

ANNUAL REPORT

LIVING FORESTS. THRIVING COMMUNITIES

TENURE FACILITY 2021



Tenure Facility

Living Forests. Thriving Communities

More than 2.5 billion Indigenous Peoples and local communities live on almost half of the world’s land area, yet they legally own less than 10% of their territories. These richly biodiverse ancestral lands are vital to our global climate, fresh water, and food security. Reducing land conflict, advancing human rights, promoting development, and contributing to sustainable climate solutions can all start with strengthening community tenure rights.

The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility (Tenure Facility) is an international financial mechanism exclusively focused on securing land and forest rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The Tenure Facility works alongside Indigenous Peoples and local communities, offering dedicated financial and technical support for innovative approaches to implementing tenure rights, while sharing the knowledge, innovations, and tools that emerge across a global network.

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CONTENT

FOREWORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	4
EDITORIAL FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS	6
GLOBAL OVERVIEW: AN OVERVIEW OF FORESTS AND LAND TENURE RIGHTS IN 2021	8
GENDER AND LANDRIGHTS: LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF GENDER AT FOREST LEADERSHIP AND PROTECTION	12
BELIZE	16
COLOMBIA: CNTI	18
COLOMBIA: PCN	20
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	22
GUYANA	24
INDIA	26
INDONESIA	28
LIBERIA	30
MALI	32
MOZAMBIQUE	34
NEPAL	36
PANAMA	38
PERU	40
LEARNING AS AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES	42
ABOUT THE TENURE FACILITY	44
GOVERNANCE	46
FINANCIAL SUMMARY	47

BOTH INSPIRING AND HOPEFUL, 2021 WAS ALSO A CHALLENGING YEAR.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC continued, bringing sickness, death, and hardship to the communities the Tenure Facility serves, robbing them of the wisdom of their elders and leaders, and delaying or thwarting their plans.

Many governments faced budget crunches and economic crises, and prioritised rapid expansion of mining, logging, and expansion of the agricultural frontier over local wellbeing, good governance, or the environment. Some turned a blind eye to their legal responsibilities to ensure Indigenous Peoples and local communities' land and forest rights, while others simply lacked the means to do so. This, in turn, aggravated pre-existing problems of violence against local land defenders and guardians of the forests, as well as illegal logging and mining and land invasions.

Despite all these challenges, the year's events fully reaffirmed the basic premise on which the Tenure Facility is based: that grassroots Indigenous Peoples and local communities' organisations and their allies have huge potential for helping to address problems of rural wellbeing, environmental destruction, and conflict, and that well-targeted support can contribute to those endeavours. When these peoples and communities control their land and forests, and use their traditional knowledge, norms, and skills to manage these resources, everyone benefits.

It was particularly inspiring to witness the growing presence and visibility of Indigenous Peoples and local communities' leaders in global arenas, especially women and youth. After a series of high-level credible reports on the central role these groups play in climate action, conserving nature, and sustaining global foods systems, these groups stood front and centre at the Glasgow COP26 climate summit, IUCN World Conservation Congress, Food Systems Summit, and World Leaders Summit on Climate.

Equally exciting to see was the enthusiasm and perseverance of the Tenure Facility's project partners in every country where it worked. To accompany the hundreds of Community Forest User Groups in Nepal that used Tenure Facility funds to promote gender equality and end gender-based violence. To observe 24 communities with over 100,000 villagers in Liberia finally get the government to officially recognise that the land of their ancestors belongs to them. To stand beside Afro-Colombian partners and leaders as they

“...IT WAS PRECISELY THIS SORT OF PASSION, CREATIVITY, AND COMMITMENT THAT ALLOWED THE TENURE FACILITY TO DELIVER STRONG RESULTS IN 2021.”

persist in their efforts to protect their communities, despite constant threats and violence.

It was precisely this sort of passion, creativity, and commitment that allowed the Tenure Facility to deliver strong results in 2021. Despite the many challenges, the Tenure Facility partners found and worked with allies in government to improve land and forest tenure policies and implement them faster and better, and they bolstered local organisations and governance. In the process, they managed to strengthen the tenure security and governance of over two thousand communities in more five million hectares of land.

The prospects are even better. The strong international commitments and funding for customary land rights and forest management at the end of 2021 have given much needed momentum to these efforts. Many environmental and conservation organisations around the world have become aware of the central role this pledge plays in climate action and nature conservation and have thus embraced the need to build alliances with Indigenous Peoples and local communities. In several key tropical countries, the outlook now appears more promising.

The Tenure Facility itself is also better equipped to meet the challenge. In recent months it has secured substantial additional funds and is expanding its staff and consultants. Exciting new projects in the pipeline will soon begin, and the groundwork is being laid for many more.

Challenges notwithstanding, the Tenure Facility remains on-track. To expand. To secure and sustain community rights and deliver global benefits. To succeed.

Nonette Royo
Executive Director, Tenure Facility



WE ARE ALL LINKED PEOPLE, LAND, FLORA, FAUNA, WATER, AND SKY.

SEEING THE PLANET and humanity as an interconnected and interdependent entity of complex relationships is a hallmark of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. We take a holistic and comprehensive approach to life, whether economic or cultural. In so doing, we protect our primary forests and maintain global diversity.

As a Miskitu woman, I am pleased that the critical role we Indigenous Peoples play in mitigating climate change and reversing the loss of biodiversity is finally being recognised internationally.

Although we have known this and proven it for generations, 2021 saw a quantum leap in the number of governments, scientists, and social researchers endorsing our traditional knowledge and view of nature as a model through which we can feed the world, protect our forests, and maintain global biodiversity.

From billions of dollars in funding at COP26 in Glasgow to the United Nations General Assembly's pledge to preserve 30 percent of the planet in the most important places for biodiversity by 2030,

global leaders at last acknowledged the crucial role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the meaningful conservation and restoration of nature.

This comes on top of our inalienable human and land rights, of course. These should be ours even if we had no environmental skills to offer the world.

But happy coincidence, we are guardians of 80% of the world's biodiversity, honouring our ancestors and following our traditions to harmoniously coexist with nature.

In a report last year, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underlined the important role of indigenous communities in protecting the world's environmental challenges, noting that we should be important partners in any action.

Furthermore, two independent reports, Territories of Life and The State of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, showed how our tenured territories are more ecologically intact than other protected areas and are critically important for global water security, climate goals, and the conservation of biodiversity.

In other words, when we have the land, we are the best guardians of it.

We are also the world's allies in the fight against malnutrition and food insecurity. The Food and Agriculture Organization co-wrote a report confirming that Indigenous Peoples' community food systems preserve biodiversity whilst providing foods, livelihoods, and nutrition.

This year's annual report highlights how the Tenure Facility-supported projects are making a difference, driving change, and promoting scalability, but more importantly, they are defined and implemented by indigenous and local communities.

Simply stated, we cannot achieve any agenda without the inclusion, participation, and collaboration of the world's Indigenous Peoples and local communities. We are the key to the solutions of the climate and biodiversity crises.

You could say, in fact, that we are all linked.

Myrna Cunningham
Chair of the Board of Directors

**“...GLOBAL LEADERS AT
LAST ACKNOWLEDGED
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AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES
IN THE MEANINGFUL
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“WE OFFER THE MOST EFFECTIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE SOLUTION TO HALTING DEFORESTATION.”

Tuntiak Katan, the Ecuadorian coordinator of the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities.

GLOBAL LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

an overview of forests and land tenure rights in 2021

2 021 WAS A YEAR of growing recognition that secure tenure for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) play a major role in addressing the twin global environmental threats of climate change and ecosystem loss, as well as cultural survival. Both conservation organisations and funders took up the message in their pronouncements and initiatives, bringing unprecedented visibility to tenure rights.

Indigenous rights were a central theme of the World Conservation Congress, organised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in Marseilles in September. In a landmark acknowledgement of past errors, the Congress recognised “the on-going legacy of dispossession [caused by] the imposition of some protected areas without free, prior, and informed consent”¹. Along with passing an Indigenous Peoples’ resolution calling for the conservation of 80 percent of the Amazon basin by 2025, the Congress also called for “full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples” in conservation² and funding to help implement task.

TWO MONTHS LATER, funding for indigenous conservation to protect natural carbon stores was announced at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, COP26. The governments of the U.S., U.K., Netherlands, Norway, and Germany, along with private US donors such as the Ford Foundation and the Bezos Earth Fund, pledged \$1.7 billion to “support the advancement of IPLCs’ forest tenure rights and their role as stewards of forests and nature”³.

The pledge noted that IPLCs manage half the world’s land and care for 80 percent of its biodiversity, usually through customary tenure, although in recent times they have received less than 1 percent of climate funding to reduce deforestation. To add even more evidence to this bias, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, with the Fund for Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, concluded in a report presented in March that deforestation is substantially lower in places where indigenous land rights are honoured⁴. “We offer the most effective, sustainable and equitable solution to halting deforestation,” Tuntiak Katan, the Ecuadorian coordinator of the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, told delegates in Glasgow.

While few now publicly disagree with this assertion, national and global policymakers need to align in support of indigenous and local communities efforts to protect their territories. Even while the European Commission published groundbreaking new regulations to ban imports of six agricultural commodities grown on recently deforested land, it still has to match parallel compliance with customary land rights⁵.

IN APRIL, the U.S., U.K. and Norwegian governments working with private companies such as Amazon, Unilever, BlackRock, Delta Airlines and others launched the coalition Lowering Emissions by

1. <https://www.iucn.org/news/forests/202109/indigenous-peoples-have-been-heard-world-conservation-congress>

2. <https://www.wwfdr.org/en/?36203/WWF-cheers-strong-consensus-on-a--Global-Goal-for-Nature-at-Marseille-IUCN-World-Conservation-Congress>

3. <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/news-and-press/news/governments-and-private-funders-announce-historic-us-17-billion-pledge-at-cop26-in-support-of-indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities/>

4. New report shows Indigenous and Tribal Peoples 'best guardians' of forests | Plataforma de desarrollo territorial | FAO

5. <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/briefing-paper/2021/european-commission-proposal-deforestation-indigenous-peoples>

6. <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/12/the-year-in-rainforests-2021/>

7. https://news.mongabay.com/2021/12/top_positive_environmental_new_stories_2021/

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10. <https://e360.yale.edu/fetures/amid-tensions-in-myanmar-an-indigenous-park-of-peace-is-born>

11. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/25/myanmar-more-than-30-people-killed-in-kayah-state>

12. <https://e360.yale.edu/features/a-big-new-forest-initiative-sparks-concerns-of-a-carbon-heist>

13. <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/11/bornean-communities-locked-into-2-million-hectare-carbon-deal-they-dont-know-about/#:~:text=Peoples%20and%20Conservation-,Bornean%20communities%20locked%20into%202%2Dmillion%2Dhectare%20carbon%20deal,they%20don't%20know%20>

“IN MANY PLACES, WOMEN HAVE TAKEN ON MORE VISIBLE LEADERSHIP ROLES. UNFORTUNATELY, SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY HAS BEEN CLOSED DOWN ELSEWHERE, DUE TO RUSHES TO MONETIZE NATURAL RESOURCES, POLITICAL SUPPRESSION, OR ARMED CONFLICTS.”

Accelerating Forest finance (LEAF) to accelerate payments to tropical countries for reducing deforestation. In November at COP26, the initiative announced it had reached its initial goal of mobilising \$1 billion. LEAF's billion dollars was part of \$19.2 billion in forest-related financial pledges announced at the meeting. However, details about how this money will be used are sparse ⁶. LEAF has promised more to Indigenous Peoples than the earlier schemes, and the organisation needs to fully address community land rights if it is to deliver on its promises.

Some governments and jurists are taking a more progressive attitude. At the national level, many significant court battles for IPLCs' land titles have been won ⁷. After 20 years of discussions, the Peruvian government established a long-awaited reserve for Indigenous Peoples in the department of Loreto, near the border with Brazil. The Yavarí Tapiche Indigenous Reserve covers 1.1 million hectares (2.7 million acres) specifically for "uncontacted peoples" ⁸.

The Indian state of Kerala scrapped its Athirappilly hydrodam project on the River Chalakudy following a decade-long campaign by environmentalists and tribal communities to protect the state's last riverine forest and its inhabitants⁹.

In many places, women have taken on more visible leadership roles. Unfortunately, space for civil society has been closed down elsewhere, due to rushes to monetize natural resources, political suppression, or armed conflicts.

In Myanmar, a military coup drove thousands of indigenous people into exile, including the Karen people who were chased from a peace park they had established on their territory in the forested valley of the Salween River¹⁰. In November 2020, the park's leader, Paul Sien Twa, had won the prestigious Goldman prize for environmental activism. Four months later, the park was being bombed. At year's end, fighting continued¹¹.

IN JULY, Peru's government upset many who had hailed its creation of the Yavari Tapiche reserve when it announced "the largest sale of carbon in Peru's history" from a national park that the Kichwa people have long claimed as their ancestral land. The Kichwa went to court to challenge the government's refusal to recognise their land and carbon rights¹².

In October, it was discovered that the state government of Sabah, in Malaysia, had signed a secret deal with an obscure Singaporean company to market carbon credits generated from more than 2 million hectares of its forests without notifying, consulting, or seeking the approval of the 25,000 Indigenous Peoples who tend the forests concerned¹⁹. There are hopes that the deal will be nullified in the courts. Meanwhile, “those behind the [deal] are still claiming that they have successfully become the legal rights holders of all carbon and life in these forests at the secret stroke of a pen, and that there is nothing that the Indigenous Peoples of Sabah can do about it for



COP26 Nature Day Event: Forest Community Land Rights for Nature, Climate and People. (Left to right: RT Lord Goldsmith, Regine Mboyo, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Cristián Samper and Nonette Royo.



Indigenous group protesting their rights at the Museum of Art, Sao Paulo

one hundred years”, said Anne Lasimbang of PACOS Trust ¹⁴, an indigenous communities group in Sabah.

We have seen IPLCs' rights curtailed during the pandemic, too. Many elders were lost to the virus, and with them, their wisdom and knowledge. But in addition, "Indigenous Peoples... faced increased repression by states that used the pandemic as a way to enact laws that further encroached on their rights", concluded a review published in April by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs ¹⁵.

And there been no let-up in assassinations of IPLCs leaders. The NGO Front Line Defenders recorded 358 slayings in 2021, of which 59 percent were of land, environmental and indigenous rights defenders. Few assassins are ever brought to justice. There was, however, one bright spot in Honduras during July when courts convicted the former president of an internationally financed hydro-dam company for his role in the murder of famed activist Berta Cáceres five years before. She opposed a dam¹⁶ the company had planned on the land of her Lenca people.

BUT THERE HAS BEEN better news in Africa. A conference in Togo held in October applauded the passage of progressive land rights laws in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, and Madagascar. In August, Uganda's Constitutional Court ordered the government to compensate the Batwa people for illegal evictions carried out in the name of protecting mountain gorillas ^{17,18}.

Over the border in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), there was no end to the long saga of attacks by security forces on Batwa people living in and around national parks from which they have been arbitrarily excluded. Late in the year, a joint operation

by the Congolese Army and park rangers in Kahuzi-Biega National Park a UNESCO World Heritage Site resulted in villages being burned and at least one man killed¹⁹. In April, a decade of lobbying by indigenous groups in DRC paid off when the National Assembly adopted a law to secure indigenous land rights. The law has yet to be officially signed by the President, but it suggests an eventual end to the assaults.

For laws have brought about real change on the ground in Liberia. A generation ago, land grabs and log sales funded a brutal civil war there. However, a conference in March revealed that recent land-rights legislation has enabled 1.3 million hectares of ancestral lands to be formally recognised, benefiting 350,000 people in 82 communities²⁰. Veteran activist Silas Siakor said, “I had no idea that this day would come when the government would clearly stand with communities in their efforts to secure their land rights.”



Community sensitization on Covid19, health and water hygiene in African communities.

14. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/21419278-unpress-release-8-march-2022>

15. https://iwgia.org/doclink/iwgia-book-the-indigenous-world-2021-eng/eyJ0eXAI0iKJV1Q1LCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdW50Ij0pZ2d0pStibit29RLXRoZS1pbmR3Z2Vub3ZlLXdvcmtkLTIwMjEtZW5nliwWF0Jl0xNjI4ODM5NjM2LClleHAI0jE2Mjg5MjYwMzZ9.z1CuM7PcT5CPK0Vevx8ve88y6v0vmwDu_
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16. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/05/berta-caceres-assassination-roberto-david-castillo-found-guilty>

17. <https://landportal.org/pt/node/100977>

18. [https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/press-release/2021/batwa-uganda-conservation#:~:text=Kampala%20C%20Uganda%20\(13th%20September%202021,stage%20yet%20in%20their%20long](https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/press-release/2021/batwa-uganda-conservation#:~:text=Kampala%20C%20Uganda%20(13th%20September%202021,stage%20yet%20in%20their%20long)

19. <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/12/deadly-raids-are-latest-case-of-abuse-against-indigenous-batwa-in-drc-park-groups-say/>

20. <https://www.landgovernance.org/landdialogue-liberia-more-than-1-3-million-hectares-now-under-community-ownership-and-control/#::-text=Monrovia%20%E2%80%93%20Local%20communities%20across%20Liberia,local%20communities%20across%20the%20country>

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF GENDER AT FOREST LEADERSHIP AND PROTECTION

They hold traditional knowledge about plants, forest resources, and ecological management. They grow food for their families. They invest in the education and health of their children. Women play vital roles in indigenous and local communities, and while there has been some recognition of this at the local national and global level, their influence is still often side-lined.



A village meeting in Belize, where numbers of women taking part are higher than numbers of men, a rare occurrence in the past

THE UNITED NATION'S 2030 sustainable development agenda explicitly recognises the link between gender and secure land and forest tenure. One of its goals is that all men and women have equal rights to economic resources, as well as “basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, [and] natural resources” by 2030.

This recognition comes in addition to previous international conventions and declarations such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which explicitly calls for protecting indigenous women and children from violence and discrimination.

Last year, in line with the 2030 Agenda, the Tenure Facility instituted a Gender Policy to clarify “the standards that apply to the Tenure Facility as it supports and strives for gender equality”.

The policy treats gender discrimination as an integral part of social inequity and promotes activities that are based on an understanding of the social context and power relations, and the way that different cultural beliefs and practices impact women and men.

“We are strengthening the way we are promoting gender along the project cycle, from the very beginning, when we receive proposals, to when the

project is evaluated. The gender perspective needs to increasingly be there,” Ylwa Renström Svensson, Program Officer and gender focal point at the Tenure Facility.

“We encourage partners to elaborate a gender action plan at the onset of the project, so that the organisation we partner with has a roadmap for how they are going to promote women's collective land and forest rights. When we do the monitoring work, we follow up on how they implement their own plan,” she said.

Despite some progress, gender equality is far from being achieved in the indigenous forest sector. The Center for International Forestry Research compared national laws and regulations concerning women's rights in community forests in 30 low- and middle-income forested countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Only three percent of the tenure regimes were found to provide adequate protection for women's voting rights and only five percent adequately protected women's leadership rights.

It is crucial to understand that simply having community rights does not automatically translate into equal rights for women. Forest tenure gender issues can vary significantly from place to place, given that they are the result of complex historical processes and cultural dynamics. At the same time, women are not a homogenous group, and gender is often intertwined with other factors such as caste, race, age, and class. That is why efforts

“WE HAVE DEVELOPED A GENDER CHECKLIST AND GUIDELINES FOR VISUALISING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PROJECT CYCLE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER SUPPORT TO PARTNERS.”

must consider each specific context and apply an intersectional approach.

“The best way to do things is in a way that is respectful to the context in which people live in,” Renström Svensson said. “We try to promote women's collective land and forest rights in the projects that we work with, but it has to be done within the existing realities and from the perspectives of the partners. We don't want to impose the way the partners choose to integrate the gender perspective.”

PARTNERS

Tenure Facility's partners on the ground are actively and increasingly involved. There have been gender workshops and Learning Exchange sessions to learn more about the relation between gender and the customary rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. These also serve to garner valuable

insights from other organisations' experiences in applying a gender lens to forest tenure and management.

“We have developed a gender checklist and guidelines for visualising gender equality in the project cycle and recommendations for further support to partners,” said Tenure Facility's programme officer Giulia Pedone.

This increased awareness translates into tangible results in communities in Latin America, Africa, and Asia:

- In Panama, a gender strategy was developed and presented to the Traditional Authorities, and will be adapted and validated in the communities.
- In Peru, a proposal was presented to incorporate a gender component in indigenous actions within the national regulatory framework.
- In Liberia, women are a key element in land reform laws.
- In Democratic Republic of Congo, women from indigenous groups and local communities acquired technical, legal, and institutional skills. Some 500 community women are actively involved in the project.
- In Indonesia, the Tenure Facility partner, Consortium for Agrarian Reform, succeeded in having land titles delivered in the name of women.
- In Nepal, local governments in 74 municipalities enacted local forest acts that include specific provisions that recognise women and indigenous people's rights over their forests. These range from allocating benefits from the forest, to capacity building and empowerment of women, to ensuring that 50 percent of the Community Forest User Group executive committees are composed of women.

Systemic change, however, does occur overnight or in a linear way. With this understanding, the Tenure Facility's new Gender Policy is designed to guarantee that gender issues are addressed at all phases of the project to ensure indigenous land rights.

“Bringing up gender as an important cross-cutting issue throughout the chain of cooperation that we have with our partners means the issue gets the visibility and attention that it might not have gotten otherwise. It sparks a dialogue that is crucial to trigger change,” Renström Svensson said.



Empowerment of women programme meeting in Cameroon.

BELIZE: A TALE OF RESILIENCE

THE MAYA PEOPLE of southern Belize have come a long way since the 1990s, when the government decided to allow industrial logging in their ancestral forests and dubbed them “squatters” on the land they had held for more than four millennia. Today, they have court decisions supporting their right to these lands, are working to officially map their territories, and are negotiating with the government on a law to enshrine it all for generations to come.

For the most part, the law is based on a landmark 2015 ruling by the Caribbean Court of Justice that firmly stated that land tenure existed for Indigenous Peoples in Belize, that the Belizean government had to identify and protect the indigenous land (crucially working along with the Maya themselves), and that it could no longer exploit the land without consultation.

But the progress has been far from as linear as it sounds. Almost every move towards guaranteeing tenure has been met with opposition political, bureaucratic, or both and it has often been a case of two-steps forward, one-step back.

The latest challenges include adjusting to a new government questioning its predecessor agreements and dealing with the health and isolation impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, 2021 saw Maya leaders move forward with the crucial task of mapping the lands to delineate exactly what is and what is not indigenous territory.

“We are putting a law to our land so in the future, one can know where they can move on the land,” said Santiago Quib, an elder from the San Benito Poite village.

Tenure Facility has provided \$1.8 million to assist both the Maya Peoples and government of Belize in the practical implementation of the Caribbean Court ruling. The financing is mainly being used to set up land mapping and to build up the capacities of both the government and Maya to ensure the smooth future working of the agreements.

As a result, technical support was provided to the Maya communities part of the roughly 12 percent of Belize’s population

that counts itself as indigenous to begin the mapping. For example, the project leaders trained 24 community field mappers with the help of specialist technicians and worked with community-appointed guides who are knowledgeable of the lands and boundaries.

“We do this for the love of our children so that they can see and enjoy the future,” Quib said as he worked through dense forest to delineate his people’s community lands.

A Boundary Harmonisation Council was also created, bringing together elders and mediators to solve conflicts and disputes that might arise between neighbours over boundaries.

“It’s really about the ability to leverage our position, to be able to push and advance the things that we want to see. (If there are maps) no one can reverse the actions of the people. The people have defined their territories, they have maps to show where they are, they’re empowered,” said Julian Cho Society (JCS) Executive Director Cristina Coc.

Named for the late land- and forest-rights activist widely seen as a martyr by the Maya, JCS is the Tenure Facility’s lead partner in Belize, working with the Mayan Leaders Alliance and the Toledo Alcaldes Association among others.

Coc believes the Tenure Facility funding had an impact even before any of it was actually used.

“Just the thought that indigenous people could mobilise this kind of resource and be able to do the work (changed things),” she said. “The government felt like ‘Oh, my god, they have a lot of resources’”.

ALL CHANGE

The biggest challenge facing the land rights movement in Belize last year (other than the pandemic, of course) was adjusting to a new government that took office after winning a landslide election late in 2020.

Although the victorious centre-left People’s Party pledged support for Indigenous Peoples’ rights during their campaign, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs has sought to disregard pretty much all the agreements that had been made on the mapping and new law by



Women gathering for a traditional communal ceremony during the night in Southern Belize.

“WE DO THIS FOR THE LOVE OF OUR CHILDREN SO THAT THEY CAN SEE AND ENJOY THE FUTURE.”

the previous administration. The argument is essentially that earlier agreements were not theirs, but those of their electoral opponents.

“Everything was going fine with the project itself until this new government came on board,” Coc said. “What they’re trying to do is reverse every single agreement that has already been made, but there are ongoing efforts to convince the ministry’s commissioner to change his position both from the political and legal front.”

This comes against a background of decades of struggle by the Maya to get the rights to their ancestral lands. It has been a story of resilience going to courts and international bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to argue for land rights since 1996, winning when the cases were heard (which was

not always the case), and ending up with the landmark Caribbean Court of Justice ruling.

ONE OF THE LATEST manifestations of this resilience is JCS’s adoption of strategies to work with the new government while it still disagrees with the shelving of previous agreements.

“We are reminded that the implementation of Maya land rights must be based on trust-building, healing, and reconciliation,” said Pablo Mis, program director for the Maya Leaders Alliance.

Mis noted that in giving a 2010 ruling in favour of Maya rights, then-Chief Justice Abdulai Conteh had said that it was the the implementation of his orders that would right historical wrongs and that the Maya People deserved “an honourable settlement”.

Conteh said it was imperative that ongoing collaboration and open dialogue should be maintained between the Maya People and the government, Mis said.

The project is supporting this. For example, JCS collaborated directly

with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining to support the undertaking of an inventory of all the third parties that are on indigenous lands, an action that the Maya and government agreed to in a December 2018 roadmap on delineating boundaries.

As a result, around 80 percent of the inventory has since been completed.

Similarly, the group has been meeting with all the new ministers “knocking on doors”, as Coc put it to remind them that the law exists, the meaning of the Caribbean Court of Justice ruling, the need for urgent compliance, and offering the Maya People’s continued commitment to engage in respectful dialogue and discussion with the government.

All this is aimed at getting the Indigenous Peoples of Belize the rights that more than three decades of legal battles have deemed to be theirs.

But it is more than that.

“For us, this is not a project. This is really a life struggle,” Coc said.

PROJECT OVERVIEW: BELIZE

“Securing and protecting tenure rights of the Maya People of southern Belize” is a three-year Tenure Facility-funded project worth more than \$1.8 million. It is being implemented by the Julian Cho Society, in collaboration with the Maya Leaders Alliance and the Toledo Alcaldes Association.

The project’s main goal is to secure tenure for 400,000 hectares of Maya lands in 41 communities comprising approximately 21,000 people. The legal basis is the 2015 Caribbean Court of Justice Consent Order agreed between the government of Belize and the Maya People.

The official recognition of land tenure rights passes through a step-by-step process, starting with communities’ consent and identification of land boundaries. It then moves on to mapping and demarcation of the territories and ends with technical verification by the government and land titling. So far, 22 villages have consented to begin or have completed delineating ancestral lands. By the end of 2021, 18 villages had harmonised their boundaries with their respective neighbours, and five inter-village boundary agreements were signed.

Since the start of its operations, the project has had to face serious challenges related to COVID-19 pandemic. There was also a change of government in late 2020, leading to delays in titling brought on by adjustments to new personnel and policies.

The partners, however, have been able to realign their strategy, focusing on raising awareness and capacities at the village level when dealing with third parties. This has strengthened the communities’ ability to resolve conflicts and report on land encroachments. As result, in 2021 two extractive industry companies sought the partners’ assistance to engage with Maya villages to get permission to work on the land.

COLOMBIA CNTI: DIPLOMA COURSE IN TERRITORIAL RIGHTS TO SUPPORT LAND CLAIMS FOR COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

PROJECT OVERVIEW: COLOMBIA CNTI

"Strengthening territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples in Colombia", the Tenure Facility's first project supporting Indigenous Peoples land tenure in Colombia, was launched in 2020 with a total budget of nearly \$1.5 million.

The project focuses on the implementation of the Observatory of Territorial Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a technical tool of the National Commission of Indigenous Territories (CNTI). The observatory aims to produce technical analyses and evidence to promote Indigenous Peoples' land tenure claims. It also seeks to provide greater quality and rigour in the enforcement of rights.

The partners include CNTI and the Association of Arhuacas Authorities of the Sierra Nevada.

Project activities include developing monitoring-information systems, research on territorial and environmental conflicts, follow-up on land issues related to the implementation of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement, and analysis of the government's policy on land rights.

The observatory has created a database for roughly 1,000 existing land claims, and by the end of 2021, 137 files (solicitudes) on different stages had been compiled. Of those files, 39 were analysed. In the latter, territorial claims amount to 39,816,573 hectares. The project objective is to analyse 100 claims, develop prioritisation criteria, and select 20 claims to advance towards full recognition.

Another important result of 2021 was the implementation of communication mechanisms and tools, which contributed to the recognition of the observatory as a reliable source. One of the main achievements is that the observatory is recognised by the communities as a key stakeholder in the processes of enforcing their territorial rights.

Looking ahead, an important challenge will be to ensure the observatory's long-term sustainability by developing partnerships with technical and financial partners beyond the Tenure Facility.

AT THE ENTRANCE of a small community hall in the village of Santander de Quilichao in Northern Cauca, Colombia, stands a local elder known as Don Guillermo. He is holding a branch, which he dips in a bucket of water and then uses to bless the participants lined up at the entrance of the community hall.

Representatives from 22 different indigenous communities are attending the first Diploma Course in Territorial Rights and Buen Vivir. Held at the Association of Indigenous Authorities of Northern Cauca (ACIN), this minga, or community meet, is being hailed as a pilot project in a major educational campaign to support land rights among Colombia's indigenous communities.

The programme builds on a two-year multi-sector collaboration sponsored by the Tenure Facility. The diploma's launch event, held in September 2021, will propel nationwide efforts to train community leaders and strengthen grassroots organisations seeking land titles.

The programme is coordinated by Camilo Niño, July Calderón, and a team of experts at the Indigenous Land Rights Observatory (ODTPI), part of the National Commission of Indigenous Territories of Colombia (CNTI). The course is certified by the Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural and is endorsed by traditional authorities and elders such as Don Guillermo.

SECURING LAND RIGHTS is an ongoing struggle for Colombia's 1.2 million indigenous people. According to ODTPI Director Camilo Niño, a member of the Arhuaco nation, the process of securing land is one of "constant

learning for Indigenous Peoples". Learning and capacity-building are the basis of social justice. Without education, Niño said, "there would be no means of resolving the historical struggle of Colombia's Indigenous Peoples".

ODTPI's mission is to provide technical support for local organisations filing formal requests for land titles before national authorities such as the National Land Agency. With over 1,000 unprocessed applications and the absence of legal support at grassroots level, the observatory has advanced novel teaching tools and mechanisms, such as the diploma course, which will allow for legal and paralegal expertise to reach local communities with support.

"(The diploma) is a process that informs leadership and effective decision-making within the territories," Niño said, adding that facilitating updated information and technical know-how for indigenous leaders is empowering.

With Tenure Facility's support, the observatory has positioned itself as a dedicated space for the strengthening of indigenous leadership, while also acting as a bridge between indigenous authorities, national government institutions, and public opinion. In addition to providing pedagogical tools, ODTPI is opening a space for political representation at national level.

Speaking at the launch of the diploma in September 2021, Don Guillermo said: "When we talk about land issues we are not talking simply about the individual territorial issues of each authority; we are speaking collectively, we are speaking to the national (issue)."

ACIN Coordinator Juan Carlos Samboní,



Two women reading documents as part of the Diploma Course on Territorial Rights and Buen Vivir, at the Association of Indigenous Authorities of Northern Cauca (ACIN).

"(THE DIPLOMA) IS A PROCESS THAT INFORMS LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE TERRITORIES."

a young Nasa leader told the launch meeting: "The Colombian government is trying to fragment communities, which is why the purpose of the diploma is to strengthen organisations and their knowledge base, so that knowledge can be transmitted directly to the territories."

THE TEACHING THEORY component of ODTPI's programme is one of the observatory's highest achievements, according to programme coordinator July Calderón. "Our greatest success is the pedagogy we have implemented. What the pedagogy achieves is not just technical support. We are training leaders among local youth, women groups, and elders. We are advising indigenous authorities while amplifying community voices through strategic communication on radio and print media."

Women and children play a vital role in steering inclusivity and diversity. Also speaking at the launch was community

leader Claudia Inceca said that "if you understand territory then you understand life, which is why dealing with sensitive issues surrounding land rights is good. In this way we start to sensitise ourselves as human beings and women."

Whilst the educational programme has been hailed by local communities in Northern Cauca, the challenges of scaling up remain daunting. The programme is currently being introduced in other communities in Northern Cauca such as Jambaló, San Francisco, Toribío, and Tacueyó, among others, as well as indigenous territories elsewhere in Colombia.

Insecurity and widespread violence committed against indigenous environmental defenders is rife in many parts of this country, especially in areas dominated by drug trafficking and paramilitary conflict. Conducting work within rural communities, especially in the context of community leadership training

can be extremely difficult and dangerous.

Niño warned that the impact of the programme is modest when considering that the ultimate challenge: to achieve long lasting peace and social justice for the indigenous communities of Colombia.

For community leaders like Don Guillermo, the process of securing land tenure is a long and protracted journey that does not conclude with the titling of land, but which requires ongoing investment in knowledge-exchange, leadership development, capacity-building, and the training of communities in effective political representation, organisation, and governance.



Locals gather and dance at an event in Northern Cauca.

COLOMBIA PCN: EXPANDING THE MAP OF AFRO-DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES

PROJECT OVERVIEW: COLOMBIA PCN

The Tenure Facility-backed project, "Collective title of Afro-descendant ancestral lands in Colombia", which focused on expanding collective tenure among Afro-descendant peoples, leaves an important legacy and more work to do.

The project was mainly implemented by the Black Communities Process (PCN), an umbrella organisation of more than 140 grassroots groups, community councils and individuals. It was conducted in partnership with the National Land Agency (ANT), and technical support was provided by The Observatory for Ethnic and Campesino Territories.

The project ran from mid-2018 to October 2021. It aimed to strengthen the collective territorial rights of 271 Afro-Colombian community councils covering an area of approximately 2 million hectares and benefited approximately 46,422 families (278,532 people) by providing legal, technical, social, and other support.

The most significant result is that community councils are stronger, and new territories outside the Pacific region were included in the projectan important milestone in the titling process for black communities. When the project began, it mostly covered the Pacific region, but was extended to cover historically excluded communities in other areas. Community councils benefited from legal and technical training in four regions: the Caribbean, Inter-Andean Valleys, Chocó-Antioquia, and Putumayo. More than 650 people participated.

It is important to highlight that the PCN played a key role in strengthening the titling process and governance systems in the territories. However, by the end of the project, progress on formal titling was not as good as expected in quantitative terms. This may be due in part to the complex and lengthy process of collective titling, which requires highly technical studies to be carried out along National Land Agency guidelines.

Finally, a set of "Best practices" documents was completed and is now ready for launch. They identify obstacles and ways to overcome them, over community councils' collective titling claims. They also highlight the vulnerability of the Afro-descendant territories to exploitation of natural resources, armed conflict, and climate change, as well as present recommendations for strengthening the protection of Afro-descendants' land rights in territories without formal recognition.

THE RIGHTS OF AFRO-DESCENDANT people in Colombia were officially recognised under the 1993 constitutional amendment

known as Ley de Comunidades Negras, or Law 70, the only legal framework for the protection of the rights of Afro-Colombians.

Under the law, 5.5 million hectares of Afro-descendant collective territory have been recognised in the Pacific region. But Black and Afro-descendant communities elsewhere in the country have been excluded from land titling.

To help bridge this gap in the law, the Tenure Facility has supported a novel online work platform known as Renacentes (Reborn). It was developed by human rights lawyer Astolfo Aramburo and his team at Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN), in collaboration with the Pontifical Javeriana University and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI).

The partners' aim is to use Renacentes to resolve 271 land claims presented to the government's National Land Agency. The platform also provides legal support, capacity-building and information sharing among Afro-descendant communities in the Departments of Putumayo, Cauca, Valle, Quindío, and Antioquia.

"The current situation in Colombia does not favor Black and Afro-descendant people, who are the most vulnerable ethnic groups in this country. Our communities face the highest rates of poverty, violence, and crime, which is why the challenge of securing land is enormous," Aramburo said.

PCN has managed to provide technical support to 192 claimant community councils throughout the country. With support from Tenure Facility, it is achieving something the Colombian state has not yet delivered: an effective methodology for Afro-descendant land tenure.

"For the first time in our history," Aramburo said, "we are offering capacity to follow up land claims. We are providing legal

support for claimants, while also facilitating social cartography, and sharing real-time and updated data to inform communities and local decision makers."

Out of a total of 271 official claims, only eight processes have been resolved to date.

But Johana Herrera Arango, professor of Race Studies at Javeriana University and the project's co-investigator, said it is not necessarily the number of successful land titles that matters. "The message," she said, "is that justice can be achieved. Despite the difficulties, the process can happen. That is what our programme shows."

THE PLATFORM IS HELPING Black people recover and strengthen a sense of cultural identity, according to youth leader Eny Cerón from Kurrulao, a palenque or Afro-descendant community in the Department of Nariño.

"Renacentes is creating a different space for Black settlements in this country" Cerón said. "It was believed that Black people in Colombia were located in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. We are telling the state that Black people are not only located in those regions, rather we live all over the country, and we are organising ourselves to secure collective lands."

"This project is opening a sense of Black Colombia that can no longer be understood from within two regions. Communities are now very active, because spaces like this are giving us an opportunity that we did not have in the '90s, an opportunity that we must take advantage of, and which is fueled by the desire people now have to speak up and claim their rights to ancestral lands," Cerón added.

For Aramburo, the procedure may be long and the land titles may be few, but the process is hugely significant. It opens a new panorama for Black and Afro-descendant rural communities. "It is necessary for the communities to have a more direct, participative engagement," he said. "We are



A meeting of locals to discuss the process of mapping and securing land tenure.

"(THE DIPLOMA) IS A PROCESS THAT INFORMS LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE TERRITORIES."

listening to the communities, in order to understand the nature of their claims."

INDEED, LAND TITLING for local Afro-descendant communities goes beyond the legal procedure. Collective land titling is not only a technical challenge: PCN's effort is to "build new norms of coexistence". By combining community and technical know-how, the goal of Aramburo and his team is to recognise and secure Afro-descendant

territory as an ancestral space of biocultural belonging where traditional and ecological ways of living can be preserved according to ancestral African wisdom (saberes ancestrales africanos).

Renacentes proposes a new way of working that highlights the need to bring together knowledge and expertise from local community, traditional knowledge keepers, women's groups, academia, social movements, and government institutions.



Mapping of the territory using new technologies.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: A NEW APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PROJECT OVERVIEW: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The PASDFF project, short for “Support for securing the land and forest rights of local communities of indigenous peoples as well as women”, was launched in August 2020 by Tenure Facility partner organisations. The goal was to secure 300,000 hectares of land through 10 local community forest concessions in five provinces of DRC. The concessions, known as CFCLs, are handed over by the government to be managed by the community.

The “Centre d’Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Tropicales” and its partner the Congolese Resources Institute, the “Centre d’Accompagnement de la population pour le développement multisectoriel”, the “Communauté Évangélique du Christ de l’Ubangi”, and the Centre for Community Promotion and Education together lead this project, working in different regions of the country.

Women’s rights and conflict resolution have been important throughout the process, which has also involved communities mapping their land, along with training sessions for traditional authorities and local and provincial administrations.

In Sud-Ubangi province where there is a mixed Pygmy and Bantu population, particular attention has been paid to Pygmy representation in the process and its governance structure. The project has challenged customary gender norms through training sessions on the involvement of women in the process, allowing project partners to utilise their expertise in forest management.

Of the 300,000 hectares, 196,069 were secured by the end of 2021. This was less than initially estimated but still impressive. Boundary disputes reduced the expected area since the law regulating the concessions requires parties to agree. Communities also discovered that parts of the targeted forests had been granted to farms, plantations, and companies.

In 2021, 13 communities were involved in participatory mapping. Ten of them received CFCL certificates issued by provisional governors. The remaining three are awaiting approval for their concessions. The number of communities involved rose from 10 to 13 because some members insisted they belonged to separate communities, leading to concessions being divided during the delimitation process.

Securing the land has been relatively quick. Remaining work includes creating governance structures that include all community groups. Simple land-management plans also need to be agreed upon by each community.

WHEN THE LAND CHANGES, claiming tenure can become more difficult. At least, that is what some indigenous people

and local communities have been finding in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Thanks to Tenure Facility partners, however, more than 185,000 hectares of land has been titled over the past two years.

Tenure in DRC is dictated by a 2014 decree and a 2016 ministerial order that provide a legal framework for indigenous and local communities to obtain titles for up to 50,000 hectares of community lands. These laws, the result of years of work by civil society, have opened an avenue for the long-overdue recognition of collective tenure rights.

But when it comes to actually obtaining titles, the process is not always straightforward.

“Historically, community lands had natural frontiers such as mountains, rivers, or forests,” said Dr. Carmel Kifukieto, programme officer with Tenure Facility partner the Centre d’Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Tropicales (CAGDFT). But in recent decades, he notes, landscape-level changes driven by deforestation, agro-industrial exploitation, and resource extraction have led to the transformation or disappearance of some of these traditional boundaries.

Mining, rubber production, and industrial agriculture have led to land-grabbing and forest degradation. These pressures have exacerbated conflicts over land and resources between communities, companies, and even neighbouring communities.

CAGDFT, in collaboration from local partners, began an ambitious three-year project in 2020 to secure rights at scale in western DRC. Given that this coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been major obstacles.

Despite challenges provoked by the pandemic, the project has changed the landscape for recognition of community land rights in western DRC. Across the five provinces of western DRC where CAGDFT and its partners are working, all have seen significant progress in the implementation of community land rights.

THIS PROGRESS REPRESENTS a sea change: the project’s two-year tenure for 180,000 hectares in western DRC is close to double the total community land rights areas that had been secured by 2019 across the entire vast country.

Théophile Gata, CAGDFT executive director, attributes the unprecedented speed at which the project has progressed in large part to its emphasis on participatory cartography.

The process is painstaking: in each community, CAGDFT and its local partners will hire a local cartographer, select a group of community leaders to guide the process (including youth and women), and use GPS trackers to identify key sites such as hunting and fishing areas, cultural sites, and burial grounds. Workshops are then held among neighbouring communities to identify boundaries and resolve conflicts, and produce draft maps for input and validation before submission to the government for titling.

While this process requires significant effort from CAGDFT, its local partners, and communities, Gata insists that this bottom-up approach to the process has been integral to the success of the project.

“[Participatory cartography] allows us to visualise the conflicts and mediate them,” he said.

Working with a trusted set of local partners has also been critical in running the project during the pandemic. From the beginning of the pandemic CAGDFT and its partners prioritised raising awareness



Communities in DRC taking COVID19 precautions when meeting and carrying out activities.

“THE AUTHORITIES SAY THAT IT WAS THE FIRST TIME A PROJECT HAS INVOLVED THEM AT EVERY STEP, WHEREAS OTHERS WOULD JUST COME IN AND GIVE THEM THEIR REPORTS.”

within communities about masks, social distancing, and other precautions against the spread of COVID-19. This laid the groundwork for CAGDFT’s partners to help mitigate the spread of the virus and allow the project to continue.

The involvement of local governments in the process has also been part of CAGDFT’s approach.

“The authorities say that it was the first time a project has involved them at every step, whereas others would just come in and give them their reports,” Gata said.

THE SCALE OF this success is critical to enabling indigenous and local communities in western DRC to protect both people and forests.

“The forest is the supermarket, the pharmacy, and the site of cultural inspiration on which many Indigenous

Peoples and local communities depend,” said Gata. “To ease the pressures on the forests in this region, we have to secure communities’ lands.”

With many communities having secured collective rights, they are now turning their attention to sustainable production and exploitation. The project’s success has already been felt at the community level.

Community members have felt the benefits of the project not only in its results, but also in the process of community engagement.

Gata cited the example of Mr. Balambala, a member of an Indigenous Pygmy community in the province of Kongo Centrale who was delegated to represent the community in workshops and attended several trainings.

“He was lost in his corner, but the project gave him a path,” Gata said. “Seeing one of



Local meeting for a session on methodology of mapping territory.

their members come to have these skills and knowledge and to speak before other communities this was a real plus for the community.”

GUYANA: MAPPING AND MEDIATING IN GUYANA

PROJECT OVERVIEW: GUYANA

Launched in 2019 and continuing through last year, “Securing and enhancing indigenous land tenure in Guyana” aims to improve land tenure security for Guyana’s Indigenous Peoples through legal reform and titling. The project supports 14 Indigenous Peoples’ communities, which includes about 13,000 people, in extending land titles and demarcation over approximately 2 million hectares of land.

It is a more than \$1.6 million project funded by the Tenure Facility and implemented by the Amerindian Peoples Association, in partnership with the South Rupununi District Council (SRDC).

The indigenous population of Guyana differs from many others in that they have received their land titles in the past. Those titles, however, were drawn up without field surveys, and land boundaries were not agreed through prior consultation. As a result, many titles have boundary errors, and none of them covers the full extent of lands that communities know to be theirs under customary law.

The project is key to helping Indigenous Peoples identify their traditional lands, solve long-term boundary disputes, and advance the process of demarcation. It also supports the government in the development and implementation of Indigenous Peoples’ land rights-based policies. In the Wapichan territory, SRDC is also investing in local governance systems and strengthening community-based management plans.

During 2021, despite major challenges due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tenure Facility’s partners have been able to promote inter-village dialogues aimed at the resolution of land boundaries disputes in order to strengthen the capacities of the communities to negotiate with third parties, including the mining sector, as well as to protect land and resources.

Communication and collaboration with government agencies has also improved, with the communities playing a leading role in building these relationships.

THE VILLAGES OF Assakata and Little Kaniballi in Guyana’s heavily forested, coastal region were at loggerheads last year over the misrepresentation of their land boundaries.

After both had applied to the government for formal extensions of their recognised, traditional lands, they discovered that Little Kaniballialso known as Santa Cruzwas being awarded Assakata land it had not asked for.

The issue was essentially a result of governmental misunderstanding of the nature of the local territories and the existing boundaries between the two communities. But it was causing some animosity to grow between the indigenous villagers concerned.

Enter the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA), a rights group working with the Tenure Facility to protect the cultural and practical links to the land of Guyana’s 70,000-strong indigenous populationroughly 10 percent of the nation.

“We supported these communities to solve the problem by creating a space of dialogue which led to a better understanding of their common land boundaries and areas for future extensions,” said Sharon Atkinson, an APA policy officer. “(As a result), when the government met with the Little Kaniballi Village council and residents, they rejected the demarcation because the government’s proposed extension overlapped with Assakata’s titled lands.”

The government’s response is still pending, but such mediation between indigenous communities is a key part of the work conducted by the Tenure Facility’s partners in Guyana under a nearly \$1.7 million project to help secure tenure.

Recently extended, the project is focused on supporting 14 indigenous communities in Guyana to get title to their lands and/or get extensions to existing titles, as in this case.

Such action falls under the jurisdiction of Guyana’s 2006 Amerindian Act, which, among other things, allows communities to apply for land once they can prove that they have been living there for at least 25 years.

Despite this, around half of the indigenous

communities in Guyana still lack fully secured titles.

The Tenure Facility-sponsored project has three main focus areas, two of which are being implemented by APA and the other by the South Rupununi District Council (SRC). The first focus area is mapping, which is conducted by APA, while the second focus area is the support that SRC gives to villages to secure the demarcation or land extensions of their lands. The SRDC also works with the Wapichan communities to develop better governance systems to manage their lands.

The third element is led by APA and focuses on conducting legal work and advising the government on a revision of the Act to ensure Indigenous Peoples’ rights and to streamline the process of granting land rights.

This includes efforts to cancel mining and other third-party activities that have been allowed on traditional lands without local communities’ agreement.

WHO CAN DO WHAT AND WHERE

The latter issue, according to APA Executive Director Jean La Rose, is undermining the ability of indigenous communities to control their own land. Commercial interests have been awarded rights by the government to exploit lands that should be or are under local tenure.

“It’s primarily mining concessions, but there are logging concessions that are on titled land as well,” she said, adding that the same sometimes applies to conservation projects that limit traditional activities. “So, you have a case where indigenous people have lands that are legally titled and there’s another document (allowing for other activities).”

La Rose, who was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2002 for her work on halting mining on the Akwaio’s peoples’ land, said the process of granting tenure has also been disrupted by a change in government in 2020, which brought new people into the process.

The APA, however, continued the crucial



A community-trained specialist using a GPS to map an area of territory.

“NOT ONLY DO WE FIND BOUNDARIES WHEN WE MAP, WE ALSO TRY TO MAP THE RESOURCES, THE TYPES OF TREES, THE TYPE OF MEDICINE, OR MEDICINE THAT THEY USE, PROBABLY FRUITS, GATHERING AREAS, HUNTING AREAS.”

task of mapping and demarcating lands to define what should be tenured.

Much of this involves physically traipsing through heavily forested areas.

Describing the process, Atkinson said APA first has meetings with the leaders of the community and village residents in places such as Assakata where mapping is to take place.

“They give us descriptions of the areawhich include landmarks or rivers, streams, creeks. After that, we do a pilot sketch, a sketch-mapping exercise with some of the knowledgeable people, knowledge holders, those who fish, farm, hunt, gather medicinal plants, or catch crabs for a living,” she said.

With this information in hand, the actually mapping takes place, with

community-trained specialists conducting extensive walking through the actual area using a GPS device linked to satellites. But this does not always work.

“Sometimes the cloud cover and the forest cover does not allow for satellite penetration,” Atkinson said. “So, we have a backupsmartphones.”

“Not only do we find boundaries when we map, we also try to map the resources, the types of trees, the type of medicine, or medicine that they use, probably fruits, gathering areas, hunting areas,” said Dan James, an APA policy assistant who works with Atkinson and does much of the physical mapping.

“We (APA) are trying to build a database, not necessarily to share with everyone but for the community, so that they can have this



A group drawing maps of the territory in South Rupununi District.

information once we are finished mapping out everything,” he said.

Guaranteeing the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their land is paramount, but it is also crucial given the need to protect Guyana’s forests from exploitation. The country has as much as 90 percent forest coverone of the highest levels in the worldand a very low deforestation rate that the United Nations, among others, considers crucial for climate change mitigation.

INDIA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES EMBRACE HIGH TECH IN INDIA

PROJECT OVERVIEW: INDIA

Tenure Facility partners in India began implementation of phase II of the “Upscaling community tenure rights in India” project in April 2021. Phase I supported over 5,800 Gram Sabhas/village assemblies in filing claims for Community Forest Rights (CFR). Phase II aims to see titles granted in at least 3,000 of these assemblies. Furthermore, 3,000 new claims will be submitted, with the aim of 40% being approved.

Project activities focus on supporting the maximum number of communities in cementing rights recognition and tenure security as well as exploring models to sustain post-CFR livelihoods.

Implementation of the project was severely disrupted early last year when the second wave of COVID-19 caused the worst humanitarian and public health crisis in India since independence. Nonetheless, title was granted in 104 existing claims, 249 new claims were submitted, and 44 approved.

Notably, joint titles were distributed to multiple villages in Odisha state. Many communities across India do not have designated forests within their boundaries. They have historically accessed land within neighbouring communities and shared responsibility for managing it. However, the Forest Rights Act does not readily recognise this phenomenon. The approval of joint claims demonstrates the flexibility of the law in addressing a problem that affects over 50% of villages in Odisha.

The prototype technology applications developed in the first phase will be transformed into a product suite called “ForestFi”. It will support communities in mapping, monitoring, and making informed decisions about forest management. Ways to sustain forest rights and livelihoods will be explored through piloting standards for community-based sustainable supply chains for non-timber forest products.

TALK TO ONE of the Tenure Facility’s partners in India about what they have been doing to ensure Indigenous Peoples’ land rights, and you are likely to hear a litany of high-tech terminology.

Apps. Stacks. Drones. Geo-tagging. Gamification.

Pilot projects in the states of Himachal Pradesh in the far north, Jharkhand to the east, and Odisha and Maharashtra cutting an east-west swathe across central India are using the latest technologies to meet one of the oldest goals ensuring that the land you own is your own.

“We are developing a set of tools to facilitate different aspects of (the land rights project),” said Abhijeet Parmar, project specialist at the Hyderabad-based Indian School of Business (ISB), the Tenure Facility’s lead partner in India.

The project is the latest element of a \$3.1 million Tenure Facility-funded project that started in 2018. It has led alone to 100 Community Forest Resources Rights claims being recognised last year under India’s 2006 Forest Rights Act, which legitimises the rights of the forest dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers.

Technology is now being used to cover a range of activities including securing tenure rights, researching how forest products are managed, getting them to market, and generally keeping digital records in an arena where there are either old papers gathering dust in scattered filing systems or no records at all.

In all, Parmar said, there are a series of different data-gathering and analysis tools creating a technology stack called ForestFi. Among the technologies are:

- Specifi, which maps forest inventory using satellite data, drone images, and ground surveys

- Formifi, which allows for land to be claimed digitally under the Forest Rights Act

- SelliFi, a management system developed for keeping records of collection, storage, and sale of seasonal forest produce

- TerraFi, a virtual-reality based application for community-based data collection and monitoring of forest resources

Although, to date, they are only pilot projects, they have the potential to revolutionise the rights and livelihoods of India’s Indigenous Peoples.

In a similar vein, there is also a separate, more basic ISB project to systematise forest-product businesses swapping the traditional stone pounding of seeds, for example, with a simple milling unit.

The overall scope is huge in India: some 84 million people, around 8 percent of the population, are designated as Adivasi or members of Scheduled Tribes in essence, indigenous. Most of them live in forest areas, which cover around a quarter of India’s total territory.

HIGH TECH-ING IT THROUGH THE FOREST

The ForestFi project differs in a significant way from some other land-rights projects in that it goes beyond assuring tenure to planning for the future use of the land.

Apurva Duddu heads up the ISB’s pilot project in Hamachel Pradesh. As she describes it, the technology is allowing local people to find out what they actually have in terms of sustainable forest products and how to better benefit from them.

One pilot took place in 2021 in Pangri, a rugged region in the foothills of the Himalayas.

“We conducted participatory forest inventory mapping in the villages,” she said. “We trained local women in using GPS devices for collecting (data on) species where they exist.”

The women would walk through the forest and if they found, say, a hazel tree, they would geotag it as such, measure its height and girth, then move on. They did this for more



Teenage girl recording local plant species with mobile phone, India.

mushrooms, walnuts, and pine nuts as well.

From this, the potential for future harvesting can be extrapolated and the land managed accordingly. Indeed, informal women’s groups known as Mahila Mandal already have set rules about who can pick what and when.

“The products were chosen (for the pilot) first because they are of high value, and they’re produced and collected in high volume by the local communities. Second, women are involved in collecting, and third, the products don’t raise questions of sustainability,” Duddu said.



Providing training to local farmers about forest management technology at courtyard district Katni Madhya Pradesh in India.

“This exercise is to help the communities get an estimate of the distribution and the quantity of production of each of these species in the pilot area,” she said.

The geotagging comes in addition to assisting the local communities’ work for land-rights recognition after mapping their lands.

“Our priority is to get tenure security first, and then basically proceed from there,” ISB’s Parmar said.

Here again, the ISB approach is high tech. As well as using satellites and drones, one experiment involves using Google Earth, a tablet, and 3D glasses.

“Google Earth basically generates very high-resolution images,” Parmar said. “So, we take a particular orientation (of the land) and then generate stereo images. If you put on your 3D glasses, you can actually see the terrain features projected on the screen.”

The idea is that by using this technology, individuals from forest communities can readily identify prominent landmarks such as schools and temples and locate them in the

“THE WOMEN WOULD WALK THROUGH THE FOREST AND IF THEY FOUND, SAY, A HAZEL TREE, THEY WOULD GEOTAG IT AS SUCH, MEASURE ITS HEIGHT AND GIRTH, THEN MOVE ON.”

3D landscape. They then can literally draw their boundaries on the tablet.

The whole ForestFi process data collection and recording embraces the concept of gamification, using the mechanics of digital games to motivate and engage users to achieve strategic goals.

And it will not be limited to India alone. Once the pilot projects are over and proven successful, ISB’s stack will be available for all to use.

“Whatever technology we are developing, it’s completely open source,” Parmar said. “It will be released (for all) with the source code and everything.”

INDONESIA: YOUTH AND ELDERS UNITE IN INDONESIA TO SHARE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND GAIN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

PROJECT OVERVIEW: INDONESIA

A Tenure Facility-backed project in Indonesia ended in June 2021, with significant progress in its effort to enhance the tenure security of 200 indigenous and local communities who live on approximately more than 2 million hectares of land.

The “Accelerating agrarian reform and recognition of indigenous territory in Indonesia” project was implemented between November 2018 and June 2021. Its work included supporting the mapping and registration of indigenous territories and submitting Priority Locations for Agrarian Reform (LPRA) for land redistribution.

The project was funded by a \$2,250,000 grant to AMAN and involved the Customary Territory Registration agency (BRWA) as an implementing partner, as well as the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA).

The project was amended during the COVID pandemic to support AMAN’s food sovereignty program.

By the end of the project, 79 indigenous communities received official recognition of their territories, covering more than half a million hectares. Among other achievements, local regulations were passed in eight districts to recognize indigenous land rights, potentially benefiting 352 communities. More than 1,000 communities completed mapping their land, and 633,196 hectares of mapped territories were submitted to the government for inclusion in the government’s One-map system, which ensures land rights and usage data are accessible to decision makers.

At the national level, 9,269 hectares of customary forests were recognized. Only one identified priority location was redistributed, benefiting 705 households. KPA submitted 654,854 ha. of land prioritized by communities for redistribution, and BRWA and KPA were invited to join a team working for the acceleration of agrarian conflict resolution set up by the President of Indonesia in 2021.

Finally, more than 200,000 households, including 12,243 headed by females, became organized to push forward conflict resolution and land redistribution. Land redistribution was used to resolve conflicts in six provinces, resulting in some 3,000 hectares of disputed land redistributed to over 4,000 families.

IT IS HARD to find anything good to say about the global COVID-19 pandemic, but one of the rare positive outcomes has been the resilience of the people facing it. That was the case last year in Indonesia, when indigenous and other local farmers worked not only on growing their own food but also on supplying pandemic-besieged cities as well. And young indigenous people stepped up too, returning home to kick start organic farms and local schools.

Indonesia hosts the world’s third largest tropical forests after the Amazon and the Congo Basins sprawled across 18,000 islands. Some 70 million Indigenous People are stewards for ancestral lands within or near these forests. Among them, hundreds of thousands of small-plot farmers and labourers who rely on customary lands for their traditional livelihoods.

With help from Tenure Facility project funds, many of these farmers and workers rose to the food security challenge in Indonesia (in particular its marginalised communities) when the country creaked under the weight of lockdowns and a slowing of what had been some \$19 billion in food imports (mainly, wheat, soybeans, rice).

“The pandemic has shown us something extraordinary how we are able to address food crises,” said Dewi Kartika, secretary general of Indonesia’s Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), the largest peasant union organisation in the country. “It has been the smallholders who have been the frontline for supplying food for the cities.”

It was not that indigenous and local farmers were unaffected by the pandemic they were. But, according to Erasmus Cahyadi, director of projects for Tenure Facility partner AMAN, – the Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the

Archipelago which has 17 million individual members across the Indonesian archipelago – in many places traditional farming practices produced bumper harvests, which were then shared with those in need.

“We had to adjust our projects to address gaps in the response to the ongoing pandemic,” he said. “Our communities worked together and shared surplus harvest ... under our Food for Many initiative these are our ancestral ways.”

THIS INCREDIBLE RESILIENCE was also on display among Indonesia’s indigenous youth, many of whom participated in the AMAN-supported Youth Homecoming Movement. It began a few years ago when three young women set up a few indigenous schools, creating an important way for the elders to share their ancient traditions, culture, and wisdom to protect territories and forests.

There are now 82 such indigenous schools across the country. But the youth did not stop with education: a growing number of young people are now embracing organic farming or sustainable permaculture as a preferred vocation. And a lot of it depends on a solid relationship between the young and old, the homecomers and the elders.

Indigenous knowledge in the archipelago is under threat. Passed down through generations with storytelling and lifestyle, traditional knowledge has maintained the current biodiversity and protected primary forests. But, the ancient wisdom holders, the elders, are declining in number, something that was exacerbated by the pandemic.

So, some of the Tenure Facility project funds in Indonesia have focussed on encouraging the involvement of indigenous youth in all aspects of society whilst pairing them with elders to learn traditional

“THE PANDEMIC HAS SHOWN US SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY HOW WE ARE ABLE TO ADDRESS FOOD CRISES.”

knowledge, passed down through stories and systems.

“(The homecomers) asked for permission from elders to work on a piece of land in the territories. Then they organised themselves into groups with youth from communities and cities and started farming activities, vegetable cultivation, traditional medicine and herb gardens, as well as combining farming and education with ecotourism,” said Mina Setra, AMAN’s deputy secretary general.

The activities have changed the perception of farming and employment opportunities in the territories. Not only is there a financial gain for the youth, but there is also a transfer of ancient knowledge in managing their own ancestral territories and helping in the struggle for tenure.

Tenure, of course, lies at the heart of progress for Indigenous People.

AMAN, KPA, and the Ancestral Territory Registration Body (BRWA) which is responsible for mapping, registering, and

certifying indigenous territories continued to work together last year with Tenure Facility support. Since 2015, Tenure Facility has provided over \$3 million to secure land rights and agrarian reform for indigenous and local communities in Indonesia.

“BETWEEN 50 AND 70 MILLION Indigenous People in Indonesia claim rights to 40 million hectares of land and forest. While their rights are recognised by Indonesia’s constitution and some laws, their title is not yet secure and they are vulnerable to prosecution, eviction, exclusion, loss of assets, and violence,” KPA’s Kartika said.

BRWA uses technology for participatory mapping of the community territory, documenting data at household level and detailing locations.

“The tenure process is very bureaucratic there are layers of red tape and collaboration is required from village up to government level,” said BRWA head Kasmita Widodo. “With our data, the communities are more confident with [tenure] claims and their cooperation from the district government.”

The initiative to gain tenure establishes and promotes standards for community mapping and documentation. It also acts as a single reference for community maps and registers, verifies, and certifies claims. It

feeds data to the government’s geospatial agency, which implements the national ‘One Map’ initiative.

One Map’s purpose is to ensure that land rights and data is integrated and accessible to decision-makers to enable efficient and conflict-free, land-use planning. This has been a crucial step in achieving tenure security for Indigenous People.

THERE HAVE BEEN CHALLENGES, of course. Indigenous communities want to simplify the current process for the recognition of their land rights and the provisions for customary law, known locally as Adat, which impacts Indigenous People. To support these efforts, an Indigenous People’s Bill has been on the government’s agenda for more than a decade, but it is yet to be passed. Additionally, the new Omnibus law designed for creating jobs in Indonesia as a whole weakens existing environmental laws and legal protections for Indigenous groups. This raises concerns about land grabbing.

Tenure Facility partners have proven, however, that even in the face of adversity, indigenous communities both the young and the elders have ancestral ways that are important for protecting forests and improving food sovereignty.

That needs to be protected itself with tenure.



Locals waiting on the coast of the river for transport by boat, Indonesia.

LIBERIA: EMPOWERING LIBERIANS, INCLUDING THE YOUTH, TO CONTROL THEIR LANDS

PROJECT OVERVIEW: LIBERIA

By the end of 2021, all twenty-four (24) communities targeted by the project covering 583,934 hectares of forestland have completed the legal requirements for customary collective community land recognition. This includes establishing by-laws and land governance bodies and boundary harmonisation pending confirmatory surveys to obtain their customary land deeds. The 24 communities were certified as land-owning communities by the Liberia Land Authority (LLA), covering an estimated population of over 100,000 people.

All 24 beneficiary communities have established their land governance bodies known as Community Land Development and Management Committees (CLDMCs). With the establishment of the CLDMCs, these 24 communities are positioned to resist land grabbing without Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC). These communities now have the legal rights to protect their Customary Land ownership in a court of law. Each of these communities also has the right to enter into enforceable contracts such as land leases or other forms of transactions. Out of the 697 persons serving on the 24 community land governance bodies, 432 (62%) were male, predominantly young men or youth. The remaining 265 (38%) were female, predominantly young women. The required ratio of men to women on the CLDMC is 50:50, but due to entrenched customary practices, local resistance prevented the partners from achieving this.

The CLDMCs are emerging as local institutions that shape the political, economic, and social dimensions of actualising customary land rights. Despite this level of progress, there is still a lot to be done to strengthen the organisational capacity of the CLDMCs to make them effective, inclusive, and accountable in order to avoid “elite capture” of these structures. The bridge project therefore aims to strengthen the capacity of the CLDMCs to implement their mandate. So far, the bridge project has supported all of these communities to improve their By-Laws by incorporating provisions to address natural resources management, especially for the forest. In addition, all 24 CLDMCs have developed Articles of Incorporation to legalize their CLDMC. By legalizing the CLDMCs, the communities have further strengthened their legal status, thereby making it easier to represent their interests and defend their rights using the court system. All 24 CLDMCs have notarized their Articles of Incorporation with the Liberia Business Registry and have been issued Liberia Revenue Authority Tax Identification Number (TIN), which enables the CLDMCs to report incomes and pay the relevant taxes.

DURING THE WEEK, 27-year-old Austine Kumeh studies in Greenville, on Liberia’s southern coast. The rest of the time he is inland, working on land rights in his village, located in the densely forested Sinoe County.

Despite his youth Kumeh is one of nine people on his village’s Community Land Development Management Committee, the body responsible for land rights and usage.

In a country that traditionally turns to elders for decisions, Kumeh is an example of the many young people in Liberia who are getting involved in community land governance in their traditional homes. They have been galvanised by the 2018 Land Right Act, which provided legal mechanisms for traditional communities to claim their land.

“We are getting involved in the land business because there are some decisions our people take [that] in the long-run bring problems to us as young people,” Kumeh said. “So, we want to get involved in decision-making.”

Not that the elders are ignored or unsupportive. On the contrary, Kumeh says they are consulted and give guidance, welcoming the youth initiatives.

“But sometimes we have our own ideas to share. Because now, we as young people ... move around and see other places other communities and we bring back those ideas to our people and inform them about what we see out there,” he said.

A major part of the land committee’s work is mapping their area and vetting plans for forest use that must then be presented to the group.

Kumeh and his fellow villagers have identified the various boundaries with their neighbours and crafted local by-laws governing what can happen on the land.

Such activities are the goal of a nearly \$2 million project supported by the Tenure Facility in Liberia. It is led by the Foundation

for Community Initiatives, partnered with Parley Liberia, the Sustainable Development Institute, and the governmental Liberia Land Authority, where claims are registered.

Together, they are working on land tenure over 583,934 hectares for 24 communities, benefiting 100,000 people.

Tenure Facility funds are also being used to develop tools for use by NGOs and local organisations as they accompany rural communities through the complex process of securing and maintaining their land rights. This included the launch of a website last year to share experiences throughout the country.

IT IS ALL CRUCIAL for Liberia, which was founded in 1822 by freed black slaves from the Americas and is the only sub-Saharan country never to have been a colony. Traditional land rights were originally recognised, but then logging, mining, and agriculture began to encroach. Recent civil wars have wreaked havoc over the environment and, along with poverty, contributed to the country having 63 percent of its population under 25 years of age (vs. 42 percent globally).

This has put immense pressure on rural communities, many of which live in the roughly 45 percent of the country that is forested, some of it the most biodiverse in the world.

The 2018 Land Right Act was a breakthrough, but like many such laws, the detail is in the implementation.

Silas Siakor, a Goldman Environment Prize-winner who is the project coordinator for the Tenure Facility partner Foundation for Community Initiatives, says both government and civil groups share a desire for the law to be implemented, but it is not straightforward.

“The law requires a series of processes that communities need to complete in order to be given different bundles of rights,” he

said. “So, for example, a community has to complete a self-identification process.”

That amounts to villages, groups of villages, or towns coming together as a single unit for the purpose of formalising their land boundaries. Once that happens, the communities must develop their own bylaws to define how they will manage the land that they claim.

COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT and management committees, such as the one Kumeh belongs to, are responsible for managing the bylaws. They need advice and other help, which is where Tenure Facility partners come in.

“There’s a big push from civil society to work with them to implement the law,” Siakor said, noting that a side benefit has been a shift in leadership and participation.



A young Liberian woman in her family home, travelling back from the city to take part in community development.

“WE ARE GETTING INVOLVED IN THE LAND BUSINESS BECAUSE THERE ARE SOME DECISIONS OUR PEOPLE TAKE [THAT] IN THE LONG-RUN BRING PROBLEMS TO US AS YOUNG PEOPLE.”

“Before now, land governance was squarely in the hands of the elders excluding the youth and excluding women. With this new law and the support that the NGOs are providing, youth are taking an active interest in this new environment and holding positions on these committees,” he said.

Kumeh, the student on the committee in his Sinoe County village, is clear on the benefits to him and his community, travelling home from college to work in the new legal environment.

“The [by-laws explain the] way we want things to be,” he said. “Before, some people

would just go anywhere to farm, and outsiders will come and go into our bush without informing us. Some people (would) just go into the bush to settle there. Some of them will be fishing, hunting, or mining and the community is not aware of it.

“We developed our by-laws so that anyone coming, even if the government sends them, must speak with us before they go into our bush,” he said. “With (our) education and the law, we are getting to know the roles that we are supposed to play as a community for our forest and for our own land.”

MALI: MALI'S LAND COMMISSIONS EMERGE STRENGTHENED FROM THE PANDEMIC

PROJECT OVERVIEW: MALI

Land rights campaigners in Mali faced multiple familiar challenges in 2021. Political turmoil led to a coup as it did in 2020, a deadly jihadist insurgency showed no sign of ending, and COVID continued to hinder their work. Nevertheless, the National Coordination of Farmers Associations (CNOP), Tenure Facility's partner, was able to advance its efforts to make customary ownership of land a reality.

Since 2019, the CNOP project, "Securing land and forests for local communities, a guarantee of security, food security, peace and social stability", has focused on establishing village land commissions, in line with the Agricultural Land Law (the LFA) of 2017. A hundred such commissions have been set up and successfully managed local conflicts in the Sikasso, Ségou, and Koulikoro regions.

No new commissions were established in 2021, but the 30 formed in 2020 were strengthened.

Official certification of customary ownership of land is not yet possible in Mali despite the LFA favouring these rights. However, the project partners are promoting certification and preparing for when it will be possible. Tools developed by the project still must be officially validated by the government before customary land can be granted.

Conflict management is an important component of the land commissions' work. Most have successfully managed at least one conflict during 2021. Each case is resolved through reconciliation and documented in a way that should be recognised by law. In fact, this rarely happens, though capacity building with local judges is improving the situation.

Support from the Executive Secretariat of the Agricultural Orientation Law, the project's government partner, is facilitating closer cooperation with local government and judicial authorities, including the recognition of post-conflict documentation. Transactions documented at village level also help prevent conflict over agricultural land.

Intense dialogue with the government regarding the draft of a law in 2020 that risked undermining the role of land commissions has led to plans that would allow the law and the LFA to coexist. It would also allow for provisional certificates of customary ownership to be issued, something that is coming closer to actualisation.

AFTER YEARS OF conflict over land tenure in Mali, Land Commissions, supported by Tenure Facility's funding, are addressing the country's economic, environmental, and political land challenges.

Under French colonial rule, land belonged to the state, and largely remained so after independence, with only halting progress towards decentralisation in the intervening decades. The resulting patchwork of land governance has fomented conflict between agrarian, pastoralist, and fishing communities, among others.

The 2017, the "Loi Foncière Agricole (LFA), a bill providing a legal framework for land governance pushed by the country's peasant movement ushered in needed reforms. Among these reforms was a call for the creation of Land Commissions, or COFOs (their acronym in French), to address local land disputes.

While the LFA represented a significant step forward, the daunting task of actually creating and overseeing COFOs fell to civil society. For years, these efforts struggled to gain traction.

FOR BRAHIMA TRAORE, project lead with Tenure Facility's partner the National Coordination of Peasants' Organisations, Mali (CNOP), introducing more localised commissions at the village level was a key innovation. "The land belongs to the community," Traore said, "and conflict happens at the community level."

From their establishment and piloting in 2017, village-level land commissions have dramatically reduced conflicts over land. This has been achieved during a particularly turbulent period for the country: a civil conflict beginning in 2013, ongoing extremist movements in the country's northern and

central regions, and a military coup that toppled the government in 2021 have all presented significant challenges from the perspective of land governance.

But of all these challenges, perhaps the greatest obstacle to the land commissions has been the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOR CNOP AND its six partners who embarked on a Tenure Facility-financed project to scale the creation of land commissions nationally in 2019, the timing of the pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge. The COFO model was premised on one key ingredient: in-person dialogue and conflict resolution. And in villages where the COFOs were new, in-person awareness-raising was vital to selling communities on their value.

"In 2019 we were raising awareness this was a big part of our work at the beginning of the project," Traore said. "Communities needed to know what they would gain from the Land Commissions to accept them."

With the pandemic, such in-person work suddenly became dangerous for communities. While the commissions had succeeded despite instability, insurgency, and a military coup, the pandemic threatened to undermine their very premise.

CNOP and its partners sprang into action to redesign their engagement tactics. After a governmental order limited gatherings to 50 people, CNOP and its partners continued while respecting the new regulations. Where previously an awareness-raising workshop about COFOs might have been held for one group of 150 community members, CNOP and its partners instead presented to three groups of 50.

While effective, this labour-intensive strategy threatened to undermine the scale of the project: Mali has 12,700 villages, and



Malian street market with family from local community selling vegetables.

every village needs a Land Commission.

CNOP and its partners started thinking about how to do their work at scale in the context of a pandemic. One solution was to identify local leaders who could champion the COFOs. CNOP could then train a group of leaders to guide communities through the process of establishing Land Commissions.

THE INNOVATIONS HAVE been key to addressing emergent challenges not just COVID-19, but also within the context of economic, ecological, and political insecurity, and the pressures of urbanisation.

The COFO approach has had remarkable success in reducing land conflicts in urbanising areas. For instance, the town of Dioga, 10 kilometres from the rapidly

Girl watering cabbage field adjacent to her village, Mali, Africa.

"THE LAND BELONGS TO THE COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT HAPPENS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL."

growing city of Kati, has seen the 69 land disputes it was experiencing in 2019 reduced to just 20.

The process of creating Land Commissions has also had a crucial impact on the role of women in decisions about land at the community level. Traore gives the example of the village of Kadjila in the Sikasso region. "Previously, women weren't involved in communities' conversations around land, but the project made an important change on this level. Women can now make important decisions about land because they are members of the land commissions." Now, of the 110 participants in the village land commission in Kadjila, 70 are women that's more than half the commission.

The resolution of conflicts and the involvement of women in land governance has laid the groundwork, Traore said, for the state to secure communities' land rights at scale. "There remains work to be done," he acknowledges. "[But] Mali has the potential for a process to secure tenure."

MOZAMBIQUE: MOUNT NAMURI COMMUNITIES' LANDMARK TITLES OVER ANCESTRAL LAND

PROJECT OVERVIEW: MOZAMBIQUE

A project to improve the implementation of Mozambique's well-established laws on tenure came to completion in December 2021, with nearly 50 communal land associations established and more communities supported to acquire land ownership certificates.

The project, "Scaling up the community land value chain (CaVaTeCo) approach in Mozambique", whose aim was to scale up the community approach to securing and documenting tenure, began in mid-2019. Tenure Facility's contracting partner was ORAM-Nampula (whose name later changed to ANAM-Nampula).

While Mozambique has some of the best land legislation in Africa, bureaucracy can be burdensome.

The CaVaTeCo consortium team supported 46 communities with delimitations of community land to acquire land certificates. The partners conducted participatory mapping as a basis for certification in Ile, Gurue, and Coastal Nampula. The Terra Firma consultancy established a national digital platform to host and administer the land rights.

The consortium confirmed pre-existing delimitations and submitted requests for new or corrected ones on behalf of 47 communities (out of 60 targeted). The partners also supported communities in addressing emerging land conflicts. However, provincial authorities only approved 22 certificates a reminder that this part of the process is beyond the project team's control.

Certificates can only be granted where a land association exists. During the project period, 49 certificates were established. This led to 36,077 land parcels being formalised and registered in community members' names. Of the 157,142 hectares mapped and submitted for approval, 56,555 were granted to the communities through the 22 issued certificates.

A key project goal was promoting women's land rights. Women constituted 55.7% of the 20,540 people who registered claims of family or individual land parcels. Women have also played a large part in capacity building, including work on the legal framework, raising awareness, and using technologies such as satellite imaging. Men and women participated in the project, learning skills for delimitation, data capturing, and surveys. Learning sessions were held when women and girls could participate.

HOLDING A CERTIFICATE in her hands that bears an official stamp from the Environmental Services of the Department of Lands of Zambezia Province, Adelina Jaquissone stands beaming.

She proudly displays a land certificate for her community of Mucunha in Northeastern Mozambique. By her side, in a small grove at the foothills of the Namuli mountain range, are Environmental Services Director, Hermenegildo Alide, and various other stakeholders and local villagers. They are taking part in a special ceremony to celebrate the delivery of land certificates for the communities of Mucunha, Murrabuê and Nawitela.

The localities are of enormous biocultural value, given the unique forest biodiversity that grows in and around Namuli's iconic granite domes.

Known locally as the Queen of Mount Namuli, Jaquissone is the foremost spiritual, cultural, and political leader in the region, embodying an old local saying: Miyo kokhuma o Namúli, or "I was begotten by Mount Namuli."

Local people have a deep connection with the mountain. Namuli is said to be the ancestors' birthplace. It is a spiritual home not only for the people of Mucunha but also for many other Lomwe- and Maku-speaking people in Zambezia and Nampula provinces.

"It is very important that the communities have their rights to land recognized," Queen Adelina explains. Community land delimitation is more than a legal process. It represents the closure of a long historical conflict and period of displacement, going back to the Portuguese colonial era and the Mozambican Civil War, which ended in 1992.

The certificate Adelina is holding in her

hands represents the beginning of a new era, defined by the formal recognition of people's collective land rights.

The Tenure Facility has played a vital role in sponsoring the Community Land Value Chain, a multi-sector effort dubbed CaVaTeCo that has supported the official land delimitation, or boundary fixing, process. CaVaTeCo was designed and implemented by a consortium comprising the National Association of Mutual Support (ANAM), the international NGO Nitidae in partnership the land consultancy firm Terra Firma, based in Maputo. Its goal is to create a citizen-led registry portal across Mozambique.

Out of a total of 157,000 hectares of land claims, CaVaTeCo has managed to process certificates covering 56,000 hectares in 22 communities across Mozambique in the period July 2019 to December 2021. By the end of the year, the consortium had finalised or confirmed the delimitation of communities in Ile, Gurué, Angoche and Moma.

Titling of community land is also an opportunity for the long-term habitation, sustainable farming and protection of endangered flora and fauna endemic to Mozambique's Afromontane rainforests. For local guardians like Queen Adelina, land tenure is an affirmation and recognition of traditional, cultural, and spiritual ways of living in harmony with the rainforest.

According to Nitidae Country Representative, Jean Baptiste Roelens, the process of land titling must also bear in mind gender-specific factors, especially given Mozambique's matriarchal society. The Nitidae field team, which is composed of local technicians from Mucunha, have worked closely with women's groups, while also establishing community management committees that have helped facilitate

Lady smiling during event in her local village, Mozambique.

conflict-mitigation, community unification and collective management of natural resources.

"Land ownership for local people is vital," Roelens said. "Under former Portuguese colonial powers, tea production or livestock farming created strong pressure on the land." This left an indelible mark in these communities.

"People have been prevented from accessing their ancestral lands, which is why there is still land conflict here and why delimitation is settling these conflicts once and for all for the confidence of local communities," Roelens said.

LAND USE PLANS

Central to the sustainability of the project was a community training programme known as Land Use Plans, aimed at the management and conservation of natural resources. Land management training was co-designed first and foremost to support community leaders like Queen Adelina. According to Simon Norfolk from the land consultancy firm Terra Firma, training is a vital way of "strengthening the unity, legitimacy, and capacity of these committees, as well as the level of coordination with local leaders".

For the first time since the lands were delimited, the people of Mucunha were able to initiate, on their own terms, community-led activities for management of natural resources that address local concerns and priorities. One of the key initiatives stimulated by the Land Use Plans was a community programme for fire control.

Key outcomes of this initiative included an awareness-raising campaign disseminated via community radio and information leaflets, the creation of fire breaks around vulnerable areas, and community sensitisation to the use of flammable materials in local farms. The campaign achieved considerable success, as no wildfires were reported during 80% of the season, resulting in a reduction of wildfires reported overall.

The titling of land for the Mucunha peoples is a momentous event that is celebrated by Queen Adelina and her community for multiple reasons.

As Queen Adelina herself points out: "This recognition of community rights will help protect the cultural heritage of Namuli and the tradition that our families have kept for so many years. That is our hope."

"PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PREVENTED FROM ACCESSING THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS, WHICH IS WHY THERE IS STILL LAND CONFLICT HERE AND WHY DELIMITATION IS SETTLING THESE CONFLICTS ONCE AND FOR ALL FOR THE CONFIDENCE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES."

NEPAL: FOREST ENTERPRISES BREED FOREST PROTECTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW: NEPAL

A project created by Tenure Facility partners to take advantage of Nepal's Constitution of 2015 saw community forest rights secured in more than 50 municipalities in 2021, with thousands of local people helping to demarcate the land.

The constitution brought the management of community forests under the jurisdiction of local governments, opening up new opportunities for the recognition of community forest rights, including those of Indigenous Peoples.

The project, "Securing community forest rights in Nepal through local government and coordinated local actions", is active in 100 municipalities. It supports local governments to enact laws and regulations in order to secure community forest rights. Within 35 of the active municipalities, 1,200 communities will create community forest cadastres. An online portal and inventory will support communities and local government to monitor the land and govern it effectively.

As a result of the project, local forest acts were enacted in 54 municipalities last year, and an additional 43 municipalities were inspired to pass their own acts. Almost 17,000 community members, including about 7,000 Indigenous People and 2,000 Dalits took part in mapping more than 88,000 ha. of community forest. This included identifying and rating the value of forest products and ecosystem services. As a result, participants are more aware of their territories and the customary use of natural resources.

The Community Forest Data Portal is also taking shape. It will incorporate and display data on Community Forest resources, level of rights, good governance mechanisms, and participatory mapping data related to community-based forest enterprises.

IN THE DANG DISTRICT of south midwestern Nepal, local forest communities gather the broad leaves of the Sal tree, dry them, and turn them into the biodegradable eating bowls and plates used widely in the country and across neighbouring northern India.

Someway to the northeast, the Tamang people are harvesting the local large cardamom crop, not just for the seeds, but also for the leaves with which they make mattresses.

In the Gurung Communities of uphill Nepal, the traditional sheep-farming economy is being augmented by blanket weaving, empowering local women, and attracting the young back to the villages from the cities.

The Tharu women of the Bardia District and the local communities of Kailali District, meanwhile, are making handicrafts using community forest resources which are also traded internationally.

These are all examples of the kind of forest enterprises being formed and encouraged in Nepal as part of efforts by Tenure Facility partners to ensure not just land rights for indigenous people, but also the means of survival.

The Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) is leading a nearly \$2 million grant programme in partnership with Green Foundation Nepal and the Centre for Indigenous Peoples Research and Development (CIPRED).

FECOFUN represents more than 22,000 community forest user groups spread widely across Nepal, which is more than a quarter covered by national forest, despite its reputation for snow-peaked Himalayan mountains.

These community groups encompass local people living around forest areas, including but not restricted to Nepal's indigenous people.

With a new federal constitution (2015)

giving local municipalities the devolved power over local forests, the partners' main task last year was to facilitate local governments' passing and enacting of local forest acts to secure strong community rights.

"We are sharing information, we are facilitating, and we are supporting the local governments to make their local forest acts, including the provisions of collective resources and land tenure rights," said Dr. Sita Aryal, FECOFUN's national project coordinator.

So far, 117 local governments have enacted forest acts, 74 of which come under the purview of the project.

In 35 of those municipalities, efforts were under way to map indigenous land areas and formally register their ownership. This register called a cadastre is essential for future development and dealing with disputes.

Meanwhile, the different nature of the widely dispersed and diverse indigenous communities in Nepal – about 36 percent of the population, or some 8 million people, spread across a land incorporating both Himalayan peaks and sub-tropical forest lowlands – means that the acts are not simple cut-and-paste documents.

Each act is based on what the local groups themselves want to adopt to protect and manage their forests. The acts also take into consideration other legislation or settlements that may already exist with indigenous locals.

There has not been a total buy-in by all the municipalities and their officials, primarily because it is all so new. Many municipalities are hesitant about exercising their new devolved authority, preferring to see how others do it first.

But Aryal says the 117 forest acts that are in place tend to follow a pattern that includes general rights, intellectual property rights for traditional knowledge and customary



A talented Tharu woman of the Bardia District building furniture and handicrafts from bamboo.

"WE REALLY WANT ENTERPRISES BECAUSE THEY ARE ONE OF THE MOTIVATIONS FOR (KEEPING) YOUTH IN THE VILLAGE."

practices, and budgets for the support of livelihood programmes and enterprise promotion.

"They are also mobilising for leadership development of women and marginalised communities," she said. "These are the major achievements during this last year."

THE COST OF COVID

It was not all smooth sailing, of course, given the COVID pandemic. There were barriers to progress in 2021 that came down to restrictions on movement.

"Because of COVID, we could not travel. We had to stick with Zoom," said Dr Pasang Dolma Sherpa, CIPRED's executive director.

That, she said, put a crimp on a crucial element of working with municipalities and indigenous communities.

"Face-to-face interaction is very, very important to change perspective; to change views," she said, adding that it was important among partners as well.

There had been a plan to reach and empower more community members, but government COVID restrictions meant

the outreach was limited. FECOFUN, as lead organization, nonetheless mobilized community forest groups to support local communities through the pandemic, creating awareness, distributing food, wood, fuel, and safety materials, along with providing quarantine space.

Given the rural and generally poor nature of many indigenous groups, difficulties related to technology and internet connection added to the communications challenges.

The cost of dealing with the COVID pandemic last year was allocated from the partners' annual budget approximately 10 percent. Some was used to ensure that income-generating activities of local communities continued even during the strict lock down period. The partners collaborated with the local governments in their COVID-support activities so the development of forest enterprises was only slowed by the pandemic, not stopped.

The micro-businesses are driven by the people themselves. The community forest user groups decide on the businesses, based on the resources of the area and the

interests of the people who live there.

CIPRED's Sherpa noted that creating such businesses has spill-over effects empowering women, for example, and offering village youths alternatives to moving to the cities or seeking work in the Gulf countries.

One of the business projects for this year concerns the Dura people in central Nepal. The objective is to brand the wild cliff honey produced in the region to mark its special qualities and protect its provenance.

"We really want enterprises because they are one of the motivations for (keeping) youth in the village," she said. "The focus is to establish enterprises in the village, especially based on indigenous skills and knowledge, so that the youth are empowered."



A family of the Dura people in central Nepal.

PANAMA: TECHNOLOGY DRIVES SUCCESSFUL LAND CLAIMS IN PANAMA

PROJECT OVERVIEW: PANAMA

The unity fostered among the peoples themselves is undoubtedly the greatest achievement of the three-year Tenure Facility-backed project designed to strengthen the territorial security of Indigenous Peoples in Panama.

The \$1.9 million Project, “Strengthen the territorial security and organizational capacity of the Indigenous Peoples of Panama” (PST-TF), was designed by indigenous authorities and technicians from the national coordinating body for Indigenous Peoples (COONAPIP). The project was mainly implemented by COONAPIP with the support of the Social Development Program (PRODESO) as the financial administrator.

Other major achievements included the creation of the Naso Tjër Di region after the Naso people took formal ownership of 160,616 hectares of mostly forested land. Furthermore, work by eight inter-institutional groups led to the government issuing an unprecedented resolution that makes it possible to approve requests for collective titling in protected areas. For years, the overlapping of territories and protected areas was a reason that indigenous lands were not legally recognized.

Capacity building was one of the project’s goals. Nearly 700 men and women were trained in governance and territorial management, laws and rights of indigenous peoples, forest monitoring, leadership, and other skills. For the first time ever, COONAPIP was able to make substantial progress in preparing a gender strategy, its own internal regulations, a guide for complaints and reports of environmental crimes, and a protocol (including a manual) for community mapping. The organisation also developed an environmental management plan, internal regulations and an Organic Charter for the Naso Tjër Di Comarca.

Other results of the project include a study of sacred sites that demonstrates the ancestral occupation of the Bribri territory, and an indigenous community digital radio in operation at the COONAPIP offices. COONAPIP also drafted and validated its “Program to 2030”.

ELICEO QUINTERO IS monitoring the high hills of Mandungandi, in Guna Yala, a densely forested indigenous province in Central Panama. A technical consultant for the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization, Quintero is on a reconnaissance mission with local Guna leader, Yamileth Ortega.

Their aim is to facilitate training for local indigenous youths in social mapping and the use of remote sensing and multirotor drones. It is part of a nationwide programme steered by the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples in Panama (COONAPIP).

“I have been doing this work for years” Quintero said, “always on foot, sometimes under heavy rain, with all my equipment hanging over my legs like lead, with my back-up, my hard drives, my memory sticks and cameras. I’m like a one-man NASA.”

Quintero’s experience illustrates why cartography is such an important aspect of achieving land governance among indigenous communities in Panama. “Geodesic mapping is all about generating high quality information... (It) will allow us to protect natural resources and make informed decisions at the level of indigenous councils.”

“We hope to see indigenous people raise their hands in Congress,” he said, “so that when discussing forests’ databases, climate change or the value of the country’s natural resources, the communities can say: We have a team to make the necessary updates at national level.”

Quintero’s training programme is part of the Strengthening Territorial Security and Organizational Capacity of the Indigenous Peoples of Panama (PST), a multi-stakeholder collaboration between the Tenure Facility and COONAPIP. Launched in August 2018 and completed at the end of 2021, PST’s success translated into three main areas, according to project coordinator Manuel Martinez Villagra.

These areas included the titling of indigenous lands, protection of territories, and indigenous governance.

“COONAPIP has fostered a favorable environment for these results,” Martinez Villagra said, “which have helped unify the indigenous people of Panama, while strengthening dialogue with regional and central government, as well as multi-stakeholder groups such as in academia and the private sector.”

WITH SUPPORT FROM the Tenure Facility, PST has led to successful titling and capacity building not only among Guna communities, but also among the Emberá, Bribri and Naso Indigenous Peoples.

Among the Emberá, for instance, 12 out of 28 existing land claims have been successfully processed over the course of PST’s three-year lifespan. Among the Bribri in the community of Dakle, PST has helped form and train a group called Sebriripa, whose purpose is to increase surveillance and monitoring using Geographic Information Systems. Among the Naso, PST has provided technical assistance that supported a landmark process leading up to the creation, by national decree, of the Naso Indigenous Province in December 2020.

The aim of PST is to continue developing novel, bottom-up methodologies for forest control and monitoring in Panama’s indigenous communities. According to Quintero, indigenous communities can now work hand in hand with the authorities, not least because government officials are beginning to see how well-trained indigenous cartographers are”.

The success of the training is such that local indigenous map makers have created their own organisation, called Geoindigena. Geoindigena is a community-based charity that uses mobile phone and GPS technology to produce high-quality maps of areas exposed to deforestation, forest



Indigenous locals in dugout canoes, along the Rio Chagres River, Chagres National Park, Panama.

degradation, illegal logging, and wildfires.

OPTICAL IMAGES TAKEN from drones and satellites are not specific enough. What Geoindigena can do, which no-one else can, is “walk the forest”. As Quintero puts it: “The government doesn’t walk. We do. Our information is irrefutable.” Yennifer Concepción, a member of the Naso-Tjerdi people and participant in COONAPIP’s training programme, agrees that “the community has made great achievements in our region, through walking the borders and digitizing the data obtained from the field, while engaging our youth in the process of protecting and safeguarding territory.”

Areas under secure tenure, which are now constantly monitored with local support from young cartographers and guardians, suffer fewer problems from logging and illegal timber extraction. As more indigenous mapping groups like Sebriripa and Geoindigena continue to combine GPS and GIS knowledge with traditional knowledge, new opportunities for better control of resources are emerging. Because these initiatives are led by young people, technology is also empowering an important sector of



Indigenous family traveling by boat to their community in the Darien Province of Panama.

the indigenous population, which in other parts of Central America remains largely disenfranchised.

Communities across Panama can now establish surveillance points. Based on the information gathered through the monitoring and mapping techniques,

teaching processes, and tools facilitated by PST, local leaders can make more informed decisions and co-design strategic plans for sustainable land use and management.

Information is, it seems, the new arrowhead steering positive change among Panama’s newly titled indigenous lands.

PERU: WHEN A LAND TITLE MEANS SO MUCH MORE: THE CASE OF THE TIPISHCA COMMUNITY IN PERU

PROJECT OVERVIEW: PERU

A \$1.3 million project to strengthen the tenure and management of indigenous territories made further progress in 2021, building on important gains in previous years. In the past 12 months, native communities' collective tenure over nearly 320,000 hectares of indigenous territories in the Loreto and Madre de Dios regions was reinforced.

The project, "Legal security of indigenous territories: claiming ancestral rights in Peru", began in November 2020 and is due to end in January 2023. The Tenure Facility partners consist of two regional indigenous people's organisations: FENAMAD, which operates in the region of Madre de Dios and ORPIO, active across the Loreto region. The project associates are the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Regional Government of Loreto, and The Regional Government of Madre de Dios.

The objective was to improve the tenure and management of 3.2 million hectares of indigenous territories (Native Communities, Indigenous Reserves, and Territorial Reserves) and to promote the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples in spaces identified at the local, national, and international level. In 2021, numerous opportunities for discussion of Indigenous Peoples' rights were generated.

In the past, land rights in Peru were weakly defined, and illegal mining and logging affected forested areas. However, in a positive sign for the future, a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights 2021-2025 has been approved. This instrument is the first that seeks to institutionalise the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Peru's policies. It also establishes the strategic actions the country will execute to this end. Notably, the plan highlights the prospect of incorporating these principles into a strategy for protecting human rights defenders and promoting the titling of indigenous territories until 2025.

IT TOOK NINE YEARS of relentless struggle for the Tipishca community, living in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon, to obtain the property title of the land they inhabit and to register it in the public record.

Located on the right bank of Las Piedras river, in the department of Madre de Dios, Tipishca extends for 2,536 hectares and has a population of slightly more than 120 inhabitants, or around 50 families. It is surrounded by conservation and nature reserves, and other protected areas.

But despite having been recognised by the Peruvian State in 2010, the community of Tipishca did not, until very recently, have a land deed.

"Indigenous communities face many problems to get titles to their lands. And, without legal certainty, they are constantly invaded by illegal miners, loggers, and people who want to take advantage of loopholes," Segundo Laureano, vice-president of the local Native Federation, said. "Without a title, you cannot ask for loans from the bank or access State aid programs. A community without a title is like a community that does not exist."

The founders of Tipishca are from the Yine ethnic group, one of the 55 native peoples living in Peru, and one of the seven that populate the department of Madre de Dios. The Yine are renowned for their navigating expertise, which explains how they spread across the Peruvian Amazonia and its many rivers. Besides Tipishca, they can be found in Loreto, Ucayali, Cusco, and Madre de Dios. The overall Yine population is estimated at around 9,000 people, according to data from the Ministry of Culture.

ADrift in their own territory

In their land, the Tipishca community watched for years as forest concessions

were awarded to others. Several requests were also filed to open ecotourism premises. The limits of their land were not clearly demarcated, bringing uncertainty and questions about what they could or could not do in their territory. They wanted a better future for their families and children, but without a land title they felt adrift in their own territory.

They grow plantain and yucca, their staple foods, and they fish and hunt to cover protein needs. But, in spite of the richness of the forest, this is not enough to survive. To pay for their children's education and additional food needs, they must go outside of their territory to work in Puerto Maldonado, the capital of Madre de Dios. They work at forest concessions and chestnut plantations. They also take on other jobs, such as producing charcoal and selling wood. Still, despite these efforts, they cannot make ends meet.

The uncertainty experienced by the inhabitants of Tipishca is common throughout the Peruvian Amazon. In fact, although many Indigenous Peoples have lived in these forests for thousands of years and have been responsible for their protection, their rights are not fully recognised.

PARTNERSHIP

The Peruvian Society of Environmental Law (SPDA), with funding from the Tenure Facility, undertook a project to provide legal security to indigenous territories and help communities claim their ancestral rights. The regional governments of Loreto and Madre de Dios, the Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the East (Orpio), and the Native Federation of the River Madre de Dios and Tributaries (FENAMAD) are also part of the partnership.

In the last year, this project has been able

"WE HAVE TO EMPOWER OURSELVES TO BE AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS AND REPLICATE THIS IN OTHER COMMUNITIES."

to support the titling, geo-referencing, and expansion of 20 native communities, which together add up to more than 319,000 hectares in Loreto and Madre de Dios. There are currently 44 ongoing files being processed that will benefit 41 communities that have over 360,000 hectares combined in these two regions.

Tipishca has been one of the players in this process. There have been years of negotiations to clearly define its territorial limits and put an end to sections of it overlapping with several concessions in the surrounding areas. Demarcation gave way to titling. Then came registration in the public records. It finally happened on October 7, 2021, a date the community will remember with pride.

BASIC SERVICES

"It has been an intense struggle over several years. We are very happy for this," said Noemí Fernández Saavedra, former president of the community and one of the architects of this achievement. Fernández

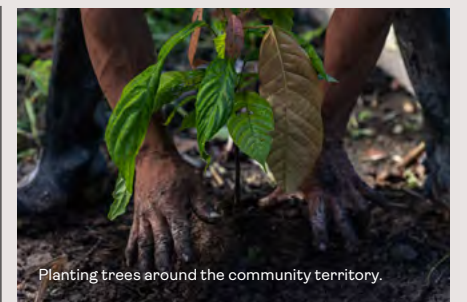


A teacher assisting children with art in the Tipishca community.

also truly values how the process has allowed her to learn. "Especially about women's rights," she said. "We have to empower ourselves to be an example to others and replicate this in other communities."

With the Tipishca land title under their arms, its dwellers are full of expectations: they want to plant cocoa, promote ecotourism, and explore options to bring developments which do not entail having to leave their land or putting their culture at risk.

"We now have clarity about our territory. We can apply to the social and economic programs of the State. We are going to be able to pursue the development of our land



Planting trees around the community territory.

from our land, instead of being forced to go out into the city to earn a living," Javier Fernández, president of Tipishca, said.

LEARNING AS AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES

The past few years have been especially difficult for many Indigenous Peoples and traditional rural communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only caused illness and death but has also redirected governments' attention and resources from efforts to stop illegal activities that threaten these communities.

FACED WITH INCREASINGLY tight budgets, governments have tended to promote mining, oil and gas drilling, industrial logging, and large-scale agriculture to achieve short-term economic growth, often at the expense of the communities' rights. This was particularly the case in areas where Indigenous Peoples have not yet secured legal tenure to their lands.

Ranged against this, however, was the resilience shown by indigenous communities and supporting organisations: they have raised their voices, built fresh alliances, found new ways to work with companies and governments, and harnessed their ingenuity to find their way forward.

With this as a backdrop, the Tenure Facility hosted the 2022 Learning Exchange from February 15-18, bringing together partners to ask some simple questions: What worked? What did not work? What has changed? What might work in the future?

At issue, of course, is human rights. Indigenous Peoples and local communities have the right to decide what happens on their own land. But getting there requires constant work.

As Tenure Facility Executive Director Nonette Royo has said: "The big challenge is how to meaningfully work together, build capacity, advance rights-based approaches and learn from a wider network of allies who are out there and are different but keen to help."



Sketches capturing the discussions that took place during the Learning Exchange 2021

"INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE WHAT HAPPENS ON THEIR OWN LAND. BUT GETTING THERE REQUIRES CONSTANT WORK."

The Learning Exchange brought together more than 150 people each day and featured regional sessions for Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It allowed for different actors to talk about how they have been securing tenure in their local contexts.

In Nepal, for example, Tenure Facility partners such as the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal is working with local governments to secure local forest acts under the auspices of the country's 2015 Constitution.

Meanwhile in Guyana, another partner, the Amerindian Peoples Association, has been helping and sometimes mediating between local communities to delineate their lands to present the government with needed data from the field.

Once achieved, sustaining tenure is equally important. Partners from India, Indonesia, Liberia, Panama, and Peru presented the Learning Exchange with stories about how land with secure tenure is being used to provide income while simultaneously preserving biodiversity and forests.

There is, for example, a "Homecoming Movement" in Indonesia which has seen indigenous youth returning to their traditional villages where they have set up schools, developed organic farms, and even created eco-tourist destinations.

One day's discussions were focused on how to build alliances and broaden inclusion.

Guatemala focused on women's empowerment and gender issues, Indonesia on the youth movement, Liberia on relations with the government, and Mali on managing conflict.

Money is a key factor to obtaining tenure. The discussions took place only a few months after 11 countries and the European Union agreed a \$12 billion "Global Forest Finance Pledge", part of which will be used for clarifying land tenure and forest rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

A group of these countries also joined with private foundations to pledge an initial \$1.7 billion of financing through 2025. This fund will support the advancement of Indigenous Peoples' tenure rights and provide greater recognition and rewards for their role as guardians of forests and nature.

Overall, the Learning Exchange underscored the importance of tenure as the bedrock for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to ensure their self-determination.

Participants agreed that security of tenure comes from strong governance, effective dispute resolution, monitoring, legal defense, natural resource management, and sustainable livelihoods.



LIVING FORESTS.



WHO?

The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility (Tenure Facility) is an international financial organisation focused exclusively on securing land and forest rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. We are dedicated to implementing and scaling up recognition of the collective land and forest rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities globally.



WHY?

Today, it is widely acknowledged that the legal recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples and local communities' land rights constitutes a necessary step towards sustained forest conservation and sustainable land use. By securing collective land and forest rights, Indigenous communities can thrive and expand the sustainable management and protection of their forests and lands across the Southern Hemisphere for the benefit of all.



WHAT?

The Tenure Facility was designed and developed with the strong participation of Indigenous Peoples' leaders and local communities' organisations. We respond to their demands and provides grants and specialised expertise to advance their land and forest tenure security. We enable governments and communities to test new models, strategies, and approaches. We share the practical lessons learned from our initiatives to catalyse broader and more systematic commitments from governments and create pathways for upscaling.



HOW?

The Tenure Facility celebrates the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and supports their initiatives directly. It provides grants to implement tenure rights under existing law and policy, and shares the knowledge, innovations and tools that emerge. Our fast and flexible approach enables them to respond to unmet needs, adapt to challenges, and capitalise on opportunities. We anchor catalytic interventions on the ground, with pathways for scaling nationwide. Through partnerships at all levels, we tap synergies and share learning. We support Indigenous Peoples and local communities as they build their capacity to engage with governments, while fostering equal participation of women and youth.

TIMELINE:

2012

The Tenure Facility concept is defined and discussion with stakeholders initiated. Stakeholder consultations were of paramount significance to ensure the institution was designed with the vision and insights of those it was designed to served.

2014

Advisory Group is established to guide establishment of a new institution.

20152017

Six successful pilot projects demonstrated the effectiveness of strategically deployed funds and positioned the pilot leaders to guide the Tenure Facility.

2016

The Tenure Facility began its transition from an initiative of RRI managed by RRG to an independent legal entity.

2017

The registration of the Tenure Facility as a Swedish Collecting Foundation was completed and Nonette Royo, the Tenure Facility's first Executive Director, was appointed.

2018

The Tenure Facility Secretariat was established in Stockholm and by the end of 2018, our partners had advanced collective tenure security of over 4.2 million hectares of land and forest and strengthened the protection over 2.4 million hectares of forest categorised as a reserve for Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation or initial contact.

2019

In 2019, Tenure Facility's implementing partners achieved the titling of over 3.5 million hectares of land and forests and advanced the process of securing tenure of almost 11 million hectares benefiting approximately 4 million people.

2020

In 2020, Tenure Facility's partners achieved the titling of over 4.4 million hectares of land and forests and were on track to document and verify evidence-based claims for up to 9.8 million hectares. Together, they advanced collective tenure security to more than 14.2 million hectares. In addition, Tenure Facility partners strengthened protection of over 2.4 million hectares of forest categorised as a reserve for Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation or initial contact in Peru and protection against encroachment of over 1.3 million hectares in Panama. Tenure Facility-backed projects are supporting approximately 7.2 million people in all areas combined.

2021

In 2021 Tenure Facility's partners achieved the titling of over 5.1 million hectares of land and forest and were on track to document and verify evidence-based claims of up to 10 million hectares, altogether advancing collective tenure security over more than 15 million hectares. In addition, our partners had significantly advanced the protection of over 2.4 million hectares of two Indigenous reserves in Peru. All areas combined; Tenure Facility-backed projects are supporting approximately 7.5 million people.

GOVERNANCE

THE TENURE FACILITY is governed by a Board of Directors composed of leaders from Indigenous Peoples, community organisations, civil society, international development, and the financial sector. The Board is the organisation's highest decision-making body and guides strategy, policies, and budgets.

The Board also appoints the Board members and the Executive Director, approves the annual accounts, and selects auditors. The Board is ultimately responsible for the foundation's operations.

In addition to the Board, there is an Advisory Group that guides the Tenure Facility on strategic matters, contributes

knowledge and expertise, and promotes links between the Tenure Facility and other organisations. The Executive Director manages the foundation and is accountable to the Board. She represents the organisation and ensures that the operation adheres to established guidelines and policies.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CEO, Nawitka Capital Advisors Ltd.

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Independent economic adviser

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Ex-World Bank and Interamerican Development Bank

Abdon Nababan

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Gerardo Segura Warnholtz

Senior Natural Resources Management Specialist, The World Bank

FINANCIAL REPORT 2021

DURING THE 2021 financial year, the total available funding for the Tenure Facility was USD 9.2 million, of which 39 percent was received from Sida and Norad, and 22 percent of that comprise unspent funds from 2019. In Q4, TED Audacious fundraising produced a five-year agreement (2022-2026), pooled from 11 donors, for USD 81 million. In addition, the Bezos Earth Fund provided a four-year grant of USD 30 million. Other donors that joined the Tenure Facility mission include Robert Bosch Stiftung, Crankstart, Sobrato Philanthropies, Hampshire Foundation, Christensen Fund, and Nia Tero.

Of the total costs for 2021, 55 percent (USD 5.1 million) were paid out to project partners in 12 countries. A new phase for

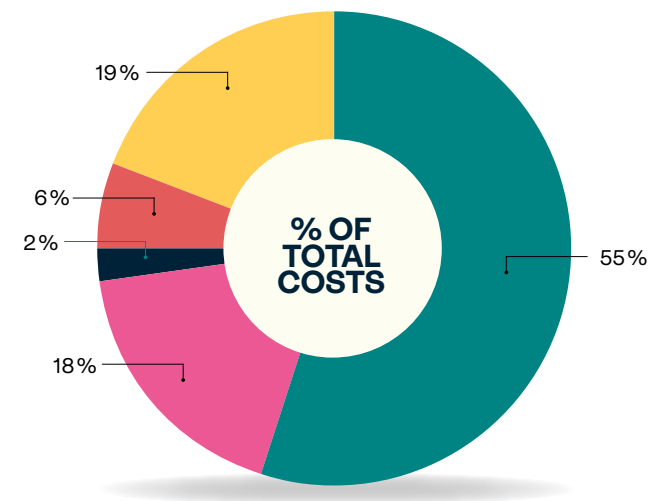
the India project with a value of USD 1.1 million was approved. The average project value as of 31 December 2021 amounted to USD 1.6 million. At the end of 2021, there were 11 agreed projects, corresponding to approved grants of 17.6 million.

Project support amounted to 18 percent of total costs and included technical assistance, support provided by collaborating partners, programme staff, and other programme costs. The costs for monitoring, evaluation, and learning equalled two percent of total costs, while Strategic Communications & Outreach totalled six percent of costs. Administration amounted to 19 percent of total costs, including support from a shared services centre, as well as temporary assignments within the framework of operations.

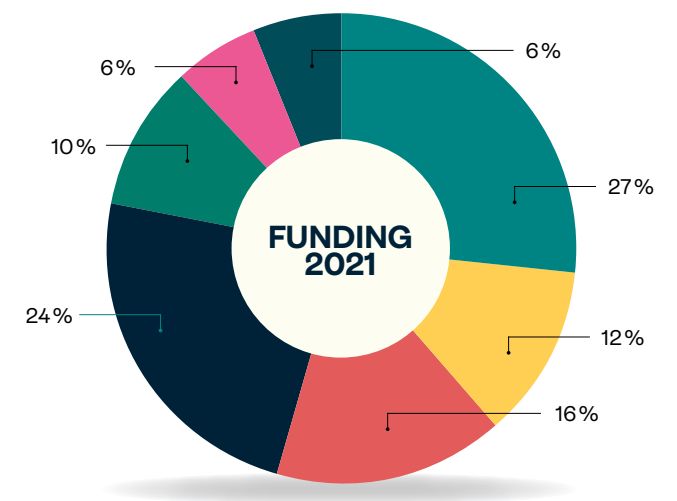
The value of the project portfolio decreased by 19 percent from 2020 to 2021. The COVID pandemic paired with a focus on redesigning internal processes and a disappointing cashflow resulted in portfolio expansion constraints. This situation, now resolved, lasted until the fourth quarter of 2021 and has delayed developing new partnerships.

The charts show the financial project engagements and expenses of the Tenure Facility for the financial year 2021 organised by function and by donor contribution.

Our funds were received in USD, NOK, SEK and EUR. All amounts provided in the annual report have been harmonised into USD for comparability and to facilitate reading.



In % of total costs	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2021 Million USD
Project disbursements	55%	5 127
Project support	18%	1 709
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	2%	207
Communications	6%	598
Administration	19%	1 762
Total	100%	9 403



Funding	ACTUAL 2021 %	ACTUAL 2021 Million USD
Norad	27%	2 472
Sida	12%	1 113
European Commission	16%	1 443
Ford Foundation	24%	2 172
Good Energies	10%	929
Oak Foundation	6%	515
Other	6%	552
Total	100%	9 216

thetenurefacility.org



Tenure Facility

Living Forests. Thriving Communities