Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) continues to support forest peoples in Africa, Asia, and South and Central America in their struggle for land rights and control over their traditional territories. This year we have seen significant progress towards their aim to gain recognised ownership of their customary lands. FPP has helped to create spaces for their voices to be heard across complex political and social global landscapes. This report sets out the ongoing challenges of this work, as well as the achievements, and we would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have made our work in 2017 possible.

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) acknowledges and expresses our thanks for the following support:

Arcus Foundation  
Both Ends  
Christensen Fund  
Climate and Land Use Alliance  
European Commission  
The Ford Foundation  
Harmony with Nature  
International Institute for Environment and Development  
International Labour Office  
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs  
JMG Foundation  
Meridian Institute  
Oxfam Novib  
Rainforest Fund  
Rainforest Foundation US  
Rights and Resources Initiative  
Sacharuna Foundation  
Samworth Foundation  
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency  
Size of Herefordshire  
Size of Wales  
Swedish Resilience Council/Swedbio  
Synchronicity Earth  
UK Department for International Development  
Waterloo Foundation  
Zoological Society London  

Thanks also to our individual donors.
A drone is used to map and visualise community and commercial land use in Pulai Gading village, South Sumatra, Indonesia. The village lost grazing land and rice fields to pulpwood and oil palm plantations. © Dico Luckyharto/PPP
Nearly all forests across the globe are inhabited. The peoples who live there have customary rights and ways of life and traditional knowledge that are attuned to their forest environments. Yet, government policies commonly treat forests as empty lands owned and controlled by the state and available for development, colonisation, logging, plantations, dams, mines, oil wells, gas pipelines and agribusinesses. These encroachments often force peoples out of their homes and their forest lands.

Many conservation schemes to establish wilderness or protected reserves also deny forest peoples’ rights. FPP supports forest peoples and indigenous organisations to promote an alternative vision of how forests should be managed and controlled, based on respect for the rights of the peoples who know them best.

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.

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 Approaches

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

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Networking, sharing information and **building solidarity** for coordinated action among a wide range of actors.
2017 was a busy and rewarding year for FPP and the 50-plus partners we work with across 20 countries around the globe. The 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provided a moment for reflection on achievements, and on the continuing and emerging threats facing forest-dependent and indigenous peoples.

Supporting the exercise of self-determination remains a central strategy for FPP in advocating for, and achieving, sustained change in the lives and futures of the peoples with whom we work. Key national declarations by indigenous peoples in Cameroon, Colombia and Peru in 2017 asserted their rights to govern themselves and to engage with states as equals.

“The control of our territory and the exercise of our own self-government is not an aspiration that we are seeking to formalise through the documents that we are submitting to the state, but is something we have already been exercising for thousands of years. What we are doing today is putting this in writing in order to formally notify the state and the wider public”.*

Working towards legal and policy reform provides real change in the frameworks that impact on how forest peoples and indigenous peoples are able to control their lives and futures, while access to justice work underpins such reforms with mechanisms to make real the commitments made by state and corporate actors to respect human rights. In a year in which the threat to the very lives of indigenous defenders and existence of their territories was highlighted by the UN and civil society, the importance of legal change and of effective remedies to protect human rights is clear.

2017 saw a focus on gender among our partners and in FPP’s work, with the development of a gender policy for us, and strong networking between women in our partner organisations.

FPP works in solidarity with our partners, civil society and other actors wherever this advances our mission. Such partnerships and networks sustain us and our work, and we look forward now to the challenges to come in 2018 and beyond as we continue to seek practical, grounded change in people’s lives.

As we turn to the future, we are very pleased to be joined in this work by our new Director, James Whitehead, who joins our leadership team in 2018. We welcome James and look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead with renewed vigour and dedication.

Coordination and Management Team

Louise Henson  
Managing Director and Management Lead

Helen Tugendhat  
Operations Lead

Fiona Cottrell  
Finance Lead

Tom Lomax  
Strategy Lead

* In May, delegates of the Wampis Autonomous Territorial Government, exercising their right to self-determination, notified the Peruvian government of the formation of their autonomous government and reminded them of their obligation to recognize their ancestral forest territory. On presenting the dossier, they shared this with parliamentarians.
Our global reach at a glance

**Guyana**
- Launching the Wapichan website, where locally-collected monitoring reports and other local community information is published

**Brussels**
- Advocating for greater attention to land rights in EU regulations of key commodity markets

**New York**
- Advocating for greater rights protection in the context of conservation at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

**Venezuela**
- Supporting indigenous peoples to reject a national park on their lands

**Montreal**
- Developing the strategic use of mapping and monitoring

**Geneva**
- Pushing, with community representatives from Peru, for strengthened accountability of palm oil businesses to forest peoples at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights

**Costa Rica**
- Strengthening government consultation to help address power imbalances

**Bonn**
- Advocating on the protection and promotion of indigenous lands at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

**Paris**
- Monitoring reference to human rights in the World Heritage Convention

**Colombia**
- Asserting collective rights and calling for recognition of indigenous peoples’ autonomy to govern lands, territories and resources

**Peru**
- Working in solidarity with the indigenous Wampis people as they declare themselves an autonomous territorial government

**Suriname**
- Preparing for work to restore ecosystems at a disused mine built on customary lands

**Liberia**
- Supporting Liberian civil society’s advocacy for a Land Rights Bill

**Paraguay**
- Denouncing abuses of indigenous communities by industrial agribusiness
Cameroon
Working with forest communities to support the launch of their declaration, which called for recognition of their which stop abuses by eco-guards in protected areas

Central African Republic
Pushing for land law and forest tenure reform

Democratic Republic of Congo
Providing support to communities suffering abuses from eco-guards in national parks

Republic of Congo
Strengthening communities’ capacity to use mapping and monitoring to collect evidence of land use

Brazzaville
Bringing together regional experts in community-based monitoring

Nepal
Submitting a legal complaint about evictions caused by a road expansion

Bangladesh
Supporting communities resisting threats to the Sundarban

Kenya
Exploring the legal situation around appropriating community lands for conservation

Indonesia
Backing community demands for ownership and control over customary lands and calling for gross human rights violations to be addressed

Thailand
Standing with the Karen people in Kaeng Krachan National Park who are seeking recognition of their rights and culture

Republic of Congo
Strengthening communities’ capacity to use mapping and monitoring to collect evidence of land use
2017 marked a key moment in the struggle of indigenous peoples for self-determination with the 10-year anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. FPP celebrated the many gains made by indigenous peoples in the 10 years since the Declaration was adopted – in legal advances, key legal cases fought and won, increasing global respect and recognition, increasing solidarity and collaboration across the globe. We also took a moment to reflect on what has yet to be achieved, and where the struggle for equality and equity, for self-determination and cultural survival, will need to be fought in the future.

At an international workshop on community-based monitoring information systems and forest peoples’ rights organised by FPP in Pekanbaru, Indonesia, in February, participants issued a call to action – the Pekanbaru Declaration. It expressed solidarity with the community’s wishes to take back control of the activities that occurred on their customary land and called for governments, certification and human rights bodies to address gross human rights violations. Delegates from Africa, Asia and Latin America heard testimonies of the growing harm facing forest communities around the world. Among the stories shared was the situation facing indigenous people from Long Isun, in Long Pahangai, Mahakam Ulu – in East Kalimantan on the island of Borneo.

In Cameroon, in September, the newly created forest indigenous peoples’ platform Gbabandi released a declaration calling for respect of their customary tenure rights. This key expression of their self-determination called for change from the state and other actors on consent, chiefdoms, benefit sharing and participation. In recent years, Cameroon’s indigenous peoples have experienced the increasing threat or loss of land due to mining, agro-industry, oil palm plantations, or conservation, among others, and the declaration demanded that their rights be respected.

“Gbabandi platform speaks with the voice of us, indigenous forest peoples. Gbabandi has shown us that big changes are possible, that we can advance. Now we speak up about the problems that we face, and we see that the work is progressing, and problems can be resolved” – Marie Djoki, Bagyeli from Bella Bas, Department of Océan, Cameroon
In April, indigenous peoples of the Amazon gathered in Bogota, Colombia, self-identifying as the “People of the Centre” and heirs of the Green Territory of Life in the Amazon rainforest. They shared a message with the world, demanding guarantees for their rights and sharing concerns regarding internationally-funded forest, climate change and biodiversity projects that affect their territory, including the National Parks Department’s Heart of the Colombian Amazon Project, supported by the World Bank and Global Environment Facility. They called for more information and substantive changes in the design of the indigenous peoples’ component of the Visión Amazonia forest and climate programme funded by the UK, Germany and Norway, which undermines their principles of consent and participation and applies processes that are not appropriate for their way of thinking and decision making. During the visit to the capital, FPP enabled the delegation of traditional authorities to engage in high level meetings with the National Lands Agency to push for completion of land title extensions to two indigenous reserves (resguardos) bordering the Chiribiquete National Park, which in July resulted in formal approval of legal title of more than 0.5 million hectares of old growth rainforest – a major victory for the Uitoto people who now seek full control and autonomous government over their newly titled forest.

The Wapichan people of Guyana took huge strides towards their own self-determination in September with their own ground-breaking system to defend their human rights and monitor their ancestral lands against harmful development. Following training supported by FPP, community information has been collected using a grassroots land use monitoring arrangement that involves community monitoring teams, the use of smartphone technology, drones, and community digital maps – all controlled and managed directly by the community.

Reflections on FPP’s work on advancing self-determination

By Marie Djoki, Bagyeli from Bella Bas, Department of Océan, Cameroon

FPP’s and OKANI’s work has been very useful for us. Before, we could not speak up in front of others because of fear and shame; we remained behind. We did not know about our rights, particularly us indigenous women. Now, I have seen that women have the right to say something in front of others. This also shows the community that women can contribute to the community’s development and the importance of ensuring that women obtain a good education.

The community-based monitoring has been very useful. Before, we could only talk about the problems that we faced and there were others who said that was not true. With the monitoring we can collect evidence and prove that what we say is true. At the same time, the evidence collected through the monitoring gives courage and power to Ghabandi to advance the work to ensure that indigenous peoples’ rights are respected.

By Romial Mabaya, Supervisor of the Océan zone, Association OKANI, Cameroon

In 2017, FPP has done many activities which have benefitted OKANI and Baka and Bagyeli communities. In the department of Océan, FPP has continued to accompany the creation of community forests. Also the community-based monitoring has been piloted in the Océan zone. In November, OKANI and representatives from several indigenous associations had the opportunity to travel to Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo to strengthen our technical capabilities and learn from the experiences of other countries piloting community-based monitoring.

We have also benefitted from trainings and outreach on indigenous peoples’ rights, land grabbing, and physical abuses. The Indigenous Navigator inception workshop in September has been an opportunity to learn more about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they can support indigenous peoples. The Indigenous Navigator questionnaire is a useful tool to measure the extent to which Declaration is implemented in Cameroon. Goal 2 of the SDGs aims to achieve food security and therefore is of great relevance to indigenous peoples in Cameroon.

The Wapichan launch their online monitoring system http://wapichanao.communitylands.org in September with a ceremony including traditional dance. © Tom Griffiths/FPP
FPP provided high quality legal support to communities and partners in 2017, enabling their access to justice to help secure respect and protection for their human rights and remedies for rights violations. Work carried out included using international human rights mechanisms, seeking restitution in national courts, and the use of non-judicial complaints mechanisms.

In the context of international human rights mechanisms, there were significant steps towards enforcement of the 2015 Inter-American Court of Human Rights victory in the case of Kaliña and Lokono Peoples v. Suriname. In Guyana, we succeeded in obtaining a decision to expedite the processing of a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the situation of the Akawaio community of Isseneru. Working with partners in Indonesia, FPP drafted a novel complaint about violations of indigenous peoples’ rights under International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 111 – which relates to discrimination in respect of employment and occupation – in the context of community land being taken by a pulp and paper company, thus depriving the community of their traditional livelihoods.

Meanwhile in Costa Rica, FPP lawyers assisted the Brórán indigenous peoples of the Térraba Territory and the Bribri indigenous peoples of the Salitre Territory in reporting to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. We also assisted Nepalese partner LAHURNIP in the submission of a complaint by indigenous peoples under ILO Convention No. 169 concerning evictions and other land rights violations caused by a road expansion project in the Kathmandu valley.

Work continued on defending forest peoples’ lands or seeking restitution at the national level. In Kenya, FPP provided urgent legal support to the Sengwer indigenous people facing forced evictions and violence by the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), including by facilitating access to local...
lawyers and supporting advocacy targeted at a European Commission Development Cooperation project which had been funding the KFS without regard to the rights of the Sengwer.

In Guyana, significant strides were made with FPP’s support in the drafting and signature of an MOU between Guyana’s Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs and the Akawaio community of Arau regarding expansion of its land title to control mining.

FPP supported, including by the submission of an amicus brief, the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta community in Colombia with a successful Constitutional Court case, which in its judgment (published in February 2017) upheld the Resguardo’s claim that the failure to delimit their territory was a violation of their fundamental rights under the Constitution.

Critical support was provided to the Batwa in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo following an incident where a boy was shot dead and his father seriously injured by eco-guards from the State conservation body – the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature – while collecting medicinal plants on their ancestral land in Kahuzi Biega National Park. In collaboration with local partner (CAMV) and international allies, FPP sent urgent letters of appeal to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and sought local legal representation for the Batwa in proceedings before the Superior Prosecutor at Bukavu Military Court. FPP also provided support in Cameroon to a number of indigenous Baka communities experiencing dispossession and abuse as a result of state enforcement of protected areas, including in the area around Lobéké National Park.

FPP has also been active in providing follow up support to help communities enforce complaints that have been upheld in non-judicial grievance mechanisms. This includes providing access to legal and technical advice by local lawyers and partners and communities seeking to recover their lands from logging and palm oil companies’ concessions over their lands in Borneo and Sumatra.

Reflections on FPP’s work on access to justice

By James G. Otto, Head of Community Rights, and Corporate Governance, Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), Liberia

Since 2011, FPP has been collaborating with Liberian civil society organisations including the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) to support communities faced with the expanding palm oil frontier in Liberia. This support is crucial for Liberia’s forest communities given that over half a million hectares of land in nine of the country’s fifteen counties was handed out by the Liberian government in 2010 and 2011 to some of the world’s largest palm oil companies, without regard for communities and their human rights.

An important aspect of that collaboration has been legal support, including FPP’s lawyers giving regular training on human rights law and legal strategy to civil society and to the communities themselves. FPP has also provided ongoing legal advice to support community- and civil society-led advocacy including formal grievances using the complaints mechanism of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

A critical component of this collaboration has concerned the development of a Land Rights Bill, which in 2017 the government sought to rush into law before the presidential elections. At the request of SDI and other Liberian partners, FPP coordinated urgent legal advice from FPP lawyers and other experts to support Liberian civil society’s advocacy for a Land Rights Bill that would properly respect and protect community rights. The version of the Bill submitted to the legislature in 2017 would have significantly undermined community land rights but was fortunately voted against by the senate. The quality of the final bill will have huge implications for rural communities whose land rights remain vulnerable to the treatment exemplified by the palm oil sector, without proper legislative protection for customary tenure.

A real benefit of FPP’s approach is its absolute commitment to self-determination, which in practice has meant respecting the rights of Liberian communities and civil society to set the agenda for their local and national level advocacy, with FPP tailoring its legal and other support accordingly.

The Seaside Grebo community of Maryland County in South Eastern Liberia carry out perception mapping of their customary lands. © Poppy Kohner/FPP
In 2017, FPP continued to work with partners and forest communities to push for the adoption of policies and laws, at local, national and international levels, to support the human rights of indigenous and other forest peoples. Work also focused on securing better non-judicial standards and better enforcement of those standards.

Making use of national legal reform processes in Guyana, the Amerindian Peoples Association played a key role in proposing Land Titling Regulations for indigenous peoples’ lands which are to be adopted by the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs. Legal work with the Wapichan people of the South Rupununi also resulted in a bill that is presently before cabinet to resolve the land tenure situation of two indigenous communities in southern Guyana. FPP also assisted indigenous organisations in the ongoing process to revise Guyana’s Amerindian Act 2006 to bring it into line with international law standards on land and territorial rights. In Liberia, our lawyers provided legal advice and support to civil society partners advocating for a new Land Rights Act to secure customary tenure, and in Costa Rica, we fed into the reform and eventual adoption of an executive decree on consultation with indigenous peoples.

In Central African Republic, we pushed for work on land law reform and saw the adoption of a new law on territorial collectivities (i.e. rules related to local community areas), while in the Democratic Republic of Congo, FPP engaged with government and other NGOs in the development and negotiation of a decree on free, prior and informed consent in the framework of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) implementation, which was adopted in late 2017. REDD+ refers to countries’ efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and instead foster conservation. These processes offer opportunities to influence and improve standards at the critical national level.

FPP and partners continued to contribute to international law and policy-making spaces, including via the submission of reports or information to treaty bodies, such as, in 2017, submissions on Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, or engagement with special rapporteurs, e.g. a submission on human rights defenders, focusing on the specific issues faced by indigenous human rights defenders, and have participated in other fora such as the Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights and the High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals.

We were a key player in international debates on conservation and human rights, from the local and national levels – including working with local partners and communities to push for amendments to management
Reflections on FPP’s work on legal and policy reforms

During 2017, Costa Rica undertook a review and reform of its decree on consultation and free, prior and informed consent in relation to indigenous peoples. FPP supported its local partners, members of the Bróran indigenous people, in their participation in the process of elaborating the decree. The decree as amended was adopted in February 2018.

By Pablo Sibar Sibar, member of the Bróran indigenous people in the indigenous territory of Térraba, Costa Rica

The process carried out by the government, which culminated in the decree, involved holding consultation processes in indigenous communities. Many internal community meetings were held to get to this result, followed by workshops in each indigenous territory with the government, and by a national meeting attended by representatives of all the territories. As a result of this first national meeting, we insisted that the draft text was not adopted but revised (with advice from FPP) to include our concerns.

This protocol was a complete success. The government wanted to impose the type of consultation that would only benefit those who hold the consultation. We received counsel from FPP from the beginning: they gave us the guidelines for making observations and proposals regarding the changes to the protocol that we wanted, in line with our international rights. States have abandoned us, and we have always lived at the mercy of what they decide, without the possibility of defending ourselves. They always tell us what to do, imposing things on us the way they want to. This becomes even more difficult in a country such as our own that claims it defends and respects human rights. If we had not received counsel from FPP, this decree would have turned out very differently.

Today we have an extremely important instrument for use by indigenous peoples in consultation processes. With this type of support, we can achieve change faster. We are sure that if we had been alone, the government would have imposed on us what was in their best interest and we’d be at a disadvantage, without the right to complain.

FPP’s accompaniment enabled us to produce a mechanism that will be of much greater benefit to our people, as long as the government respects it.

By Cindy Patricia Vargas Ortiz, member of the Bróran indigenous people in the indigenous territory of Térraba, Costa Rica

After analysing the context in which the Térraba Bróran indigenous people (and indigenous peoples in general) find themselves – where decision-making has turned into discussions of legitimacy or the lack thereof, and in which we need to stand firm in the protection of our resources in the face of the interests and vision of the state – our territory decided to participate in the process of reconstructing the draft decree proposed by the government. This decree, according to the government, would repair the historical debt to indigenous peoples and support their right to be consulted.

Térraba was lucky to take part in this process with FPP. The support entailed more than just counsel – it was essential work that was performed not only for Térraba, but also involved contributions from other indigenous peoples in the Brunca and Pérez Zeledón regions.

I feel that FPP’s support – not only in the process of developing a consultation mechanism but also in the process of defence, denunciation, and counsel for Costa Rica’s indigenous peoples and primarily the Bróran people – represented a huge step forward. It created trust and openness among community leaders to continue making progress in the issues of lands, security, and the protection of our rights.

Negotiation of the consultation decree in Costa Rica. © Karine Rinaldi/FPP
FPP works in solidarity with communities, peoples and organisations across the globe and in all programmes of our work, to advance collective and collaborative interests. Our primary relationships are with communities and organisations working directly to defend and advance their indigenous and human rights on the ground, and we engage in international processes, coalitions and fora to further advance these local struggles and to improve and engage with the development of international standards, policies and laws.

In April 2017, continuing decades of engagement, FPP participated in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to speak to the issue of conservation and human rights, working in solidarity with indigenous organisations and funders engaged in the same issue. In November, FPP, together with the Cheptikale Indigenous Peoples Development Project, Swedbio and Natural Justice, convened a Global Dialogue on Conservation and Human Rights in Eldoret, Kenya. This event brought together experts to discuss and share experiences around the problem, and sought to build on UN attention to the issue of conservation and its impacts on indigenous peoples rights, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, Mr John Knox.

Together with the Southeast Asian Forum of National Human Rights Institutions – a key regional body in Asia advancing the understanding of the responsibilities of land-hungry businesses to respect human rights – FPP and Pusaka convened the 7th Annual Conference on Human Rights and Agribusiness in June. National Human Rights Institutions have the potential to play key roles in advancing respect for human rights, and in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region have played a crucial role addressing the impact of agri-business on human rights.

Promoting exchange and partnership between communities and peoples with whom we work is an important global thread in our work. In November we convened a regional African exchange working on community monitoring and verification in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, helping partners to trial and use different community level monitoring, mapping and survey techniques to share their experiences and lessons learned. Facilitating exchange and mutual learning on how monitoring and mapping can transform a community or a people’s ability to assert control over their territories also underpins the Indigenous Navigator initiative, a collaboration between FPP and a range of human rights organisations, UN agencies and indigenous peoples seeking to support indigenous-led
Reflections on FPP’s work on building solidarity

Milka Chepkorir, Sengwer Indigenous Peoples Programme

With support from FPP, the Sengwer indigenous women of Embobut visited the Ogiek indigenous women of Chepkitale, Mt Elgon. The sessions were filled with stories and experiences, emotional support and discussions about women working together or even visiting political leaders together to fight in solidarity for community rights. Back home in Embobut, the women were supported to form a women’s group, and grasped these roles, coming up with a cultural centre in which to keep the Sengwer cultural artefacts, and as a place to facilitate community meetings etc. The women were also supported to build a pit latrine at the centre.

In March I accompanied the European Union’s gender expert to Embobut forest for a fact-finding mission, after which one community activist was attacked and seriously wounded by the Kenya Forest Service. This information was shared across the world by friends of the Sengwer community including FPP, Amnesty International, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, among others. The sharing showed solidarity between the world and the Sengwer and specifically Elias Kimaiyo, who was the injured activist. It also shone a light on the evictions faced by the Sengwer of Embobut.

I was supported to attend the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues where, together with Natural Justice, FPP and others, we produced and read a joint statement on the situation of the Sengwer in Kenya and calling for more just conservation. This resulted to a specific recommendation included in the Forum’s recommendations for action.

FPP supported the exchange between the Batwa of the Democratic Republic of Congo with the Ogiek indigenous community of Chepkitale in June. This exchange facilitated emotional support and a mutual sense of the experiences of both indigenous communities trying to regain their land tenure rights: the Batwa seeing what is possible if you regain control of your lands, the Ogiek seeing how far they have come compared to the Batwa who are suffering through being landless.

In November, I travelled to the Netherlands to share the story of the Sengwer, particularly the women; I showed the film the Sengwer women had made and saw it was such a powerful medicine for the policy makers and other NGOs at The Hague: the reality of burning homes and evictions, the reality of women’s knowledge of medicinal plants and care for their lands.

Finally, the Sengwer took part in the Eldoret Conservation Dialogue in November. The Sengwer women launched the event by sharing the community land right struggle through songs. The Sengwer, Ogiek of Chepkitale, the Batwa of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda and a Thai indigenous community connected by sharing of their similar experiences, and discussing next steps. The communities also had exchanges and built links with the dialogue’s other attendees, including funders, academics, and lawyers.

© Mary Hodgett
Partners
The Forest Peoples Programme partners with indigenous peoples to support their 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 occurs across 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 which we work take precedence over our own. Our relationships reflect the changing needs of others and our readiness to be flexible and responsive. FPP values long-term commitment to indigenous communities as we believe trust and solidarity are strengthened with time.

Guiding Principles
Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC): A 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. FPIC, for years advanced by FPP, is now a key principle in international law and jurisprudence related to indigenous peoples. It implies 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 into 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 right, and means that indigenous 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

Publications

A Comparison of Leading Palm Oil Certification Standards: This study compares the world’s principal oil palm sustainability standards (RSPO, ISCC, ISPO, MSPO, SAN, HCS and RSB) by measuring them against a comprehensive set of more than 39 social and human rights indicators within six different themes.

Realising community-based forest monitoring in support of community livelihoods, forest sector reforms and effective implementation of legal and voluntary standards (2014-2016): A key programme in FFP is community-based forest monitoring work to promote community livelihoods, and which underpins advocacy work to achieve forest and land sector reforms.

Free, prior and informed consent: how to rectify the devastating consequences of harmful mining for indigenous peoples: This paper focuses on one of the topics of key concern for both indigenous peoples and the mining sector, namely the corporate responsibility to respect indigenous peoples’ right to give or withhold their consent to extractive industry projects in their lands and the fundamental role of this principle in altering the predominant and all too frequently devastating model of mining that is imposed in indigenous peoples’ territories.

Protecting Forest Defenders: Around 5 per cent of the world’s population are indigenous, and every day huge numbers of indigenous people risk their life in protection of their ancestral lands. Protecting Forest Defenders sheds light on some of the battles being faced by indigenous peoples around the world.

Indigenous peoples, self-determined development and sustainable livelihoods: This was an internal scoping assessment carried out as part of plans to identify possible approaches to livelihood work with partners and forest peoples. A short version has been made available more widely.

Guide for Congolese Community Paralegals working on environmental issues: In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), millions of communities and indigenous peoples are not granted
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Articles 3 and 4. FPP’s 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; countering 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.

**Gender:** Gender is a cross-cutting theme in FPP’s work on securing land and territorial rights for indigenous and forest peoples, and we seek to ensure gender considerations are integral to our work. As we work at the community level, we encounter many different customary systems and therefore gender relations and norms. Our aim is to foster a safe, participatory and inclusive environment for women and men to consider, discuss and determine (separately or together, as appropriate) the rules in their own community, on the basis of a broad human rights framework. The way gender norms evolve in different customary systems may vary across our work, but this community led approach ensures that it is grounded, culturally-appropriate and owned by the communities and peoples with whom we are working.

**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, Forest Peoples Programme 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.

legal recognition because of poverty, lack of access to information, stereotypes and stigma. In response, Forest Peoples Programme is supporting a network of community facilitators, called Community Paralegals, to help people use the law to defend their rights. (Available only in French)

**Indigenous and Afro-Descendant peoples pushing for peace in Colombia: “Between hope and despair”:** This report synthesises the outcomes of a two-year, innovative, peoples-driven project that brought together indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in Colombia whose gold-rich ancestral lands are coveted and threatened by outside actors.

**The Updated Community Guide to IFC Performance Standard 7:** An illustrated guide for communities, this document explains the International Finance Corporation (IFC)’s Performance Standard 7 on Indigenous Peoples. It’s aimed at informing communities about options in response to company plans to develop projects on or near indigenous peoples’ lands, using a loan from the IFC.

**DRC: Land reform and protection of communities’ rights:** The Democratic Republic of Congo is engaged in a land reform process under the government’s action plan. A number of reforms for enhancing economic growth are planned, including those that relate to the principles established for governing property, and the use and management of land resources and improving their productivity and contribution to social development.

**Elders walking and sharing histories:** The Muinane people of the Colombian Amazon have published their own book researched and written by their elders. It details how the Muinane people conceive their territory in the Amazon. (Available only in Spanish)

**Human Rights and Agribusiness in Southeast Asia. Report from the 6th Regional Conference:** After a week of field investigations and searching discussions, the 6th Southeast Asian Conference on Human Rights and Agribusiness issues a resolution calling for moratoriums to halt the further hand out of concessions throughout the region. This report chronicles the conference and final resolution.
Financial Summary

We continue to benefit from multi-year grants from government agencies as they provide much needed stability for our larger and longer-term projects. However, with these larger grants comes a commitment and responsibility to complete many activities against specific outputs and outcomes, which is the reason for the high level of restricted fund balances at the year end. Several of these grants come to an end in the next year to 18 months so we anticipate that the high balance of restricted reserves shown in the accounts at the end of December 2017 will be significantly reduced in one and two years’ time and the income and expenditure accounts will show a deficit as expenditure exceeds income (as has happened in 2017). If these grants are replaced with new sources of multi-year funding then these fund levels will not decrease to such an extent and securing longer term funding for the future is an aim for our fundraising team.

We greatly value the comparatively smaller grants we receive as they often provide more flexibility in terms of reporting and are usually more responsive to urgent needs. Without them we could not undertake many of the more narrowly targeted projects that can make a huge difference to specific peoples in defined areas.

2017 has been a year in which the value of sterling has remained relatively low against the US dollar and euro. We have suffered exchange losses as a result which have impacted on our unrestricted reserves. Our aim is to naturally hedge our expenditure against income in currency but at the end of grants there is often an exchange movement which hits our income and expenditure account when income has been received at exchange rates which have been very different to those throughout the expenditure period.

We have been able to fund many crucial programmes in collaboration with indigenous organisations, particularly at a grassroots level as well as enabling them to have a voice at international meetings and forums. During the year we carried out some training workshops in countries where we work closely with our partners on the ground and we also visited partners to carry out partner capacity assessments. In particular we carried out successful financial training and assessments for our partners in Peru, Cameroon, Liberia and Indonesia.

If you would like to see our financial statements, please go to www.forestpeoples.org/tags/annual-reports

<table>
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<th>Expenditure in £</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Partner work in the field</td>
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<td>Office Costs, incl. equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit and Legal costs</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Board of Trustees and Staff

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Viviane Weitzner  Policy Advisor
Andrew Whitmore  Project Officer
Clare Whitmore  Database and Technical Officer
Jake Willis  Project Manager
Peter Willis  Finance Manager

Thank you to all our volunteers, including Lan Mei, Estima Grabenbauer and Ana Maria Garrido-Corredor for their dedication and support in 2017.