In Peru our support enabled Ashaninka, Shipibo and Awajun indigenous peoples to obtain a temporary halt to the ‘Block 200’ oil drilling project planned on their ancestral lands, that would otherwise have been a fast-tracked process. In Cameroon we provided legal scoping support for Bagyeli communities threatened by the proposed CamVert oil palm plantation.

The SLRC also supports the development of a community of practice around forest peoples’ rights at international, regional and national levels, and builds the capacity of forest peoples to use legal tools. For example, during 2020 we ran our first training course for lawyers from southern African countries on litigating indigenous peoples’ rights.

We continued to provide legal support to strengthen human rights in global standard-setting, including the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, Accountability Framework Initiative, Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) and other global policy spaces concerned with countering deforestation in commodity supply chains.

“International financial institutions should not be contributing to the contamination of our forests and waters; we cannot eat money; we can only eat what is produced by the earth.” Wrays Pérez, Wampis Nations, Peru
**Country focus**

**Kenya**
For decades, the Sengwer of the Cherangany Hills have endured violent evictions by the Kenyan Forest Service ostensibly to enforce forest protection law but, in reality, weakening forest protection and causing forest loss. The Sengwer challenged their eviction in Kenya’s Land and Environment Court, whose judgment is now being appealed in the Court of Appeal.

The Ogiek of the Mau Forest obtained a landmark ruling by the African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights in 2017, recognising their land rights. However, they continue to face repeated evictions and encroachment on their lands. The Ogiek are seeking full implementation of the African Court ruling via a separate judgment on reparations, however the hearing was repeatedly postponed and should be heard in 2021. The Ogiek also successfully sought an injunction temporarily stopping the government issuing land titles on their ancestral land in Eastern Mau Forest; the main case remains pending.

**Uganda**
Following over a decade of work by FPP directly with the Batwa people and via the United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU), the Batwa’s Constitutional Court case against the Ugandan government came to a final hearing in October 2020. The case, originally filed in 2013 and significantly amended in 2015 seeks recognition of the Batwa’s rights over, and the restitution of, their ancestral lands in the Bwindi, Mgahinga and Echuya protected areas from which they have been evicted and excluded for many decades. To our knowledge this is the first time the land rights of a forest people have been litigated in the Ugandan Constitutional Court using arguments based on the Constitution of Uganda in conjunction with common law native title and human rights law. A judgement is expected in 2021. Whatever the outcome tribute is paid to the Batwa people’s incredible patience and determination in bringing the case, the tireless efforts of the staff and board of UOBDU, the professional advice and support of Onyango & Company Advocates, the depth and breadth of expertise provided by a wide range of expert witnesses, and the support of donors without which the case would never have got off the ground let alone reached final hearing. We also continued to support the Batwa’s Kisoro Memorandum and its inclusion in policy reform within the government.

**Democratic Republic of Congo**
We provided legal support to eight Batwa leaders sentenced to heavy prison terms for accessing their traditional lands in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Four were later released on bail and in September five Batwa men, who had been held in pre-trial for a year, were released through ongoing legal support from our partner CAMV and FPP’s lawyer. In December 2020, five Kahuzi Biega eco-guards were found guilty of murdering a Batwa man and wounding another young Batwa, and sentenced to between 10 and 20 years. CAMV supported the families to file a civil law suit against ICCN (employer of the eco-guards) and the tribunal awarded an unprecedented $90,000 compensation to the families of the victims.

**Costa Rica**
In 2020, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights declared admissible the Teribe (Brórán) people’s petition for recognition of their ancestral territory by the State of Costa Rica. Despite the precautionary measures ordered by the IACHR in 2015, our partners continue to face daily threats while defending their forest land and governance rights. Through local lawyers, we continued to support the Brórán and BiBrí peoples’ work to secure their lands, including calling on Costa Rica and the IACHR to ensure that the 2015 precautionary measures are enacted. We called on the government to re-open its shelved investigation into murdered human rights defender Sergio Rojas and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

**Peru**
In January the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders made an official visit to Shipibo and Ucayali communities. In October, four indigenous leaders gave evidence to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on state corruption and violence against their communities for opposing the deforestation of their ancestral territory for oil palm. Prior to the special IACHR hearing, FPP published ‘Ending impunity’, which analyses the drivers of such violence. The Commission granted precautionary measures to protect members of the Santa Clara de Uchunya Shipibo community and the chairman of the Federation of Native Communities of Ucayali.

**Indonesia**
With 14 Indonesian indigenous and human rights organisations we submitted a report and an urgent action request to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concerning the expropriation of Dayak and other indigenous lands for roadbuilding, plantations and mining along the Indonesia-Malaysia border and forcible relocation of communities. The State is using the COVID-19 pandemic to implement a sweeping deregulation process, eroding environmental and social safeguards, and exposing displaced communities to the disease. The complaint to the International Labour Organisation by the Toba Batak community of Ompu Ronggur in North Sumatra was ‘declared receivable’ by the ILO under Convention 111. We made a film to highlight the significance of this case, which is emblematic of the indigenous peoples in Indonesia.
We mutually reviewed and renewed our long-standing partnerships with indigenous organisations and local NGOs in Suriname, Panama, Bangladesh, Thailand, Tuvalu, Madagascar, Antigua and Barbuda, to continue our work together on sustainable resource use and conservation, based on traditional knowledge. We supported restoration and territorial management actions, including work on replanting mangroves, reducing plastic pollution, community research and biodiversity monitoring of key local flora and fauna. Future priorities include building resilience and adaptation to climate impacts; working on livelihoods diversification, food systems and food security; strengthening and expanding community initiatives on conservation and restoration; and implementing more gender-inclusive programmes and approaches, as well as investing in the involvement of children and youth.

At the beginning of 2020, we co-convened with key partners a ‘human rights in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework’ conference, resulting in detailed recommendations for amendments to the goals and targets under negotiation in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, meetings under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) were postponed or carried out virtually. Despite this, FPP continued to provide technical support to these negotiations, and launched the second edition of Local Biodiversity Outlooks in September. This ground-breaking publication is produced in partnership with the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, the Indigenous Women’s Biodiversity Network, Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge and the Secretariat of the CBD and emerged as a key source of evidence of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities’ contributions to biodiversity, sustainable development and climate change commitments.

With local partners from the Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK) network, we organised and participated in webinars for indigenous peoples and local communities on the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) supporting inputs into the IPBES Thematic Assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their control, drawing on COD-ILK members’ experiences from Kenya, Russia, the Arctic, Panama, Northern Thailand, and Philippines. We also supported the production of information, educational resources and briefing papers on IPBES and IPBES products, and the creation of a Secretariat for the Centres of Distinction, based in the Philippines, which will facilitate the network. The COD-ILK Secretariat launched a regular newsletter, ‘Indigenous Options’, and a new website for sharing educational materials and updates.

We worked with partners to consolidate the Global Network on Indigenous-led Education (ILED) – a coalition of indigenous peoples’ organisations, northern support organisations, donors and networks. This exciting initiative seeks to create more awareness, resources and support for community projects on inter-generational learning and education in line with cultural norms and values and languages. The network spearheads education as a key strategy for building cultural and ecological resilience, and youth and women’s leadership.

“More and more we are realising that the current biodiversity crisis is caused by the prevailing philosophy that separates nature and culture, that humans can exploit nature as we please.” Josefa Tauli, Ibaloi-Kankanaey Igorot youth, Philippines
**Country focus**

**Cameroon**
We supported local partner Okani’s work to inspire a new generation of Baka leaders in Cameroon by piloting leadership development compatible with Baka culture, where knowledge holders and cultural guides take the place of hierarchies. The approach used specific aspects of Baka culture to develop participants’ self-esteem, and encourage individuals to take on leadership roles according to their abilities, their environment and their traditional knowledge.

**Panama**
With our partners, we supported a study of the health and biodiversity of coral reefs of Guna Yala and provided supplies and fishing materials to community fishermen affected by the pandemic. We compiled (in Guna and Spanish) indigenous knowledge on climate change, biodiversity and ecosystems, drawing on the holistic Guna vision including language, classification systems, resource-use practices, social interactions, rituals and spirituality. A map on forest cover and vulnerable agricultural areas in Usdub community was produced using remote-sensing images and data. We invested in materials, plants and labour to strengthen Usdub food security in designated agricultural sites on the mainland – a climate-adaptation strategy for the island-based Guna.

**Suriname**
Communities used data from the Indigenous Navigator tool to support local language instruction in schools, research and promote traditional foods and healthy lifestyles, create local renewable energy grids for community use and prepare a baseline report on the situation of indigenous peoples in Suriname. A leadership programme for village councils focused on practical skills like negotiation and advocacy, presentation and media engagement, and communication with the community and within the village council.

**Bangladesh**
We supported the Munda Cooperative in the Sundarbans in negotiations to regain some of their hereditary land that had been usurped by powerful persons backed by corrupt local government. We provided resource user cooperatives with course materials and training modules for their ongoing innovative practices for biodiversity restoration in vulnerable ecosystems, particularly mangrove forests. These included planting programmes, nature-based production of resources such as crabs, fish, and golpata, and active monitoring of the forest’s biodiversity status. Our partner Unnayan Onneshan’s ecosystem-based biodiversity outlook report ‘Sundarbans is Our Mind: Traditional Knowledge, Customary Sustainable Use and Community Based Innovation’ will be published in 2021. Unnayan Onneshan’s project ‘Intergenerational Transfer of Traditional Knowledge and Customary Sustainable Practices’ received an award from the United Nations University’s Regional Centre of Expertise for Education in Sustainable Development.

**Thailand**
Our partners supported 45 communities and eight networks in natural resource management activities including capacity building of community leaders, setting up inter-community management mechanisms with clear roles and regulations, fire management, creating two new watershed networks and establishing aquatic conservation areas. A learning and exchange space was created for communities affected by forest reclamation policy in Chiang Dao District, mining in Omkoi District and the construction of a reservoir in Nan Province. Enhanced food security and self-reliance through agroforestry, composting and organic vegetable production enabled communities to share more food which was especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities were also supported in waste management and trials with products from wild plants.

“**What would it be like if such communities were left to take care of their own lands? We have lived in our lands and have conserved the biodiversity for so long, it only helps if we are empowered to do more. Evictions just leads to more loss of biodiversity.”**

Milly Chepkorir, Sengwer community representative, Kenya

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The Toba Batak of North Sumatra have harvested incense resin from their agroforests for millennia. The incense trade is a mainstay of their livelihoods, now threatened by the government-sanctioned Eucalyptus plantations of Toba Pulp Lestari, a pulp and paper conglomerate registered in Singapore. Credit: Marcus Colchester FPP
In 2020, many of the communities with whom we work were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges, FPP responded rapidly to changing needs, and many activities at both local and global levels continued as planned. Thanks to our funders’ flexibility, we could provide immediate financial support to affected communities, and adapt plans to meet the most urgent needs on the ground while strengthening distance support to partners to compensate for travel restrictions. Although some major international meetings were cancelled, the transition to online working was fast, resulting in increased participation and enabled us to host webinars with high-level speakers from around the world and global audiences.

Our report analysing the impacts and underlying inequalities around COVID-19 was launched during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Expert Group Meeting on the pandemic, in December. The report shows that the pandemic is having a disproportionate and specific effect on indigenous and tribal peoples. Stories from 11 communities reveal the impacts and how the communities responded to the severe absence of an appropriate State response on disease control, communication and information. Our research with Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic Yale Law School shows how states and other actors are using the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to roll back social and environmental safeguards. In doing so, they are eroding the rights of indigenous peoples in the five most tropically forested countries of the world while failing to provide the support and assistance they need to deal with the pandemic. Many governments have increasingly criminalised indigenous human rights defenders and legitimised or even encouraged the threat and use of violence against them. Indigenous peoples’ lack of access to justice at all levels allows this culture of impunity to prevail.

We are continuing to work with indigenous and local communities as the world moves towards planning for recovery, ensuring that their perspectives and insight are not ignored by policymakers.

“The life of the community is particularly affected as the routine that they are familiar with is drastically changing. Many are no longer organising traditional festivals from fear, not only of being infected with the virus, but more so of being incriminated by the law enforcement who now control all events.” Representative of Okani, Cameroon
“The school bus driver does receive hand sanitiser, mouth and nose cover, gloves. What about the safety of the children? Education authorities take measures without any communication with the parents in the interior. You must have TV or radio to hear the news and to know what measures are being taken. Otherwise you don’t know.” Muriel Fernandes, village leader (‘chief’) of the Lokono village Casipora (Kashipuri), Suriname

Country focus

Cameroon
We supported a community information campaign, via local radio in indigenous languages, to inform forest communities of strategies to slow the spread of the disease. We worked with partners to provide hygiene and protection kits and information to over 50 Baka and Bagyeli communities.

Kenya
We supported community responses to the COVID-19 emergency by developing community radio.

Liberia
We enabled our partners to secure dedicated COVID-19 response funds from Waterloo Foundation to provide education and PPE to vulnerable communities that had no access to health facilities.

Colombia
FPP enabled emergency provision of personal protective equipment kits, containing masks, disinfectant, and hand cleansers to Nipodimaki, Muinane, Nonuya, and Andoque communities in the Middle Caquetá region of the Amazon. Funds for procurement of kits and biosecurity equipment were likewise provided to OPIAC and to FPP local partners and black communities in N Cauca and Montes de María in Bolivar department as well as communities in the Chocó via our local NGO partner the Justice and Peace Commission (CJJP). Emergency support was also channelled to the Embera Chami communities in the Cañamomo Lomaprieta Indigenous Reserve in Caldas department.

Peru
We provided emergency support to indigenous peoples and organisations with medicine, hygiene supplies and food, and supported partners’ advocacy to obtain State support. We facilitated the development of indigenous biosafety protocols in San Martin and produced audios in Kichwa about COVID-19. The Wampís Nation closed its territorial borders, and subsequently (alongside EarthRights International) filed a lawsuit against the GeoPark oil company for irresponsibly moving its staff in and out of the area thereby increasing the risk of COVID-19 infection amongst the Wampís people.

Suriname
We supported our partners to engage actively with the government during the COVID-19 pandemic and to distribute culturally-sensitive information materials on film, leaflets, newsletters, bags and banners and social media, translated into indigenous languages. Our partner VIDS strengthened communications within and between communities with equipment for virtual communications, and set up a regional communication strategy to counter COVID-19 mis-information and reassure communities. VIDS produced a report on the participation of indigenous peoples in the decisions made during the pandemic and sent a report on the Covid-19 situation to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

FPP commissioned five country case studies in October November to document weakening of protections for indigenous land rights and FPIC in Indonesia, DRC, Colombia, Peru and Brazil during the pandemic. The country findings and a global report warning against further rollback in safeguards in national and international Covid ‘recovery’ policies are to be published in the 1st quarter of 2021.


All across the Wapichan territory, Guyana masks were sewn by womens’ groups. The South Rupununi District Council provided the materials and the women sewed voluntarily. Photo: South Rupununi District Council
Local partners

We partner with indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant peoples and forest communities, their community-based organisations and other civil society organisations to support forest peoples’ struggles for the recognition of their rights. Our relationships with communities, organisations and movements are linked to our principle objective of enhancing self-determination, understanding that self-determination is exercised at many levels and in many spaces.

We are not prescriptive about the shape of our working relationships, but take a context-specific approach, respecting that each community is different, and every community will evolve over time. The voices and preferences of the communities with whom we work take precedence at all times. Our relationships reflect the changing needs of rights holders and their organisations and our readiness to be flexible and responsive wherever possible. We value long-term commitment to indigenous communities – and we recognize that the struggles they face can take many years and often decades to address.

Global allies

We work to connect local organisations, partners and communities with global allies, knowing that the power of our movement is in our networks and alliances. We partner with international organisations including Indigenous Peoples Rights International, IWGIA, Land Rights Now, The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility, The Land Portal, The International Land Coalition, Global Landscapes Forum, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, UK NGO Coalition on Forests, and many others.
Guiding principles

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)
A people/community has the right to give or withhold its consent to proposed projects that may affect the lands they customarily own, occupy or otherwise use. We have worked to advance FPIC for many years, and it is now a key principle in international law and jurisprudence related to indigenous peoples. Although not without significant implementation failings in practice FPIC is a key norm subscribed to by international finance institutions and a significant percentage of the private sector. It requires informed, non-coercive negotiations between investors, companies or governments and indigenous peoples prior to the development and establishment of oil palm estates, timber plantations or other enterprises on their customary lands. It means that those who wish to use the customary lands belonging to indigenous communities must enter negotiations with them. The communities have the right to decide whether they will agree to the project or not once they have a full and accurate understanding of the implications of the project on them and their customary land.

Self-determination
This is a fundamental human right and means that indigenous and other peoples can decide their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. They have the right to autonomy or self-government and can choose and drive their own means of subsistence or livelihoods. The right to self-determination is made explicit in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Articles 3 and 4. Self-determination work focuses on getting the rights and interests of forest peoples recognised in policies and programmes; supporting forest peoples to build their capacity to claim and exercise their human rights; counteracting top-down policies and projects that affect forest peoples; promoting community-based, sustainable forest management; coordinating NGO actions on forests in line with forest peoples’ visions; and linking up indigenous and forest peoples’ movements regionally and internationally.

Land Rights
If forest peoples are to survive and flourish, they need secure rights to the lands, territories and natural resources that they have always depended on. Under international law, governments have an obligation to respect and protect indigenous peoples’ land rights. For forest peoples themselves, secure rights to their lands and territories are not just a matter of law, they are the ground of their being and the source of their identity. Long-term stewardship of lands and forests requires that communities have clear rights and the authority to own, use, manage and control these areas. Along with our partners, FPP puts land security at the heart of our work. We help forest peoples clarify their land rights, map the way they own and use lands and forests, file claims for government recognition of these areas and develop long-term community plans so they can act as effective custodians of natural resources that their livelihoods depend on.

Gender
Our Gender Framework and Policy is embedded across all our programmes and aims to foster a safe and participatory environment for women and men to discuss and decide (separately or together) the rules in their own community, on the basis of a broad human rights framework. This community-led approach ensures that it is culturally-appropriate and owned by the communities and peoples we work with. Working with indigenous women’s organisations to ensure women’s rights are protected in land rights struggles, we support women’s groups and highlight gender in business and human rights work. We also facilitate the role of women in legal reform at all levels. The Asian Indigenous Women’s Network and the Indigenous Women’s Biodiversity Network are amongst our valued partners. A key aspect is understanding the different and evolving roles of men and women in dealing with collective and individual property rights and transmission of cultural knowledge, and the gender dimensions of participation and representation. Fostering indigenous women’s leadership, and sharing experience across countries is often a critical element. Our work on gender is inextricably linked to our commitment to safeguarding, to address the vulnerabilities faced by women and young people in any relationship where power and resources exist. In 2020, supported by dedicated staffing and funding, we boosted our work on gender through a series of research and learning events.

Toba Batak woodcarving showing the links between ancestral spirits and the land. Drawing by Marcus Colchester FPP
Local Biodiversity Outlooks 2
September 2020
A complement to the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. Local Biodiversity Outlooks presents the perspectives and experiences of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) on the current social-ecological crisis, and their contributions to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and to the renewal of nature and cultures.

LBO-2 Summary, conclusions and recommendations
Human Rights in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: Options for integrating a human-rights based approach to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity September 2020
This report – developed through a collaborative process that included a major thematic workshop and four webinars – makes concrete suggestions for ways to include human rights in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Ground-truthing to improve due diligence on human rights in deforestation-risk supply chains (En) March 2020
This paper highlights how ground-truthing offers major potential to improve risk assessments and audits to prevent harmful supply chain impacts on human rights.

Upholding Human Rights in Jurisdictional Approaches: Some emerging lessons (En)
Including cases from Seruyan Indonesia, Sabah Malaysia, and Ecuador June 2020
This paper contrasts non-State ‘landscape approaches’ with ‘jurisdictional approaches’ in which local governments of sub-national jurisdictions implement land use planning and management regimes, with multi-stakeholder participation that includes the State as a key actor and authority.

Indigenous Peoples and United Nations Human Rights Bodies

The Toba Batak and Toba Pulp Lestari: Seeking remedy through the International Labour Organisation (En/Bahasa Indonesia) August 2020
Briefing supporting the Toba Batak’s complaint that the Indonesian Government is contravening ILO Convention 111 and numerous other human rights standards it has agreed to uphold through ratifying international treaties.

Cameroon: New community guide to natural resource management (Fr) August 2020
The guide summarises current Cameroonian laws relating to natural resource management, and guides communities on what to look for, demand or avoid when faced with a situation of natural resource exploitation on their lands.

Ending Impunity: Confronting the drivers of violence and forest destruction on the agribusiness and extractives frontier in the Peruvian Amazon: a rights-based analysis (En/Sp) October 2020
This report identifies the principal direct and underlying drivers of violence against human rights and environmental defenders and forest destruction in the Peruvian Amazon.


Indigenous women’s realities: Insights from the Indigenous Navigator (En) October 2020
The inequalities and discrimination affecting indigenous women placed them in a particularly vulnerable situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, indigenous women are leading actors in building resilience.

Non-judicial grievance mechanisms as a route to remedy – an unfulfilled opportunity (En/Sp/Bahasa Indonesia) November 2020
Current non-judicial remedy procedures are failing, and complaints procedures of RSPO, FSC, OECD, Unilever and CAO
must be radically overhauled to be accessible, transparent, predictable, equitable, rights-compatible and provide effective remedy.

**Legal guide for establishing a birth certificate in Cameroon (Fr)**
December 2020
This legal guide for community members, produced by our Indigenous Navigator partners in Cameroon, explains how to go about obtaining a birth certificate.

**Breaking the Heart of Borneo: A Plan to Plunder Borneo’s Final Frontier (En/Bahasa Indonesia)**
December 2020
International investment, coupled with de-regulation, is pushing the expansion of oil palm and mega road projects through previously inaccessible forests in the Heart of Borneo, opening them up to exploitation and threatening the millions of indigenous people who depend on them for survival.

**COVID-19 and Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: The Impacts and Underlying Inequalities (En/Sp/Fr)**
December 2020
This report contributes to understanding the disproportionate and specific impact of COVID-19 on indigenous and tribal peoples, building on the responses of indigenous or tribal communities and peoples in ten countries.

**Transmigration townships and the Dayak Bekati: indigenous peoples rights in an industrialised palm oil landscape in Indonesia (En/Bahasa Indonesia)**
December 2020
Industrialised plantations, State-sponsored resettlement schemes, integrationist government social policies, combined with land tenure systems which fail to protect customary rights, create a deadly cocktail threatening the survival of Indonesia’s indigenous peoples.

**Manual: Donde no**
December 2020
This manual seeks to contribute to the safe exercise of the right to indigenous justice, prioritising the resolution of conflicts through traditional and peaceful mechanisms.

**Films from the frontline**

**Video: Indonesia’s state-authorised land grabs discriminate against indigenous peoples and destroy forests**

**Video: Breaking the Heart of Borneo**
Borneo’s borderlands – harbouring some of the oldest and most biodiverse tropical rainforests in the world are at the epicentre of Indonesia and Malaysia’s oil palm expansion where over half of all deforestation is attributed to the monocrop, threatening the home of thousands of indigenous communities.

“**I fear for my life**: How Costa Rica’s government fails to protect indigenous peoples”

**Video: Cry of the Sacred Marutu Tao and its Defenders (Guyana)**
Marutu Tao (Marudi Mountain) is one of a network of mountains in Guyana, that are a core component of Wapichan cultural heritage, but mining activities on it are threatening the environment, the cultural heritage and way of life of the Wapichan.

“**Two years ago, an average of four human rights and environmental defenders were killed each week. Now it’s four people a day – most of those are women, most of them are indigenous.**” John Scott, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
Our total income in 2020 was very similar to 2019 for which, given all the impacts of the pandemic, we are extremely grateful to our donors. Most noticeable has been in the increase in unrestricted income, which although a small proportion (5%) of the total income, is a vital component of our funding which enables all of our other work to happen. Our unrestricted reserves at the year-end are also at a similar level to last year giving us a firm base for 2021. Our biggest single grant in 2020 was from the Norwegian government which will come to an end in March 2021 for work in Indonesia and South America. We were unsuccessful in securing a follow-on grant for that work, due to heavy competition over a smaller funding pot, which is leaving a hole in 2021. We have secured new grants since this news and expect to go into 2022 in a strong position.

A notable impact of COVID-19 in terms of our financial statements is that a greater proportion of funds is being spent through partners with less being spent on travel and workshops. As with the rest of the world, we have embraced technology to allow us to continue to communicate with partners and allies but the inability to travel does have an impact on our ability to work closely with indigenous peoples’ organisations and communities and we look forward to travel becoming possible again.

Although we expect 2021 to be a difficult year in financial and operational terms, not least due to continuing impacts from the pandemic, due to our reserves and resilient funding mix we expect to move into a stronger position by the following year.

Our financial statements are available through our website www.forestpeoples.org
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Annual General Meeting of Forest Peoples Programme: Staff and Board of Trustees, July 2020

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Peter Willis  Finance Manager
Tom Younger  Programme Coordinator, Peru & Junior Policy Advisor
Ana Zbona  Facilitator, Zero Tolerance Initiative

Associates
In 2020 our group of Associates acted as advisors to our Board and Staff. Associates are experts in their field, and are invited, known and trusted allies of our work.
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