



the  
Amazon  
Conservation  
Team

# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



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## FOUNDERS' LETTER

**T**he Amazon and its indigenous and local guardians face a greater array of formidable adversaries than ever before.

A new crop of politicians is threatening to gut forest policies, thwart indigenous land rights claims, choke institutional funding, and carve out loopholes for lawlessness, potentially undoing thirty years of progress toward safeguarding the rainforest. This malfeasance coincides with metastasizing markets for timber, oil, and minerals, a surging global demand for agricultural commodities, and rapidly shifting local economies, particularly in post-conflict Colombia. Alarms are ringing all across the world's greatest rainforest.

Between 2017 and 2018, deforestation in Brazil hit its worst levels in a decade, increasing by 13% since 2016. In Colombia, deforestation rose by 23% between 2016 and 2017. If this continues, the Colombian department of Caquetá is slotted to lose half of its forest by 2050. Scientists have warned that in some areas of the Amazon, deforestation of 20-30% could alter the forest so profoundly that it would start shifting to a savanna ecosystem. Not only could this strip indigenous and local peoples of their homes and means of sustenance—a tragedy in itself—it also could have devastating effects on water cycles and carbon levels worldwide.

Daunting as this scenario is, ACT refuses to press pause on our grand vision of healthy tropical forests and thriving local communities. We are designing solutions that work within the system by adapting to its constraints, expanding where there is latitude, and building institutional alliances. And we are making quantifiable impact on the ground because of it.

In 2018, we doubled down on securing indigenous land titles and advancing sustainable land management with local communities. As we have known since ACT's beginnings, and as has been repeatedly demonstrated in scientific literature, indigenous lands can present superior results with respect to ecosystem conservation

and sustainable use of natural resources. And land is primary not just for conservation—fair governance systems, thriving traditional cultures, and prosperous sustainable livelihoods for our partner communities all both rely on and help maintain a hospitable ecosystem.

Through collaborations with government institutions and local stakeholders, we contributed to the achievement of previously improbable wins, like 1.6 million additional acres of lands under indigenous oversight and a groundbreaking decree to protect isolated peoples and their territory in Colombia. In Colombia, agroforestry projects are transforming areas once dominated by illicit coca and plagued with violence. In Suriname, indigenous rangers are adopting new technologies and communities are building sustainable value chains. Solar energy is now powering partner communities in Brazil, Suriname, and Colombia. We also began the process of establishing ACT-Brasil, made official in January 2019.

The Amazon can seem indomitable to the collective imagination, but it is fragile. And so here we are at a moment of reckoning for the forests of South America—outraged, but invigorated and strengthened in our solidarity with indigenous and local peoples. Thank you for your enduring support—the Amazon and its guardians need it now more than ever.



Mark J. Plotkin



Liliana Madrigal

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

**M**idway through my first year as Chairman of the Board of the Amazon Conservation Team, I find that I've gone from "Oh my god, what have I taken on" to "What a privilege to be able to support such an amazing group with my time, my money, and my heart." The more I learn about ACT, the more my respect, admiration and awe for this remarkable organization grows, like the kapok trees that soar above the other flora in the rainforest.

ACT's elevator pitch is pretty straightforward: we work (smartly, strategically, tirelessly) to protect the Amazon rainforest, among the most biologically rich and diverse places on the planet, from the myriad forces threatening it, by partnering with the indigenous communities who have traditionally cared for the forest. But how does that take shape on the ground?

In the past year, our work took on many forms. In Colombia, we helped secure land rights for indigenous people in one of the country's most challenging areas, Antioquia. There, our work was essential to the legal titling of a 234,650-acre reserve for the Mayaperi people near Colombia's border with Brazil and Venezuela. Striving to make communities more robust, we've made great progress in bringing solar energy to villages, as well as helping to strengthen other sources of autonomy and self-governance, whether it be schools, agriculture, or livelihoods.

Recently, I was lucky enough to make a field trip to the forests of the Xingu in Brazil with ACT's leaders and staff, as well as a few other supporters, to visit the Waura people of the village of Ulupuene.

(That's me in the photo, with two members of the Waura, shortly after being greeted by the entire community upon our arrival.)

During our three days with the Waura, sleeping on hammocks in the *malocas* graciously provided by our hosts, and feasting on the fish they caught in the nearby Batovi River and the cassava they grow in their field, we were able to gain a sense of their everyday lives. At a village meeting with ACT staff, tribal leaders communicated to us what they needed to strengthen their village, and thus enhance their ability to protect the surrounding lands. Eleukah, the village chief and shaman, had a number of requests, conveyed by his son, Aonçinha, whose name means "little jaguar": help with construction of traditional houses; raw materials for making their crafts, which they sell; lightning protection; and the ability to have exchanges with other villages. Oh, and maintenance of their internet equipment.

Like many indigenous communities, the Waura tread the line between ancient and modern, traditional and contemporary. No one is immune to the allure of modern life—except, perhaps, the uncontacted tribes who live deep in the forest—but the tribes we work with are also anxious to continue the traditions that have served them well for thousands of years, protecting the forest by sustainably interacting with it. They are the frontline guardians of the planet, because preserving the Amazon means combating climate change for all of us—with ACT's help.



Laurie Benenson





# 2018 ADVANCES AT A GLANCE



ACT has 132 partner communities across 14 geographic regions, encompassing 48 indigenous & local ethnicities.

## ■ Suriname



- Approximately **200** participants from 6 of our partner communities are currently participating in supply chains for 4 different products.

- \* **Pepper:** 60 women from 4 villages
- \* **Honey:** 28 men from 3 villages, managing over 70 stingless bee hives
- \* **Jewelry & Crafts:** 84 women from 4 villages
- \* **Herbal Tea:** 25 women from 1 village; this is the most recently started ACT-supported sustainable alternative livelihood initiative and the first one to achieve autonomous management by the participants.

- Solar energy and clean water infrastructure systems established in 1 village, benefiting 564 people across 92 households.

- **ACT** developed a master plan for providing clean water to 6 indigenous and 10 Matawai villages and presented it to the government for implementation.

## ■ Brazil



- **ACT** trained 10 community members to be local experts in mobile data collection, who were able to collect the data necessary to complete a cultural map of their community and surrounding territory.

- **ACT** facilitated a firefighting training workshop where villagers learned to prevent and suppress manageable wildfires, a threat prevalent in the region.



- **ACT** supported the production of a picture book about monkeys in Waura cosmology as part of a larger initiative to support the leaders' efforts to restore full adherence to traditional hunting guidelines. This is the first children's book to be self-illustrated by the Waura and self-authored in their own language.

**ACT-Brasil was officially established as a legally recognized Brazilian nonprofit organization in February 2019.**

## ■ Colombia



- **5 reserves created, 1 reserve expanded** in Antioquia.

- **1 reserve created** for the semi-isolated and recently contacted Mapayerri indigenous people in Vichada.

- **Total of 1,876,559 acres (759,417 ha)** of territory protected since 2015, benefitting **more than 15,800 people** from 13 indigenous communities



- **ACT** installed **328 solar lamp kits** for families of Colombia's middle and lower Caquetá River regions, benefitting **1,776 people** in **31 communities**.



- Colombia passed a historic policy for the protection of isolated indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups led its development from start to finish and **ACT** was a key ally throughout, coordinating the collection of inputs from stakeholders and facilitating negotiations until the final signing.

- Representatives of **13 indigenous communities** strengthened their internal governance capacities in a certification course where they learned how to formulate community development projects, apply for public funding, and administer their implementation.



# SCOPE OF WORK





# Scope of Work 2018



## COLOMBIA

Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta	1
Antioquia	2
Orinoquía	3
Putumayo	4
Upper Caquetá	5
Middle Caquetá	6
Lower Caquetá / Rio Puré	7

## SURINAME

Southwest Suriname	8
Southeast Suriname	9
Saramacca Watershed	10

## BRAZIL

Xingu	11
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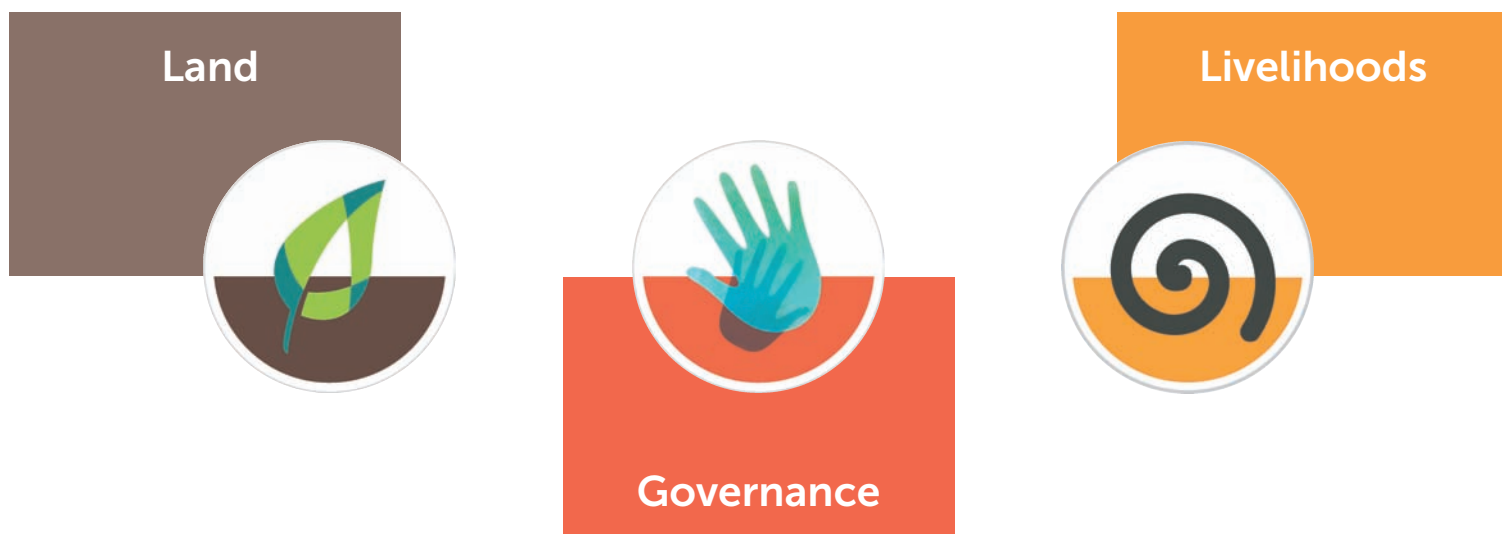
# OUR STRATEGIES: **HOW WE DO IT**

**T**hrough our three-pronged strategic approach to conservation focusing on land, livelihoods, and governance, ACT is working with our partners to attain these aspirations while strengthening their traditions.

The following pages highlight 2018 ACT initiatives that correspond to these overarching strategies.







## Promote Sustainable **Land** and Resource Management

Ensures the protection, stewardship and recovery of prioritized landscapes, including the biodiversity and natural resources they encompass.

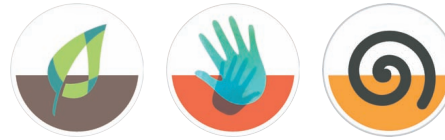
## Strengthen Communities' Internal **Governance** and Traditions

Increases the self-determination of our partner communities.

## Promote Communities' Secure and Sustainable **Livelihoods**

Improves the local economy and livelihood conditions within our partner communities through environmentally and socially sustainable means.

## INCREASING ACCESS TO RESOURCES



**T**he Colombian government designates a portion of the federal budget for indigenous-led projects in indigenous communities. These do not come without barriers, however. A level of financial and administrative capacity must be proven, and a full project proposal must be developed. For many indigenous communities, these western standards are not embedded in their education and must first be learned before they have a chance of receiving funding. As part of ACT's ultimate vision for indigenous communities to be self-sufficient and autonomously interact with government entities, we continue to lead training courses with a curriculum tailored to the participants' baseline knowledge, learning style, and need.



*Miguel Angel Chaparro, first ACT Indigenous Leadership Program fellow*





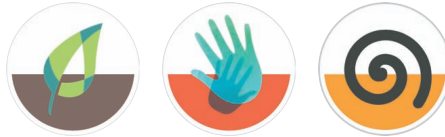
Escuela del Río (School of the River) gathering,  
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia

In May 2018, at Colombia's Universidad de la Amazonía, ACT led a **second session of the certificate course *Strengthening of Administrative Capacities for Territorial Management***, providing continuity to a training process commenced in 2017 in the Puerto Sábalo - Los Monos indigenous reserve now known as La Escuela del Río (the School of the River). Other organizing partners included the Colombian National Planning Department and the Visión Amazonía program, which offered direct training in how to access the financial resources they offer. The course was attended by representatives of eight indigenous groups, enabling dialogue between the communities around the collective management of common use resources. In the program, participants learn to plan, propose, and execute the types of community development and investment projects that public resources fund.

ACT also initiated a hallmark Indigenous Fellowship Program that enables young indigenous women and men with significant leadership potential and the desire to further their educations for the good of their communities to both attend universities and travel to the U.S. for interaction with prominent institutions such as the UN, World Bank, and OAS in order to understand how these entities function and can more constructively work with their communities. The program's first fellow—Miguel Chaparro of the Arhuaco people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta—graduated with a Finance, Government, and International Relations degree and has been an important advocate for the legalization of his people's land claims.



## GROWTH: EXPANDING ACT'S IMPACT



In our 2020 Vision, we set a goal to expand ACT's impact organically into regions and countries that share borders with the traditional lands of our partner communities. As one of our core values, we work by invitation only and in full consensus with our partners. In 2018, we cultivated and nurtured those fundamental community relationships and strategic organizational partnerships in three new regions.

In northern Brazil, along the border with our partner communities in southern Suriname, indigenous leaders invited ACT's support. As a result, we prepared to launch a new entity in Brazil, formalized in January 2019.

In French Guiana, to the east of our partner communities in Suriname, ACT and the French national parks unit signed a memorandum of understanding to apply our expertise in the Parc Amazonien de Guyane, one of the largest national parks in the world.

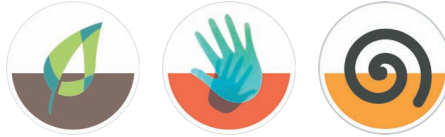
In Peru, ACT continues to support the Peruvian NGO ORPIO in multiple activities toward the protection of isolated indigenous people, with an eye to establishing an official in-country presence in order to build a unified isolated peoples initiative in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.



*Dr. Mark J. Plotkin speaking with indigenous leaders of the Tumucumaque region in northern Brazil*



## IN SOLIDARITY: CREATING AND NOURISHING ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS



**A**CT continuously pursues highly constructive alliances to strengthen our work and increase our impact.

Traditionally, our most involved and numerous relationships have been those with indigenous associations at local, regional, and international levels. New in 2018, ACT signed a memorandum of understanding with the OIS, one of Suriname's most important indigenous organizations, to work collaboratively toward official recognition of collective land rights. We were also invited to participate in the general assembly of the northern Brazilian indigenous umbrella association APITIKATXI. Meanwhile, ACT's sustained partnership with the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC) catalyzed a renewed engagement with the high-level Amazonian indigenous rights organization COICA.

Collaborations at the institutional level are also essential to increase support to our beneficiaries. In 2018, for staff of the

Colombian National Parks System, ACT provided training in GIS-based protected areas management tools as well as in elements to help protect isolated indigenous peoples. To that latter end, ACT has been working with the team of the Rio Puré National Park for more than five years to strengthen their management of isolated peoples' territory. With respect to efforts to legalize indigenous territories, ACT has recently signed an agreement with Colombia's National Land Agency. In Suriname, ACT partners with the Center for Agricultural Research (CELOS) to develop scientific protocols to foster sustainable forest management.

Meanwhile, our work continues with the InfoAmazonia alliance to build public awareness of the wider context of the Amazon and the importance of its conservation. In 2018, ACT was also granted Special Consultative Status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, increasing our voice and that of our partners at a global level.



*Kogi ceremony*

## UNDERSTANDING FORESTS TO BETTER PROTECT THEM



**A**mazonia harbors some of the world's most spectacular biodiversity. This is unquestionable. However, there remain huge information gaps on the specifics of these life forms—the species, their numbers, and their relation to each other—especially in the most remote corners of the forest. This kind of hard data is crucial for governments when deciding to form a protected area or restrict certain industries. It is also the baseline information indigenous and local residents need to manage the forest's resources sustainably. Hence, ACT supports collaborative surveying of lands lived in and traveled by our partner communities.

*Black caiman, Colombia*







*Expedition in the Curuni  
River Basin, Suriname*

In Suriname's rainforest interior, covering nearly half of the traditional territory of the Trio indigenous people, ACT staff, ACT-trained indigenous rangers and Trio community members conducted a biodiversity survey expedition that included an inventory of species from which marketable products can be developed. This completed a series of surveys of most of the Curuni River basin.

In the area of Colombia's Puerto Sábalo – Los Monos and Monochoa indigenous reserves—expanded by 45% in 2017 with ACT's guidance and input—ACT led expeditions to provide baseline data on the forest's topography and biodiversity, delineate ancestral territories, and train local indigenous teams in monitoring tools and best practices. Participants marked traditional borders and conducted rapid inventories of mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles.

In Brazil's Xingu Indigenous Park, ACT trained the Ulupuene Waura village community on how to document both cultural and natural resource aspects of their environment using the mobile data collection application Open Data Kit. The Waura will be able to use maps generated from this data for youth education, to inform management planning, as baseline data for mapping oral histories using the Terrastories application, and to make their case for the protection of river ecosystems under pressure from surrounding soy farms.



## BOLD MANDATES, GREAT CHALLENGES I: PROTECTING ISOLATED PEOPLES



**P**rotecting isolated indigenous peoples is as much a question of conservation as it is of human rights. When their homelands are free from outside incursions, and their traditional lifestyle is maintained, the health of the rainforest, its waters, and its biodiversity is also preserved. But a single outside contact can bring a tragic end to all of this. ACT, recognizing the urgency of this matter, has been a leading force in securing their protection since 2010.

**In July 2018, the Colombian government passed a national decree to protect isolated peoples, their territory, and their human right to self-determination.** Exceptionally progressive and unlike any in the Amazon, the policy recognizes indigenous leaders as authorities in their lands, with the same power and responsibilities as the government in protecting their isolated neighbors.

*Curare-Los Ingleses reserve members patrolling a stretch of the Caquetá River to protect the uncontacted people who live there, Amazonas, Colombia*



Photo courtesy of Juan Arredondo





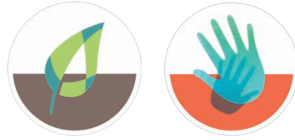
*ACT's Daniel Aristizábal (center) and Río Puré National Park team members reviewing protection plans for isolated peoples at annual meeting of the Curare communities, Amazonas, Colombia*

It also establishes a national system of protection that involves all government levels and stakeholders, mandating a level of nationwide solidarity needed to protect these highly vulnerable groups.

Local indigenous stakeholders were integral to the policy's development, from initial idea to final draft. ACT was there every step of the way as well, coordinating the six-year process of gathering inputs from all local and governmental stakeholder groups, and then facilitating negotiations. In 2018 alone, ACT supported seven large-scale gatherings for indigenous and government representatives—including the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC) and the Colombian Ministry of the Interior—to settle on the terms.

The crucial next step is to bring this policy, replete with legal language and requiring the participation of 21 government entities, into practice. ACT will be a leading force in this process, having made formal agreements with the Ministry of the Interior in December 2018.

## BOLD MANDATES, GREAT CHALLENGES II: SECURING SACRED SITES



**W**rapped around the stunning Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range—an ecological wonder that emerges along the Caribbean coast, sheltering nine biomes and 30% of Colombia’s biodiversity—lies a chain of sites sacred to the Kogi indigenous peoples known as the Linea Negra. Many of these sites are on land bought up by tourism, real estate, or agro-business entrepreneurs over the years. The few that do remain in Kogi hands are nevertheless impacted by the unsustainable practices surrounding them. For years, the Kogi have sought to reclaim their ancestral territory, through either acquisition or legal decree. ACT has partnered with them on this journey since 2011.



*Traditional Kogi dwelling,  
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia*





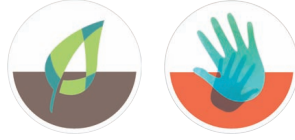
*Kogi mambo (priest),  
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia*

**In July 2018, a Colombian presidential decree recognized and expanded protections for the Linea Negra.** ACT, by facilitating field visits and compiling data, was key in providing substantiating evidence for the signing of the decree despite vocal opposition from other actors in the region.

This milestone decree anchors ACT's ongoing support to expand three large reserves of the Kogi, Arhuaco, Wiwa, and Kankuamo indigenous groups of the Sierra and officially return the land to its ancestral guardians. ACT has drafted required socioeconomic, land tenure, and legal studies, and trained community members in carrying out topographic surveys and conducting land use and boundary determination expeditions—all necessary components for an eventual declaration. Beyond their immeasurable material and spiritual value to the indigenous groups, the expansions will help protect the buffer areas of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Park while promoting connectivity with lowland ecosystems and safeguarding watersheds.



## ON THE FRONT LINES: EMPOWERING THE GUARDIANS OF THE FOREST



**S**outhern Suriname features a largely intact tropical forest landscape, making up the lion's share of the country's 93% forest cover. However, acculturation is leading to localized environmental degradation around villages, and the threat posed by forest concessions and small-scale Brazilian miners persists.

**To strengthen our partner communities against these challenges, ACT has trained and equipped a force of 33 indigenous rangers in five villages, and constructed guard posts at each location.** With ACT's support, the rangers are regularly trained in on-the-ground threat assessment, biodiversity surveying, mapping, camera trapping, water monitoring, inventory creation, and data collection methods, and apply these skills in ACT-facilitated expeditions.



Curuni River, Suriname





ACT's Johan Hardjopawiro (front right) providing GIS training to Matawai rangers, southern Suriname

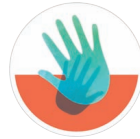
The rangers are then able to present their findings to their communities, keeping their entire villages aware of their forest's condition and any threats, and supporting evidence-based decision-making for forest management.

ACT has also supported the rangers' adoption of new monitoring technologies, like Open Data Kit and Forest Watcher. To make these tools readily accessible for the rangers, we load tablets with preformatted survey forms in the Trio and Wayana languages. Having digital forms in native languages greatly reduces barriers to the rangers' accurate collection and analysis of local data, and allows them to report results more clearly to their communities.

**Growing past their community-level impact, the rangers are beginning to be recognized on a national level.** At the request of Suriname's national forest service, the rangers have conducted reconnaissance for illegal gold mining and participated in official presentations by the government's formal REDD+ unit and Ministry of Regional Development. Additionally, they have collected data useful on the national level for wildlife, biomass, and carbon measurements.



## ANCESTRAL LANDS, MODERN RIGHTS: SECURING AND EXPANDING LEGAL LAND TITLES



**F**ollowing Colombia's internal peace accord, a host of actors seek to assert claim to lands previously appropriated by armed groups. Securing legal land title is urgent and complex, and especially so for long-marginalized indigenous communities. ACT seeks to advance and secure their collective property rights, both for its own sake and as a central strategy to reduce deforestation and forest degradation.

Principally, ACT has pursued the establishment, expansion, and formal land titling of indigenous reserves in three regions of Colombia: Antioquia, the Amazon-Eastern Plains Corridor, and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. We have submitted 25 processes for government approval between 2017 and 2018, and at least 20 more are forthcoming in 2019, facilitated by our collaboration with the National Land Agency.

**With 11 approved reserve constitutions and expansions so far, ACT has been key in the legalization of more than 1.6**

**million acres of indigenous lands.**

In 2018, due in large part to five years of extensive support and research from ACT, the 235,000-acre Mapayerri Reserve—home to indigenous peoples in initial contact—was established in Vichada. ACT also facilitated the establishment of the Inga de Santiago Reserve in Putumayo and the Carupia and La Lucha reserves in Antioquia, plus the expansions of the Inga de Brisas and Inga de Yurayaco Reserves in Caquetá.

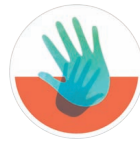
Beyond the clear value of authority over their traditional lands, through the establishment and expansion of reserves, indigenous communities secure the right to access state services and resources from the national budget that significantly improve their living conditions. To help additional communities independently pursue these processes, ACT published the “Indigenous Land Titling Guide for Reserve Establishment and Expansion Processes in Colombia.”

*Mapayerri traditional dwellings,  
Vichada, Colombia*





## HUMAN RIGHTS: A NEW DAY FOR THE MAPAYERRI



In July 2018, in Colombia, three new indigenous reserves were officially established with ACT's guidance and input: the Mapayerri reserve, in the department of Vichada, and the Carupia and La Lucha reserves in the department of Antioquia. This will benefit three indigenous peoples in initial contact: the Mapayerri, Zenú, and Embera Chamí.

The Mapayerri are a remnant of a much larger group that once inhabited Colombia's eastern plains. The majority perished in the 1900s because of the formerly common practice of *guahibidas*, the "hunting" of indigenous people. In the early 1990s, the surviving Mapayerri established initial contact with local populations. During this period, the Mapayerri suffered rampant abuses and exploitation from coca growers.

These experiences made them very wary of outsiders, and they retreated to remote forests and plains near the Tuparro National Park.

The establishment of these reserves is a powerful safeguard for the human rights of these peoples, legally granting them the land necessary to continue their semi-nomadic lifestyle free from undesired outside interference. Furthermore, the reserve establishments set an important precedent for the protection of indigenous peoples in initial contact. As a result of this work, ACT wrote the first set of comprehensive guidelines for the protection of Colombia's indigenous peoples in initial contact and introduced these guidelines to governmental entities.



Mapayerri reserve members,  
Vichada, Colombia



## RESEEDING THE FOREST AND GENERATING INCOMES



**W**ith funding from the International Climate Initiative, in the Colombian Amazon, ACT has helped more than 80 rural and indigenous families living in a conservation corridor in the municipalities of Belén de los Andaquíes and San José del Fragua commence sustainable production and conservation projects aligned with deforestation reduction commitments. The overall agroforestry project now engages 166 families across thousands of acres, with participation from five indigenous reserves.

Learning from successful experiences is a key project strategy: ACT has arranged for participants to travel to other jurisdictions to visit thriving models of agroforestry and cacao cultivation, the latter through our partner FEDECACAO, which assists in the development of the cacao value chain for the communities.

The project participants can serve as advocates to others who continue to believe that extensive open-air ranching and monocultures are the most profitable productive practices, and can also demonstrate the means to recover degraded areas and reduce pressure on forests.

ACT also has strengthened the operations of local weekly farmers' markets and trade fairs, given the importance of these markets for the families' incomes and their consumption of healthy foods.

Training is also vital: in 2018, ACT led 20 workshops in 21 village communities and five reserves on topics covering agroforestry, beekeeping, organic fertilizer production, isolation and reforestation of water resource areas, and the cultivation of cacao, *Caryodendron orinocense* (cacay) and native timber plants. All strengthen environmental awareness.



*Planting trees as part of ACT agroforestry initiative, Caquetá, Colombia*



## PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: BUILDING LOCAL ECONOMIES



**R**emote villages in the southern reaches of Suriname are virtually isolated. With no outside employment and limited access to markets, residents face difficulty in generating sustainable income to pay for necessary items such as food and medicine. When these necessities are not met, there is less incentive to remain in their ancestral territory, and it may even spur engagement in extractives and other non-sustainable activities. Hence, ACT seeks to establish dependable income sources through commercially viable, community-based enterprises for non-timber forest products. At the most foundational level, the villagers need technical and commercialization assistance to optimize value chains, as well as access to local markets.

**Five interior villages have begun chile pepper, herbal tea, honey, and traditional handicraft enterprises through a**

**collaborative agricultural program with ACT and Suriname's Ministry of Agriculture.**

ACT also works together with organizations that can serve as buyers, vendors, and distributors of the sustainable goods produced by the communities. In a resoundingly successful pilot project, a self-organized team of 20 women in the village of Kwamalasamutu is now producing marketable herbal tea for purchase by Greenchild.

Commercial viability has already been achieved for tea and pepper enterprises in two villages as well as for the handicrafts enterprise. Over the long term, ACT envisions community members having access to a variety of sustainable enterprises in their villages, all of which are financially self-sufficient and locally managed by community-based cooperatives.



*Indigenous women processing tea leaves for commercial use, Kwamalasamutu, Suriname*



## KEEPING BEES, KEEPING TRADITIONAL WAYS OF LIFE



**W**ithin ACT's partner communities in Suriname, there is a general lack of experience with the cash economy and commercial-level work. A typical day involves hours of strenuous physical labor in the morning, with the remainder of the day devoted to childcare, cooking, and social activities. Men often go hunting, and women work especially hard as they transport firewood and other heavy loads. How do income generating activities fit into this schedule?

To address this challenge, it is necessary to develop sustainable projects that can be incorporated into the indigenous lifestyle and routine. An example of this is ACT's stingless bee honey project. Once a wild hive is transferred to

a bee box, the hive can be kept close to a residence. The boxes are relatively low maintenance: the bees need only a dry, protected, parasite-free place to live. Beekeepers can monitor the hives every few days and can travel for a week or two without any adverse effects upon the hives.

In 2018, ACT produced an illustrated stingless bee honey production manual and is translating this into the Trio indigenous language for ACT-trained beekeepers in three villages. In Kwamalasamutu, a former traditional clinic building was transformed into an information and training facility for the project. Additional hive products, pollen and propolis, are being tested for sale.



*Stingless honeybees,  
Kwamalasamutu, Suriname*

Photo courtesy of Ayrton Vollet



## THE MIGHTY CACAY: SOWING A TREE OF LIFE



**A**s part of a net zero deforestation project in Caquetá, Colombia, ACT began training local indigenous people to implement sustainable production and conservation projects in eight communities, emphasizing agroforestry systems and the conversion of monoculture farmland to more diverse crops in order to build resilient and environmentally sound community income sources. Within this project, the native cacay tree has emerged as one of the most promising income-generating and eco-friendly crops.

It can be grown in small areas and has a production longevity of 80-100 years old, making it ideal for rural small-scale farming. Its nut has a high nutritional value, large size and appealing flavor, supporting food security in the communities. Moreover,

the extracted oil is in high demand by the luxury cosmetics industry—one hectare of cacay can generate an average family income of more than one minimum wage per month for more than 50 years. ACT is supporting the communities' cultivation of cacay, having purchased seven thousand trees planted by 216 families, and has partnered with the Colombian firm Kahai SAS to develop the value chain for this product.

Beyond improvement of indigenous and rural family economies, ACT has identified cacay's potential to support the consolidation of micro-connectivity conservation corridors where indigenous and rural territories adjoin protected areas. As a native tropical forest tree, one that nourishes the soil, it is very suitable as a replacement for illicit crops and for reforestation.



Cacay tree farm, Caquetá, Colombia



## HERE COMES THE SUN: BRINGING RENEWABLE ENERGY



**R**emote forest communities historically relied on firewood to light the nights, cook food, and purify water. While fire remains paramount for cooking, a dependency has surfaced on diesel fuel and disposable batteries to generate electricity for lighting, potable water pumping systems, and a range of technological devices. Herein lie two problems: the fuel itself is nonrenewable and polluting, and supply is largely dependent on irregular deliveries from the government, inevitably leading to dark periods or over-reliance on firewood harvested around the community. Reliable sources of renewable energy not only significantly reduce this logistic dependency and need for localized deforestation, but also foster cleaner air quality. Communities directly benefit in their day-to-day from steady lighting and device charging, enabling early morning and evening work, expeditions, and lengthened study time for youth.

*ACT's Hector Silva explaining solar lamp maintenance and operation, Caquetá, Colombia*







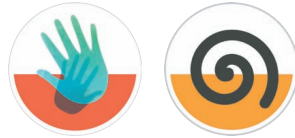
Solar energy modules,  
Tepu, Suriname

In Colombia, ACT installed over **300 sturdy and portable solar lamp kits** for families of the middle and lower **Caquetá River regions, benefitting more than 1,700 people in 31 indigenous communities**. The systems significantly improve the quality of life of the communities, providing a secure source for lighting and mobile phone charging with minimal impact on traditional community practices. The systems are easily installed and operated, allowing the families—including the elderly—to quickly adopt the technology. As follow-up, ACT regularly monitors the efficacy and impacts of the systems. More than 600 kits will have been installed by the project's end.

In July 2018, for the Surinamese indigenous village of Tepu, ACT delivered a **modular solar energy system providing 88 households with continuous electricity**. Community members receive ongoing training in the system's maintenance. ACT and the community carried out this project in alliance with the Japan-Caribbean Climate Change Partnership and with support from Suriname's Ministry of Natural Resources, and we are now collaboratively expanding this initiative to the village of Curuni.



## GARDENS FOR LIFE: WOMEN HEALERS REVITALIZING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE



**T**he women of ASOMI—an association of indigenous women healers and their apprentices from five indigenous groups of the northwest Amazon, founded in 2004 with ACT’s support—have dedicated their lives to protecting the cultural legacy and biodiversity of the Andes-Amazon transition region. This mission is manifest in their **small sustainable farms known as chagras, which cumulatively shelter over 700 medicinal, artisanal, timber, and food species.**



*ASOMI women inspecting a chagra  
(traditional garden), Putumayo, Colombia*





*ASOMI women attending knowledge workshop to share horticultural traditions, Putumayo, Colombia*

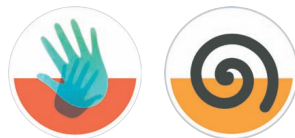
Through these chagras, the ASOMI women are working to revitalize traditional medicine knowledge and practices, preserve and recover native plants, and improve the general quality of life in their communities. They also travel across communities and to schools to hold workshops in traditional knowledge and practices and to conduct seed exchanges with indigenous and non-indigenous neighbors.

In 2018, with multi-year funding from the Inter-American Foundation and guidance and support from ACT, over 50 ASOMI chagras were strengthened through onsite agro-ecological guidance, new tools and supplies, cultivation plans, and inventories of species at risk and in recovery. The ASOMI women also conducted 30 knowledge transmission workshops, using their chagras to demonstrate traditional horticultural practices and convey the seeds of endangered plants to apprentices and other community members while also gathering new knowledge from the experiences of other cultivators.

A newly designed sustainability plan under execution includes ongoing administrative and financial training for ASOMI members and income generation through rental of their facilities and the production of traditional handicrafts. Recent additions to their infrastructure include a new kitchen and dining facilities.



## MATERIAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: BUILDING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



In our efforts to strengthen local communities, while ACT gives precedence to skills training, we simultaneously respond to requests for help with infrastructure and other physical systems.

In Suriname, ACT assisted national agencies in the development of a **master water plan for 16 villages** in central and southern Suriname. ACT and our partners, with government financial assistance, also completed the installation of a running water distribution system in the indigenous village of Tepu. There, **88 households now have access to filtered surface water**. In 2019, the process will be repeated in the villages of Curuni and Sipaliwini, the latter with support from the UNDP through the construction of a solar system to power the water supply system.

*New field station for Matawai Amazon Conservation Rangers, Sukibaka, Suriname*







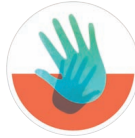
Ranger station inauguration,  
Sukibaka, Suriname

In 2018, ACT sponsored the building of a two-story building in the village of Kwamalasamutu that houses an **Amazon Conservation Ranger field station and traditional medicine clinic** and includes an herbal tea processing area. The infrastructure and equipment in the building increase the rangers' capacity in monitoring and data collection, education, and communications. ACT also upgraded the existing ranger field station in Sipaliwini, and began construction of a new station in the village of Curuni.

In Colombia, in order to strengthen the governance processes of our indigenous partner communities and contribute to land management, ACT supported the construction and renovation of *malocas* (traditional roundhouses) in multiple reserves. Within the Puerto Sábalo - Los Monos reserve alone, ACT facilitated the improvement of ***malocas* in ten villages, benefitting over 900 community members**. There, ACT also supported the renovation of the infrastructure of the main river port of the reserve's Coemaní community. In Putumayo, ACT also built central *malocas* for the Kofan community to help them care for the Orito Ingi-Ande Medicinal Plant Sanctuary, and for the Inga people of the Yunguillo Indigenous Reserve.



## INTANGIBLE HERITAGE: GIVING NEW LIFE TO ORAL HISTORY



**A**CT, in partnership with Mapbox and the Ruby for Good community, continues to steward the design of Terrastories—an open-source, offline-compatible location-based storytelling application. ACT is using Terrastories to map and preserve audiovisual recordings of native language storytelling in the Matawai, Kogi, and Waura communities. Storytelling is one of the primary vehicles for the transmission of traditional knowledge, and it motivates an ethic of environmental stewardship. Rather than fading over generations, these stories are given life in an interactive platform the groups can access locally and share as privately or as widely as they choose.

In October 2018, **ACT officially launched the Terrastories platform** based on our work with the Matawai people of Suriname, a collaboration that collected nearly 300 stories for 149 locations along the Saramacca River from 34 speakers.

*Matawai researcher delegation, with ACT's Niradj Hanoeman, offering an evening of Matawai storytelling at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC*







*Left to right: ACT's Rudo Kemper, ACT's Niradj Hanoeman, and Matawai researchers at the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives*

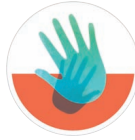
In September, with ACT's facilitation, a group of Matawai conducted research on archival collections from the 1970s featuring rare Matawai materials at the Smithsonian Institution, through its Recovering Voices program. Concurrently, the Matawai were able to hear voices and see photos of their ancestors not heard or seen in decades.

ACT staff also traveled to the Jaba Tañiwashkaka sacred site in Colombia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region to introduce community oral history recording tools and methodologies to members of the Kogi and Kankuamo communities and the local population.

In 2019, the Terrastories development team will focus on creating a general version of the app that can be used by third parties across the world to map their own storytelling traditions. ACT also plans to release an oral histories methodology guide that will detail the whole process from mapping and recording in the field to deploying Terrastories in the community. Additionally, as an outgrowth of the overall program, field visits will commence for the production of a documentary in partnership with the Sundance Institute focusing on the Matawai, titled *First Time Stories*.



## THE NEXT GENERATION: EDUCATING TOMORROW'S INDIGENOUS CONSERVATION LEADERS



**A**s ACT seeks to foster local environmental stewardship capacity in forest and indigenous communities, we place significant attention on youth education. Children's awareness and appreciation of biodiversity, and involvement in protecting it, is not just an abstract preparation for the future—it is also a powerful compelling force for the participation of their families and communities at large right now.

Colombia's upper Caquetá River watershed region, located where the eastern slopes of the Andes drop down into the Amazonian lowlands, has abundant biodiversity.



*Children of the Las Planadas community of Putumayo, Colombia preparing for birdwatching excursion*





*Children of the Yachaikury Indigenous School receive certificates demonstrating completion of a program in local wildlife monitoring.*

In an effort to better understand the region’s ecology and inspire tomorrow’s conservation stewards, in collaboration with our partners PROCAT and the Universidad de los Andes, **ACT established local monitoring groups** now supported over several years—one from the municipality of Belén de los Andaquíes, which monitors the health of local municipal nature reserves, and the other from the Yachaikury Indigenous School of the Yurayaco reserve. Through this initiative, **children and youth in the region have begun to generate valuable data on the region’s species**, particularly birds and aquatic macro-invertebrates, the latter a key indicator of water quality.

In the Upper Xingu watershed region of Brazil, in the village of Ulupuene, ACT supports general education and environmental learning. When Waura children are able to stay in the village to complete their education, **they are immersed in environmental education on a daily basis**. Thus, ACT ascribes paramount importance to providing the children of Ulupuene with quality education in their own village. In 2018, ACT continued outfitting the ACT-sponsored new school building in Ulupuene and supplied uniforms and supplies.

ACT is also working with the school to develop storybooks that capture the Wauras’ cultural knowledge regarding their environment and traditional territorial management. In 2018, ACT published **Kakawakapitsanani Paho: A Historia do Macaco**, the first picture book to be self-illustrated and written by the Waura in their own language.



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

**O**ur Strategic Plan: 2020 Vision continues to guide programmatic and institutional investments that will strengthen our expertise, our reach, and ultimately our impact to ensure ACT's long-term sustainability.

In 2018, ACT's investments largely centered on benefiting our partner communities on the ground, but we also devoted funding to bolster our institutional infrastructure and team capacities to respond effectively to a rapidly changing global environment. Now more than ever, there is a critical need to maximize collaboration among our teams, promote effective management practices, and constantly adapt our initiatives on the ground. Our financial results displayed in this section reflect investments in these areas.

On the revenue side, 2018 closed with an overall decrease of 21% over prior year. While donations from individuals and in-country grants increased when compared to 2017, the foundation category decreased by 32%. In 2017, ACT received multi-year grants from several sources, with tranches to be disbursed in future years.

While overall expenses increased only 3% over 2017 levels, program services remained solid at 80%, indicative of our commitment to invest largely in our field operations. In 2018, the general and administrative expense category is 30% higher than in 2017, mainly due to investments in increasing ACT's visibility and developing and improving systems that enable us to accurately measure our effectiveness and strategically adapt on the ground.

We are committed to remaining a field-based organization while growing steadily and judiciously. As ACT expands, we prioritize working cohesively and collaboratively and leveraging our human and financial resources to maximize our impact on the ground. ACT's staff and partner communities are deeply grateful for the support of so many generous donors who believe in our team and the importance of our work.



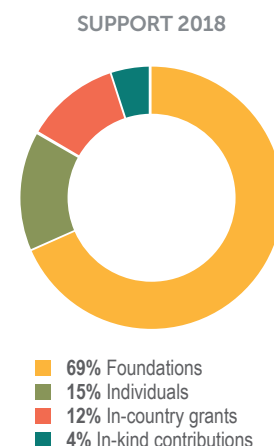
Karla Lara-Otero  
Senior Director, Finance and Operations



## FINANCES AT A GLANCE

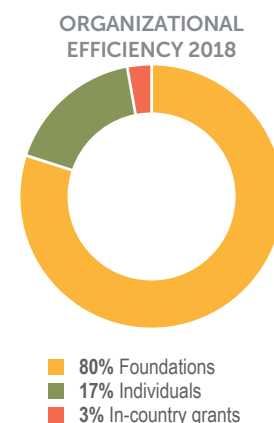
### SUPPORT

	2018		2017	
	In US\$	Percentage	In US\$	Percentage
Foundations	4,370,000	69%	6,442,000	81%
Individuals	934,898	15%	885,690	11%
In-country grants	768,335	12%	537,582	7%
In-kind contributions	302,132	4%	174,020	2%
Corporations	15,082	0%	30,232	0%
Interest and investment return, net	(122)	0%	13,413	0%
Other	22,379	0%	10,936	0%
Foreign currency valuation loss	(86,350)	0%	(36,451)	-1%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>6,326,354</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,057,422</b>	<b>100%</b>



### ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

	2018		2017	
	In US\$	Percentage	In US\$	Percentage
Program services	5,664,358	80%	5,668,958	81%
General and administration	1,247,729	17%	963,437	14%
Fundraising	234,459	3%	329,740	5%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>7,146,546</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,962,135</b>	<b>100%</b>



### REVENUE AND EXPENSE TRENDS

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>[*] Revenue</b>	4,927,682	3,613,807	9,302,157	8,057,422	6,326,354
<b>Expenses</b>	3,660,113	4,362,404	4,974,510	6,962,135	7,146,546

[\*] Significant annual fluctuations in revenue are attributable to receipt of multiyear grants, the full value of which is recorded as revenue in the year awarded.



## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### COMBINED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

(For the Year Ended December 31)

	2018 In US\$	2017 In US\$
Cash and equivalents	5,061,825	6,485,479
Grants and pledges receivable	486,677	1,473,491
Field operating advances	7,801	42,669
Prepaid expenses	27,837	21,106
Investments	1,470,842	-
Property and equipment, net	197,371	249,685
Security deposit and others	18,569	20,057
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>7,270,922</b>	<b>8,292,487</b>
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	165,880	187,870
Deferred revenue	41,890	219,272
Deferred rent	4,387	4,466
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>212,157</b>	<b>411,608</b>
Without donor restrictions	5,650,032	4,822,980
With donor restrictions	1,408,733	3,057,899
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>7,058,765</b>	<b>7,880,879</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>7,270,922</b>	<b>8,292,487</b>

*Funds are presented according to the accrual method of accounting.*

*ACT's audited financial statements, which reflect an unqualified opinion, can be obtained online at [amazonteam.org](http://amazonteam.org) or by calling (703) 522-4684.*





## COMBINED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

(For the Year Ended December 31)

	2018 In US\$	2017 In US\$
Contributions	4,544,981	4,621,642
Grants	1,543,334	3,273,862
In-kind contributions	302,132	174,020
Interest and investment return, net	(122)	13,413
Other	22,379	10,936
Foreign currency valuation loss	(86,350)	(36,451)
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>6,326,354</b>	<b>8,057,422</b>
<b>Program Services:</b>		
Biodiversity	4,285,163	3,642,077
Culture	844,003	1,378,685
Health	535,192	648,196
<b>Program Services</b>	<b>5,664,358</b>	<b>5,668,958</b>
<b>Supporting Services:</b>		
General and administration	1,247,729	963,437
Fundraising	234,459	329,740
<b>Supporting Services</b>	<b>1,482,188</b>	<b>1,293,177</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>7,146,546</b>	<b>6,962,135</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets Before Translation Adjustment</b>	<b>(820,192)</b>	<b>1,095,287</b>
Translation Adjustment	(1,922)	(1,872)
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>(822,114)</b>	<b>1,093,415</b>
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	7,880,879	6,787,464
<b>Net Assets, End of Year</b>	<b>7,058,765</b>	<b>7,880,879</b>



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Amazon Conservation Team

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**Andrew Tobias**  
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**Eryka de Seixas**  
Board Member

**Sandra Charity**  
Board Member

**“ The more I learn about ACT, the more my respect, admiration and awe for this remarkable organization grows... ”**

**Laurie Benenson, ACT-US Chair**

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Fragua-Churumbelos Program*

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River Program*

**Nelson Pinilla**  
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River Program*

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**Andrés Vanegas**  
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Kwamalasamutu & Sipaliwini*

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(Indigenous Peoples)*

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Coordinator, Apetina*

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*Program Manager*

**Tristauw Rosiek**  
*Assistant Station  
Coordinator, Sipaliwini*

**Lucio Wajacabo**  
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Coordinator, Curuni*

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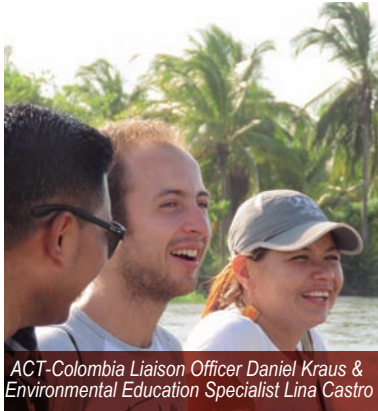




Colombian Minister of the Environment Luis Gilberto Murillo, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, Liliana Madrigal, & Carolina Gil



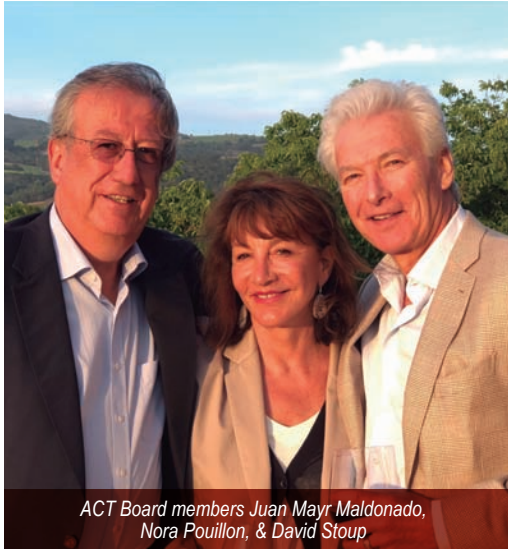
ACT-Suriname Program Director Minu Parahoe with Matawai community member Gerda Beely



ACT-Colombia Liaison Officer Daniel Kraus & Environmental Education Specialist Lina Castro



ACT Board member Stephen Altschul, ACT President Mark Plotkin & ACT Board member Tico Torres



ACT Board members Juan Mayr Maldonado, Nora Pouillon, & David Stoup



ACT's Juana Londoño with Maria del Rosario "Charito" Chicunque, Mama Vitelia, and Taita Universitario



ACT Advisory Board member Janell Cannon



ACT Co-Founder & Executive VP Liliana Madrigal alongside the Ulupuene chieftain Eleukah Waura



Melinda Maxfield and ACT Board member Bill Cameron



Kogi leader Shibulata Zarabata

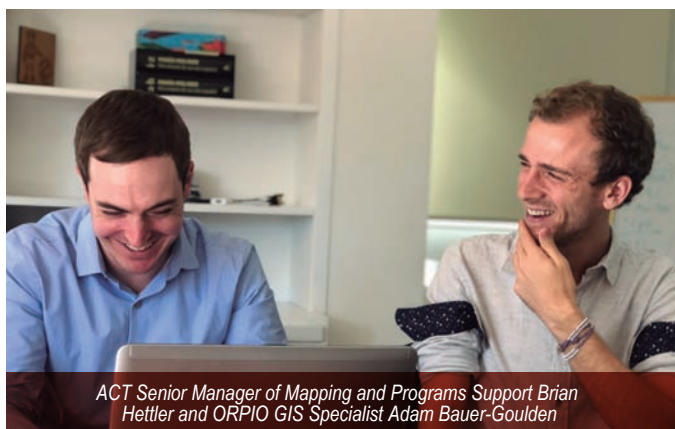


ACT-Colombia Stakeholder Engagement Specialist Germán Laserna



Traditional





ACT Senior Manager of Mapping and Programs Support Brian Hettler and ORPIO GIS Specialist Adam Bauer-Goulden



ACT Co-Founder & Executive VP Liliana Madrigal alongside Kogi children in the mountains of the Sierra Nevada region of Colombia



ACT Senior Manager of Finance & Operations Crisbelli Alvarado



healers Kamanja Penashekung & Ramon Awenkina



ACT-Europe Board Member Gilles Kleitz



ACT-Colombia Program Director Carolina Gil



Inga shaman and leader Luciano Mutumbajoy



ACT Indigenous Peoples Gathering, May 2018



ACT-Europe Board Chairman Johan van de Gronden and ACT-Europe Director Dominiek Plouvier



Mycologist Daniel Winkler



Sundance Institute Stories of Change Workshop, Matawai documentary team







the  
Amazon  
Conservation  
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