



INDIGENOUS LANDS INITIATIVE

THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR: keeping forests intact is critical to tackling the climate crisis, and not all forests are equal. **Indigenous-held forests are healthier** — able to sequester more carbon — and have **lower deforestation rates**. This is especially true where communities have strong land ownership rights compared to those without full property rights.

With growing global demands for food, timber, minerals, and other natural resources, indigenous communities face intense competition for the lands that have sustained their cultures and societies for centuries.

Empowering indigenous communities with secure land rights is vital to delivering on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda — to address root causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice and amplify climate action and environmental stewardship.



Without legally recognized land rights — registered land titles — indigenous communities have less of a say and less share in opportunities for economic development. Worse, indigenous lands and resources are that much more vulnerable to being taken by those with the political and economic power to grab them and by others eager and determined to steal them.

Land titling procedures vary from country to country, but for indigenous communities the process is almost always complex, lengthy, and costly. The legal, technical, and evidentiary requirements are burdensome and inflexible, and entrenched discrimination and marginalization of indigenous peoples add more layers of difficulties.

The Indigenous Lands Initiative will build communities' capacity to navigate land titling processes and deploy a network of experts — without charge — to secure, protect, and strengthen indigenous peoples' land and natural resource rights.

Bringing indigenous lands into indigenous ownership at a faster pace and larger scale

In eight years, we'll help **100+ communities** in **8 countries** put more than a **million acres** into *collective, indigenous ownership*

And it's just the start ...

AN INDIGENOUS LAND TITLING INSTITUTE

A key component of the Initiative is engaging indigenous communities and organizations throughout Mexico and Central and South America, mobilizing their goals, ideas, and leadership to **design and launch** a new organization. A **permanent, indigenous-led land titling institute** will continually expand on lessons and successes to advance indigenous land and natural resource rights well into the future.

THE FRAMEWORK:

- **Resources and Networks:** Growing a network of legal and technical experts and pool of financial resources for land titling.
- **International Scale and Influence:** A clearinghouse to share lessons, innovate new approaches to overcome barriers, and build on and expand achievements across geographies.
- **Advocacy for Structural Change:** Identifying, challenging, and reforming unfair laws and practices to establish more equitable land and resource ownership.
- **Knowledge and Empowerment:** In overcoming an enormous, longstanding form of discrimination—the denial of land ownership and security — communities can gain experience and confidence to fight other inequities.

THE TEAM

INDIGENOUS-LED AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

The Indian Law Resource Center, AIDSESEP (the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon, and COIAB (the Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon) are indigenous organizations with over a century of collective experiences that make clear: ***the more indigenous peoples plan and execute their own initiatives, the more positive the outcomes for the communities and the environment.***

AIDSESEP's recent achievements in land titling offer a glimpse at the kinds of successes the Indigenous Lands Initiative could apply on a wider scale. In five years, AIDSESEP helped title 230,000 hectares of indigenous lands in Peru, more than the government had titled in the 20 years prior. They secured regulatory improvements to dramatically reduce the time it takes for communities to be legally recognized from two to three years down to just one month.

INVESTING IN A PROVEN APPROACH

Despite indigenous peoples' crucial and proven role in forest protection, **less than 1% of development aid for climate change has gone to strengthening indigenous peoples' land rights and forest management.** Far less goes directly to indigenous peoples' organizations.

The Initiative's land titling projects can grow and accelerate with investment.

\$1 million A focus on one country or region would maximize impact. For example, \$1 million over three years could secure land rights for 20 communities and 300,000 acres in the Amazon region of Peru

\$5 million could support communities in three countries (initially Guatemala, Brazil, and Peru) and bring 500,000+ acres into indigenous ownership

\$10 million can secure as many as one million acres and establish a permanent, indigenous-led institute to continue assisting communities in years to come

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