the Amazon Conservation Team

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020 VISION

INTRODUCTION

We are the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT). We believe that tropical forests are extremely important in their role as regulators of global weather patterns. We believe that forests are complex, deep, and profound reservoirs of biological life. We also believe that the indigenous and local people who live in these forests are essential co-creators of the forest community.

We see a future where healthy tropical forests and thriving local communities exist in harmonious relationship with each other, contributing to the well-being of the planet. To arrive at this future, we protect both forests and the people who live in them. Though the path there will be challenging, we believe that with effort and ingenuity, we can and we will prevail.

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SECTION I

OUR ORGANIZATION

Our Beginnings

The Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) was formed in 1996. The year before—1995—saw the largest ever recorded rate of destruction of the Brazilian Amazon. An outraged public poured millions upon millions of dollars into the coffers of conservation and wildlife organizations, hoping to "save the rainforest." But the plunder of trees, land, and resources continued unabated.

Most conservationists at the time believed their goals would best be achieved by protecting forests from all human activity. Governments were persuaded to set aside significant tracts of forest as national parks. In this way, it was hoped, the forests would be safe from the ravages of civilization.

The founders of ACT, Mark Plotkin and Liliana Madrigal, were both committed conservationists who had spent years developing and working for large environmental organizations.

Rather than follow the conventional model of conservation, they decided to disrupt it. They knew – from Liliana's pioneering work in Central America – that that the most pristine and continuous forests there were not in parks, but on lands inhabited and controlled by indigenous people. And they concluded the same must be true in the Amazon as well.

New data[1] of the early 1990s also contradicted long-held beliefs of that time that nature and people are incompatible. Other persistent notions needed disruption as well: that indigenous people are unschooled savages, and that the solutions to intractable problems in the rainforest can only come from distant governments.

By 2017, more data challenged the colonial view of rainforests. From satellite imaging, we can now show that when indigenous people have control over their lands, the rate of deforestation can drop dramatically within a few years.[2] Further, a recent, exhaustive study demonstrates that some indigenous peoples in the Amazon have managed forests extensively for thousands of years.[3]

1 "The Coexistence of Indigenous Peoples and the Natural Environment in Central America", published as a supplement to the scholarly journal Research & Exploration in 1992. Map by Mac Chapin, Director, Center for the Support of Native Lands. Co-production with the National Geographic Society.

2 Blackman, A., Corral, L., Lima, E. S., & Asner, G. P. (2017). Titling indigenous communities protects forests in the Peruvian Amazon. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 201603290, http://www.pnas.org/content/114/16/4123.full.pdf

3 Levis, C., et al, Persistent effects of pre-Columbian plant domestication on Amazonian forest composition. Science 03 March 2017, 355(6328), 925-931, doi:10.1126/science.aal0157

"INDIGENOUS PEOPLES REPRESENT ONLY 5% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, BUT CARE FOR AN ESTIMATED 22% OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE AND PROTECT NEARLY 80% OF REMAINING BIODIVERSITY ON THE PLANET.*"

* Sobrevila, Claudia. The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Biodiversity. The World Bank, May 2008, https://siteresources.worldbank.org/ INTBIODIVERSITY/Reces/IeofIndigenousPeoplesinBiodiversityCoservation.pdf

The First Twenty Years

We determined that our primary strategy for the conservation of forests is to protect them from the ground up. This means enlisting the aid and support of the local communities that live in the forests. The more people who can effectively monitor, manage, and protect their traditional territories, the more forests are safeguarded from harm. In return, the forests sustain their human communities.

In the beginning, many of the indigenous and other native communities we encountered were in a state of decline. Where others chose to mourn the disappearance of native cultures as inevitable, we believed that their recovery was possible, and even critical to our own survival. We undertook the slow and painstaking work of building long-term relationships within the communities where we worked. Many years were needed to establish the strong bonds of trust that allow real and measurable progress to be made.

In the broadest terms, our initial strategic programs were all focused on health: the health of the forest ecosystems (Biodiversity), the vitality of indigenous institutions (Culture), and the traditional practices that promote the physical and spiritual well-being of the people (Health). After five years in operation, we began the process of cultural and land-use mapping of and with our partner communities, recording detailed GPS data along with cultural and historical knowledge of the area. Maps proved essential to our efforts, not only as territorial records, but also as communication devices between our partners' traditional world and our western world.

The Next Twenty Years

The colossal menace of climate change brings more challenges to the field, in ways we could not have imagined when the work began. Alternating cycles of flood and drought have besieged many areas of the Amazon, impacting our partners' ability to sustain themselves. With increasing globalization, threats to the forest have multiplied. If more tropical forests are lost, the perils will only increase.

In order to fortify our partner communities and ourselves against such challenges, we took stock of our organization as our 20th anniversary approached. We refined our mission, focused our vision and formally adopted into our strategic planning process the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation[4], a set of best practices for designing, implementing and assessing conservation projects, forming the basis for a systematic approach to adaptive management. Through this process, we redefined our targets, goals and strategies for each country, and developed an organization-wide theory of change model.

In 2016, at a pan-organizational gathering of our staff, accompanied by representatives and elders from our partner communities, we discussed what lies ahead. We carefully explored our past, present, and possible futures as we laid the groundwork for the next twenty years. We agreed that to continue, we must be realistic, determined, and committed to nature and to each other.

This Strategic Plan emerged as a guide for the first part of that journey.

4 Developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP), http://cmp-openstandards.org/

Timeline of Prominent Successes

1996

- Founding of ACT.

1997

- Shamans and Apprentices programs initiated in the northwest and northeast Amazon.

1999

- First large-scale shamans' gathering in the Colombian Amazon inspires the establishment of the Unión de Médicos Indígenas Yageceros de la Amazonia Colombiana (UMIYAC).

2000

- First of four traditional medicine clinics established in the Suriname rainforest.

2001

- 15 million acres (~6M ha) of indigenous rainforest lands collaboratively mapped in southern Suriname.

2002

- Brazil's 10-million-acre (~4.5M ha) Tumucumaque Indigenous Reserve collaboratively mapped with indigenous communities.
- Alto Fragua Indi Wasi National Park established, the first National Park of Colombia designed to be co-managed by local indigenous communities and the National System of Protected Areas.
- Founding of Yachaikury, the first school in Caquetá, Colombia to integrate teaching from a Western and indigenous perspective.

2004

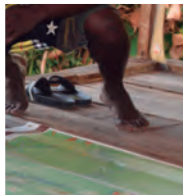
- Seven-million-acre (~2.8M ha) Xingu Indigenous Reserve of Brazil collaboratively mapped.
- First large-scale gathering of indigenous women healers of the Colombian Amazon serves as the foundation for the establishment of the Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas (ASOMI).

2005

- Six million acres (~2.4M ha) of Wayana indigenous lands in Suriname collaboratively mapped.
- First indigenous ranger training and certification course initiated in Brazil.

2007

- Half-million-acre (~202K ha) Sete de Setembro indigenous reserve in Brazil collaboratively mapped.
- Indigenous ranger program commenced in Suriname, subsequently recognized by the International Ranger Federation.



2008

- First indigenous-led carbon credit project in Brazil.
- 25,000-acre (~10K ha) Orito Ingi-Ande Medicinal Plant Sanctuary established, the first Amazon reserve specifically created for the conservation of traditional medicinal flora.

2010

- 90% of all indigenous and native lands in Suriname cumulatively mapped.
- 25 million acres (~10M ha) of indigenous lands collaboratively mapped in the northern Brazilian Amazon.

2011

- ACT research determining the existence of isolated indigenous groups in Colombia's Puré River National Park areas provides the basis for an official national decree mandating their protection.

2013

- Kogi sacred site Jaba Tañiwashkaka officially declared by the Colombian government in a new and unique conservation category.
- Junior Park Ranger training manuals developed by ACT included in Suriname's national Environmental Education Box.

2014

- Yachaikury School officially recognized as an autonomously-administered indigenous public school and central administrator of an regional school network.
- National first-contact contingency plan drafted to ensure the security and health of Colombian isolated indigenous groups.

2015

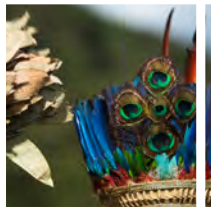
- Collaborative partnership commences between ACT and the Matawai Maroons of Suriname to compile the group's land-use and cultural maps in anticipation of the establishment of a community development plan.
- Yunguillo Indigenous Reserve expanded fivefold to more than 50,000 acres (~20K ha), connecting two Colombian national parks.
- Indigenous peoples' public policy and coordinating council inaugurated for the Colombian department of Caquetá, empowering communities significantly.
- Colombia's Inga-Kamentsa communities achieve historic territorial expansion of their lands of approximately 100,000 acres (~41K ha).

2016

- ACT provides essential support to Colombian National Parks Service to practically eliminate illegal goldmining from the Puré River National Park.

2017

- First complete map of Matawai ancestral territory of Suriname.
- Expansions of Colombia's Puerto Sábalo-Los Monos and Monochoa indigenous reserves by 1.4 million acres (~567K ha).



SECTION II

WHO WE ARE





Mission






The Amazon Conservation Team partners with indigenous and other local communities to protect tropical forests and strengthen traditional culture.


We protect tropical forests because they are pivotal for the health of the planet and ourselves. The maintenance of global water cycles, the sheltering of biodiversity, and storage of carbon are just a few of the "ecosystem services" that these forests provide. Beyond that utilitarian definition, tropical forests are complex living organisms, which have a right to thrive on their own terms.

In our experience, we have found that indigenous and other traditional communities of the forests are strongly motivated to conserve their habitats.

Their livelihoods and identity are inextricably connected to the health of the forest, and as a result, their lands account for some of the best-conserved forests in South America.

Because their cultures evolved in response to the challenges of living in their rich but fragile environments, the communities demonstrate a strong stewardship ethic when their cultural values and traditions are kept alive.

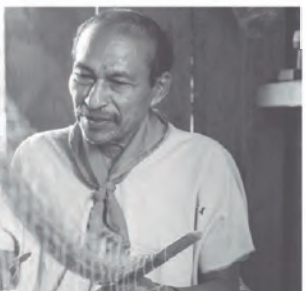
We have also observed that when elements of Western culture begin to supplant instead of supplement these values and traditions, the stewardship ethic begins to erode. This is why we work with these peoples to strengthen their cultural traditions.

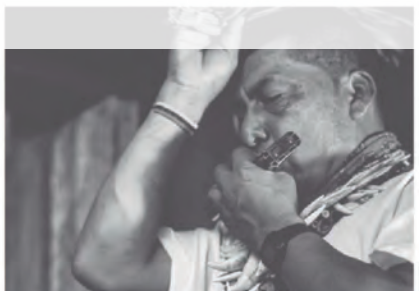
We believe there is intrinsic value in these cultures as well. Traditional knowledge of ecosystems, the spiritual depth of belief systems, and practices for sustainable living are some of the facets of these cultures that can enrich the human experience, if preserved and perpetuated.










Core Values: What We Believe

RESPONSIBILITY

We believe that conservation is our moral and ethical duty. We are a part of Nature, not apart from it. Nature is our home, not our servant.

DETERMINATION

We believe that effective conservation always begins on the ground, no matter what. Though we may face difficulties or danger, we do not turn back from our vision or abandon our partners.

INTERCONNECTION

We believe that tropical forests and the local communities that dwell within them are interdependent parts of one whole. We work to protect and strengthen both.

TRUST

We succeed because we are invited to collaborate with our partners. Our relationships with the communities endure because they are built on a foundation of unqualified respect, cooperation, and reciprocity.

HUMILITY

We seek guidance, hope, and strength from our indigenous elders. We acknowledge that we may never fully understand their realities.

CONTINUITY

We believe that strong traditional healers and leaders, and the transfer of their knowledge and culture to successive generations, are essential for sustaining their communities, and therefore, the forest.

INTEGRITY

We stand by our mission and values and will not compromise them for any reason. We choose to work with environmentally and socially responsible persons and entities.

EQUALITY

We share common ground with our many partners. We actively seek the meaningful and inclusive participation of all community members in our actions and programs.

KNOWLEDGE

We believe that the knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities are key to conservation. We also believe that traditional knowledge and western technology can work together to manage and protect the forest and strengthen the communities.

Team Strengths: What Defines Us

PERSISTENCE

We stay with our partner communities until the job is completed.

COLLABORATION

We work together as equals. We believe that for our team to succeed, we must welcome a diversity of perspectives.

INNOVATION

We look beyond the status quo.

PASSION

We commit, in hearts and minds, to the pursuit of our mission.

HONESTY

We ground our work in ethical behavior and transparency.

LEARNING

We embrace a culture of change and relentlessly challenge ourselves to improve.

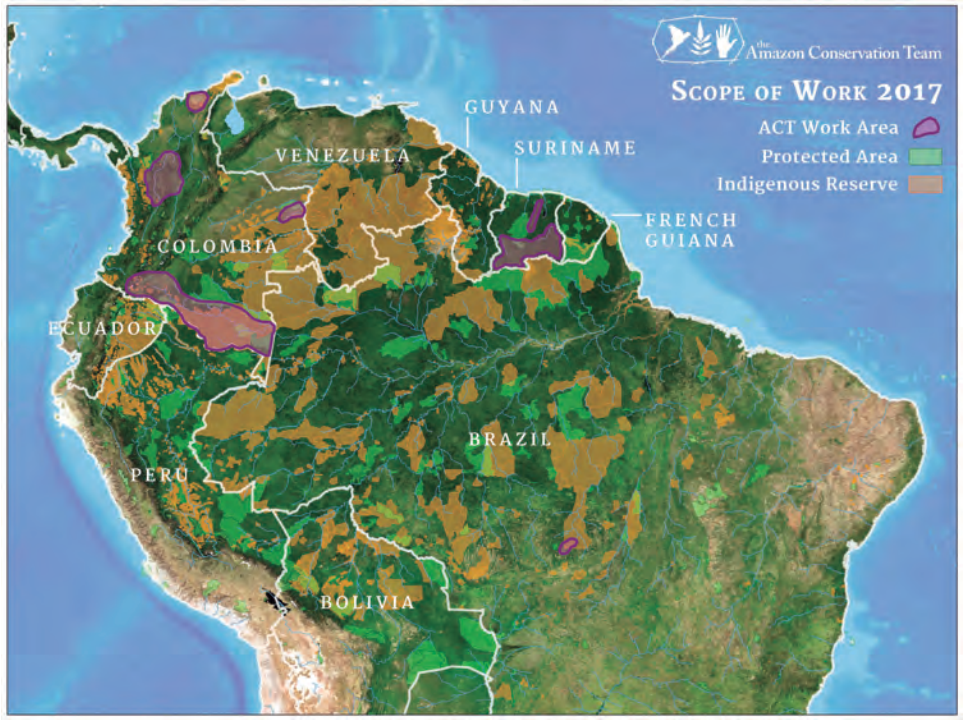
SECTION III

ON THE GROUND

Where We Work

We are a field-based organization. Before we work anywhere, we first must be invited; in effect, we do not choose our partners, they choose us. Because the protection of water is of supreme importance to our partners, our work areas are frequently defined by the presence of headwaters and watersheds.

ACT geographic scope of work



NORTHWEST AMAZON

In Colombia, our work originated in the region where the eastern Andes meets the Amazon Basin, a fragile transition zone of high biodiversity and ancient cultures. We have expanded our scope to include much of the watersheds of the Caquetá and Putumayo rivers that lie within Colombia.

We also work in the far northeast of Colombia, where the world's tallest coastal mountains, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, rise out of the sea. Our partners are communities of related indigenous groups, who protect the highly endangered environments of the Sierra.

Other work areas include parts of Antioquia, a mountainous region to the west of the main spine of the Andes, where many small indigenous reserves exist alongside farming communities, and Orinoquia, bordering Venezuela, where we focus on an ecologically important buffer area between an indigenous reserve and the El Tuparro National Park.

Further, we work in Southeastern Colombia, adjacent to the Brazilian border, with an emphasis on increasing protections for isolated indigenous groups.

Colombia has enacted progressive legislation that protects the rights of indigenous people. The country also defines processes whereby indigenous communities can gain full administrative control over the management of their territories. We focus some of our efforts on building alliances within local, regional, and national governments in order to facilitate this road to autonomy for our partners.

NORTHEAST AMAZON

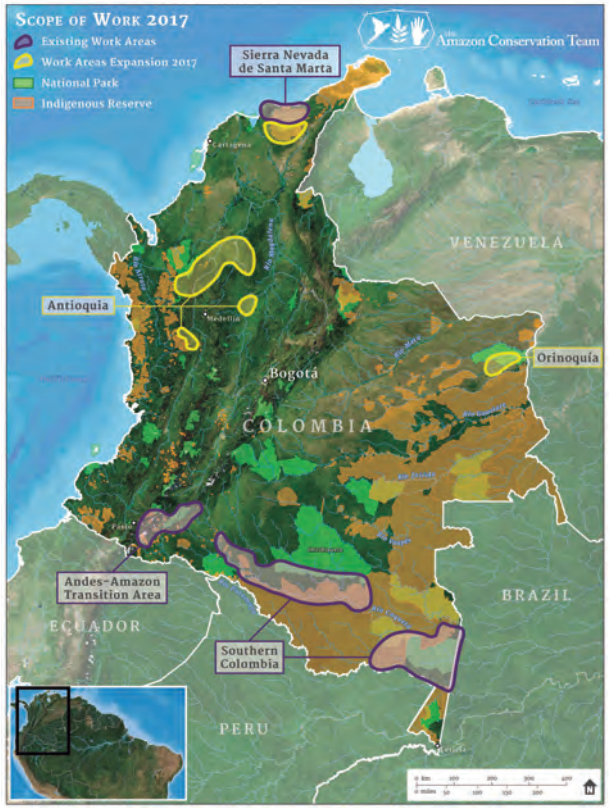
In the sparsely populated and pristine forests of southern Suriname, we continue our long-term partnership with the local indigenous people, whose territories coincide with the watersheds of important rivers. The region is part of the ancient Guiana Shield, an area of exceptionally high biodiversity and unique tabletop mountains called tepuis. This working area is the entire southern third of the country.

We also work in central Suriname with other traditional communities. These communities, who have lived in the forests of Suriname for hundreds of years, deserve a special mention. Collectively referred to as Maroons, they are descended from Africans who fled slavery by escaping into the surrounding jungles. We are currently working with a group known as the Matawai, and plan to expand our scope to other Maroon communities.

Suriname currently has no legal mechanisms for protecting indigenous land rights or creating indigenous reserves. We focus some of our efforts on encouraging national and regional governments to extend these rights to our partner communities. Fortunately, initiatives are underway to update the laws of Suriname regarding conservation and intellectual property rights.

Geographic scope of work in the Northeast Amazon

Geographic scope of work in the Northwest Amazon



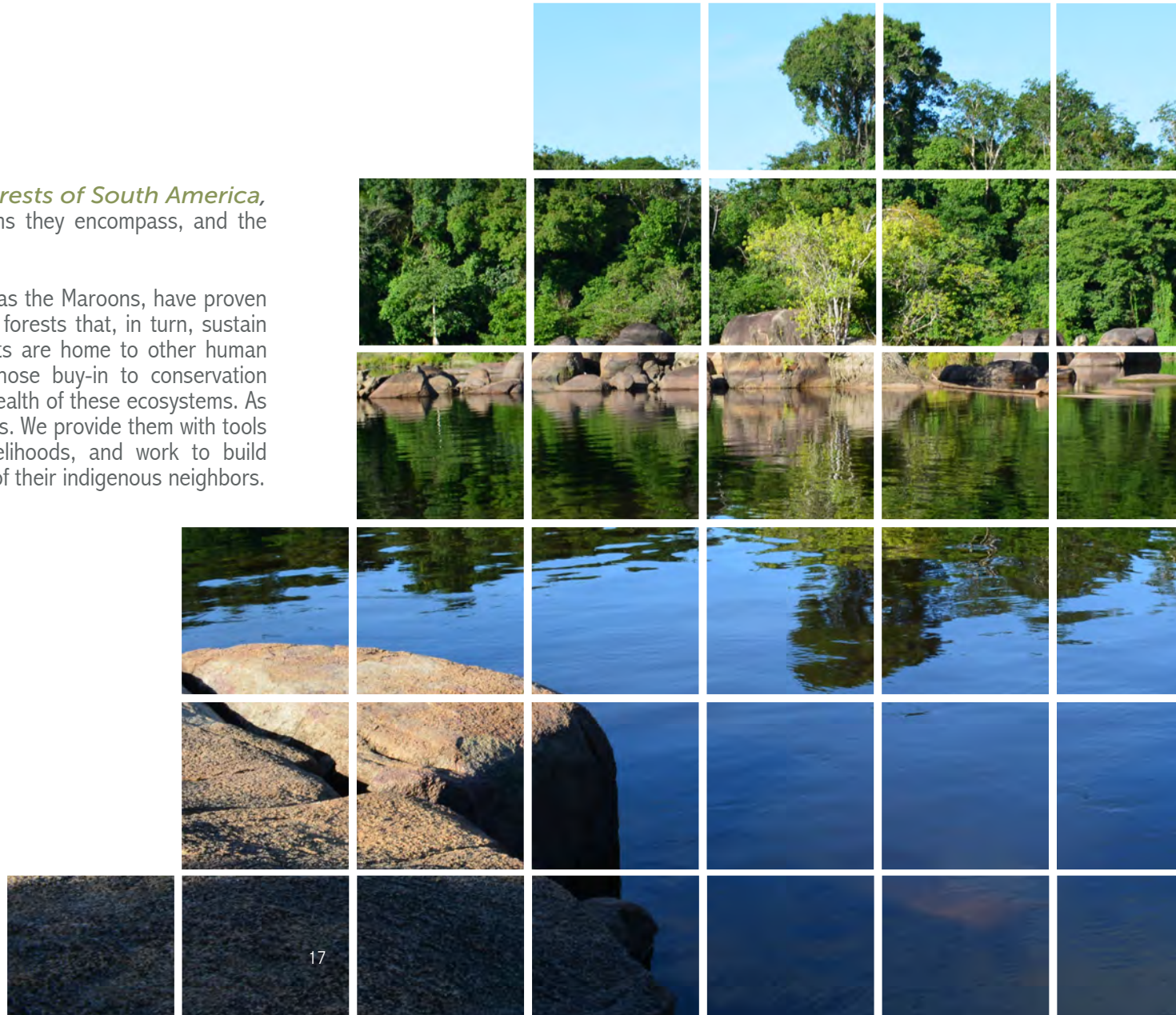
BRAZIL

Since 2011, in the Xingu Indigenous Reserve, we have partnered with the Waurá people on a special project, beginning with the establishment of a small indigenous village, called Ulupuene, to provide a border presence in the southwest corner of the reserve. We believe that Ulupuene has the potential to become a model of sustainability and self-sufficiency throughout the Xingu, and are currently assessing the potential of applying the programmatic strategies that we employ in other countries in Brazil.

Our Conservation Targets

Our targets (beneficiaries) are the *tropical forests of South America,* including the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems they encompass, and the *local communities* that inhabit them.

Indigenous and other traditional peoples, such as the Maroons, have proven to be powerful partners in the conservation of forests that, in turn, sustain their communities. In some cases, these forests are home to other human populations, such as farming communities, whose buy-in to conservation strategies is crucial to ensuring the long-term health of these ecosystems. As much as possible, we engage these stakeholders. We provide them with tools to promote their adoption of sustainable livelihoods, and work to build alliances between their communities and those of their indigenous neighbors.



On-The-Ground Realities

When forests thrive, they are home to exceptionally diverse plants, animals, and human communities. Above the trees, vast rivers of vapor form, subsequently flowing across the seas and helping to regulate water cycles across the globe. Incomprehensibly complex networks of microorganisms live underground, communicating in chemical languages mostly unknown to science.

Unfortunately, for the forest, its riches are not only biological. Its timber, gold, petroleum, land, and exotic wildlife can be turned into short-term profits. When indigenous and local communities object to the disruption of their forests, they are often marginalized, removed, or exterminated. The decimation of entire forest ecosystems was carried out during the 19th and 20th centuries, and continues into the 21st. Without the climate-stabilizing effects of tropical forests, vicious and frequent cycles of storms, wildfires, and drought are likely to become the norm by the year 2100.[5]

Threats to the tropical forests of the nation of Colombia include mega-infrastructure projects such as highways and dams, unsustainable logging, and an expanding agricultural frontier. Mining remains one of the worst despoilers of land and water. Illicit drug cultivation and drug smuggling wreck both environments and local communities. Until recently, the civil conflict that plagued Colombia for decades was a serious threat to humans, but ironically, it protected the more remote forests, rivers, and wildlife. Post-conflict, criminal activity in some areas is metastasizing, putting indigenous leaders in the crosshairs of assassins.

In contrast to most of the forests of Colombia, the forests in the interior of Suriname are largely intact, thanks in part to their isolation. Nonetheless, alarming threats exist. Illegal gold mining in the interior is poisoning rivers with mercury and other toxic waste. Logging, over-fishing, over-hunting, harvesting of exotic species, and unsustainable infrastructure projects threaten both forests and the people who live in them. The cultural degradation of local communities is an ever-present danger to their vitality.

In Brazil, the forests of the Xingu Indigenous Reserve are still largely standing due to its indigenous people. However, the Reserve is an island of forest in a sea of soy plantations. Agricultural runoff from these massive plantations has contaminated the rivers on which indigenous communities depend on for water and fish. The communities suffer from food insecurity and other economic pressures, increasing their vulnerability to loggers, miners, and other fortune seekers looking to exploit the Xingu's resources.

The indigenous peoples in all of these countries have suffered from the effects of global climate change. One example is the apocalyptic inundation by mudslides of the small indigenous city of Mocoa, Colombia, in April 2017, where hundreds of people were drowned and hundreds more left homeless. This tragic event and its aftermath put huge stresses on our partner communities in the surrounding areas. This new reality of fierce and unpredictable weather has been added to our list of major threats that need strategic mitigation.

5 United States Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory. Global Warming and Hurricanes: An Overview of Current Research Results. Retrieved February 23, 2018 from https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/global-warming-and-hurricanes/

SECTION IV

OUR STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

Our Vision, Goals, and Outcomes

We see a future where healthy tropical forests and thriving local communities exist in harmonious relationship with each other, contributing to the well-being of the planet.

For this vision to become reality in each of the places where we work, two conditions must be met:

1. The forest ecosystem is healthy and robust.^
2. The communities achieve and maintain their desired state of well-being.^

We refer to these two conditions as our Global Goals.[6] To reach these goals, we devise strategies and initiatives that we believe will lead to certain outcomes.[7] If the desired outcomes are achieved, we believe that threats to the forest and its communities will be reduced, now and in the future.

Our redefined approach to conservation is encapsulated in the expression of three desired high-level global outcomes. All three must be achieved to bring about our goals of ecosystem health and community well-being.

- Ecologically and culturally significant lands and resources are protected and sustainably managed by local communities.
- Local communities' basic needs (food, water, energy) are met, allowing them to live securely andsustainably within their own lands.
- Local communities achieve self-determination of their society, land and resources, increasing their cultural resilience.

The indispensable first step in our approach is to root our strategies in the field. We ask our partners what they want, what they need, and what they envision for their future. All community members are included: men and women, children and elders. Our community partners identify the priorities for their ecosystems and the tools and conditions that their communities need to safeguard them, and we in turn develop initiatives that lead us together towards our goals.

We are developing monitoring and evaluation systems to measure our progress towards these goals and desired outcomes. Our targets for 2020 are explained in the subsequent section How We Will Measure Success.

[6] Statement of the ultimate impacts that ACT wishes to have within our local partners' communities and targeted forests.

[7] The results of activities conducted by ACT and our partners, which contribute ultimately to the mitigation of threats and achievement of our goals.

^ See Glossary at the end of this document for our definition of ecosystem health and well-being.

Our Strategies

Three strategies form the foundation of our approach. The strategies are mutually dependent on each other for successful outcomes:

Land: promote sustainable land management and protection

Land works to improve the long-term health of the forest, including its biodiversity and resources, through appropriate management and protection. The initiatives under this strategy seek to increase legally recognized protected areas, such as indigenous reserves, as a further shield against destruction while directly combating threats to the land, using monitoring and surveillance. But none of Land's initiatives are effective without local people to perform them.

Livelihoods: promote communities' secure and sustainable livelihoods

Livelihoods focuses on family economies within our partner communities, to help them remain on their lands. Financial security is critical to families, but so also is access to clean water, good nutrition, medicines, and energy. This is especially important in communities where conflicts and deforestation have left people unable to acquire these basic necessities from their territories.

In Livelihoods, we develop non-destructive harvesting methods and production systems for subsistence. We also create income-generating projects that are sustainable and environmentally sound, and we help our partner communities develop routes to market for those products. For other needs of the communities, we contribute to the development of their community infrastructure and introduce them to culturally appropriate technologies.

Governance: strengthen communities' governance and culture

Governance is the third strategy that forms a strong foundation for the fulfillment of our vision. These initiatives seek to increase the self-determination of our partner communities and strengthen their cultural identity. We have learned that communities best able to manage their forests and to weather adversity are those with intact cultural traditions.

In some communities, cultures have been in long decline because of outside influences. We support the recovery and strengthening of traditions through ethno-education programs, knowledge transmission programs, and traditional medice and healthcare systems. We work to build up meaningful institutions within our partner communities, improve the effectiveness of these institutions, and promote the active engagement of traditional authorities in these processes.

These initiatives strengthen the collective voice of the community, especially when they are called upon to advocate for themselves. Lastly, we collaborate with the communities to develop tools, such as Life Plans, to support them in determining their own future.

We promote the sustainability of our programs by helping our partners take charge of their own initiatives. We train them to interact effectively with forces outside of their communities, and encourage them to form positive alliances. We also help our partners advocate for the enactment of culturally responsive legislation, policies, and regulations, especially community land rights.

How Our Strategies Support Each Other

The Amazon Conservation Ranger program is an example of a **Land** strategy. We train rangers in technical skills such as GPS and biodiversity monitoring so they can assess the health of a given ecosystem. Because the rangers know their lands better than any outsider possibly could, they can spot trouble on the ground quickly.

Further, in Suriname, the rangers are helping to prove to the national government that their communities are capable of autonomously managing their own territories and are deserving of land rights, one of the primary aims of **Governance**.

Our Connected Landscapes project in Colombia is a prime example of how **Land** and **Livelihoods** strategies often overlap. In this project, local and indigenous communities used satellite imagery to map forest connectivity on their lands, with the aim of creating plans for the rehabilitation and use of their lands.

As they learned about the importance of connected forests, the communities decided to plant "connectivity trails" between isolated forest patches, using high-value native nut trees. Thus, the forest is knit back together, while also providing local families with a sustainable source of income.

Our 2020 Milestone Objectives

Each ACT country program has proposed an individual set of objectives for the year 2020, based on the unique set of circumstances that exist in that nation. These are organized according to our three high-level strategies: land, livelihoods and governance. We are also including modest objectives for our Brazil initiative, which at the time of the publication of this document is better described as a project than a country program.

LAND: DESIRED THREE-YEAR OUTCOMES

COLOMBIA

- At least two million additional acres (~750K ha) of forest and land are formally protected by law.
- 20,000 people or more have improved land-use and tenure rights resulting from the expansion or establishment of indigenous reserves.
- Over four million acres (~1.6M ha) of forest and land are safeguarded and managed by indigenous and local communities.
- At least two regional connectivity corridors are established to mitigate direct threats to biodiversity.
- Detailed ecological surveys, which contribute to knowledge about biological diversity, are conducted in at least two priority areas.
- Colombia has a comprehensive public policy for the protection of indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, contributing to the conservation of tropical forests.
- Incursions into the territories of Colombia's confirmed isolated indigenous peoples are prevented by an effective coalition of local and government entities.

SURINAME

- Twenty villages or more partner with ACT-Suriname.
- Cultural mapping of the Saramacca River is complete.
- Suriname has at least sixty Amazon Conservation Rangers, trained in local environmental assessment.
- Two new Ranger field stations are in operation in southern Suriname.
- Tests of community-based management of indigenous and Maroon lands in central and south Suriname are conducted in partnership with the national government.

BRAZIL

- Maintenance of the community's communications systems (radio, internet, and boats) is performed by villagers.
- Participatory cultural mapping of the surrounding areas is complete, including the locations of fishing and hunting sites, natural resources, and sacred sites.

LIVELIHOODS: DESIRED THREE-YEAR OUTCOMES

COLOMBIA

- Sustainable, community-based enterprises are established for the production, marketing, and sale of at least two local products.
- At least 500 indigenous and local families use sustainable alternative practices to restore, protect, and manage their territories.
- Thirty of ACT's partner communities have improved access to basic needs, and over 700 people benefit from improved family economies.

SURINAME

- Sustainable, community-based enterprises, involving women and men equally, are established for the production and sale of at least four local products. At least two of the enterprises are managed by the communities themselves.
- 120 households or more earn steady income through the sale of these products.
- Local women have built and manage at least two professional jewelry production shops.
- At least three communities have access to sufficient clean water and electricity to meet their basic needs.

BRAZIL

- At least one sustainable income-generating project contributes to the well-being of the Ulupuene village.
- An irrigation system for watering crops and fruit-bearing trees protects the village harvests from cycles of drought.
- Raw materials for building, crafts, and important ceremonies are grown within range of the village and are sustainably harvested.

GOVERNANCE: DESIRED THREE-YEAR OUTCOMES

COLOMBIA

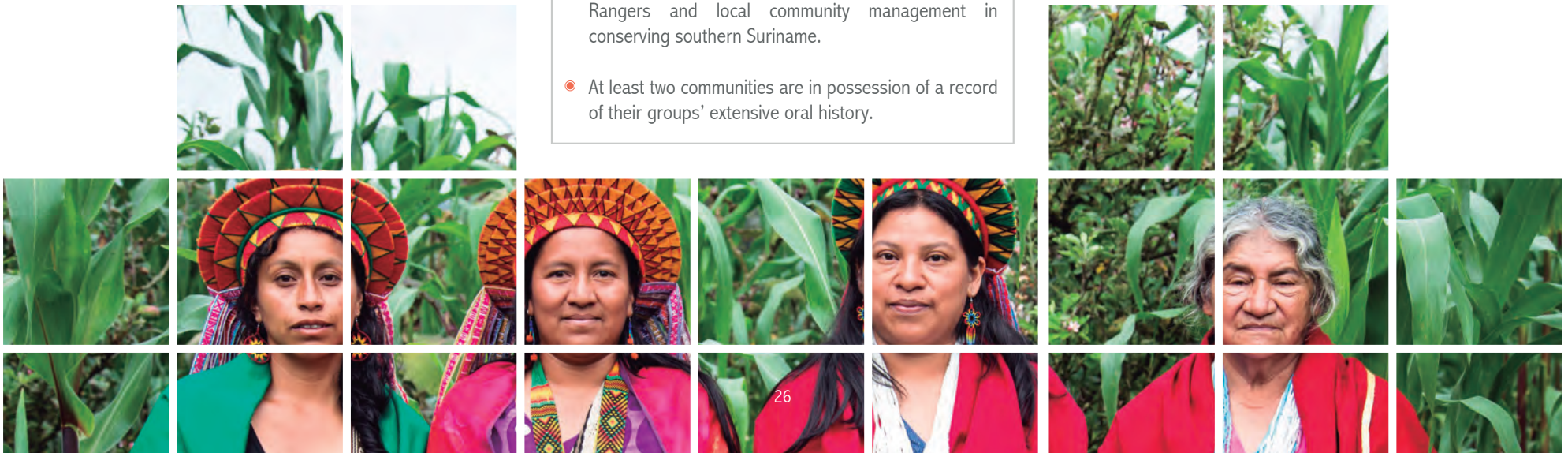
- A new program trains indigenous and local youths in biodiversity conservation and the incorporation of traditional knowledge into the management of their territories.
- At least one indigenous organization has the legal authority to directly administer public resources for the management of its territory.
- At least five national, regional, or local-level land-use plans incorporate the stewardship values and cultural perspectives of indigenous and local communities.

SURINAME

- At least three communities have each developed a comprehensive Life Plan.
- Seven traditional medicine clinics are in operation, five of which are completely managed by the healers themselves.
- In central and in southern Suriname, at least two vocational schools are launched and supported with traditional and western education materials.
- The Shamans & Apprentices programs have localized teaching manuals, along with formal methods for evaluating their students.
- Government ministries, agencies, and policymakers are aware of the importance of the Amazon Conservation Rangers and local community management in conserving southern Suriname.
- At least two communities are in possession of a record of their groups' extensive oral history.

BRAZIL

- At least one villager is trained and actively uses the community's audio equipment to record and archive important oral histories, songs, and rituals.
- At least four college-trained indigenous teachers work in the local schools.



How We Will Measure Success

The techniques of MEL (monitoring, evaluation, and learning) help our team members, across countries and across programs, communicate with a uniform set of references. MEL involves a significant institutional commitment as we incorporate its complex methods into our strategic planning. Our ultimate purpose is to systematically test the effectiveness of our initiatives, test assumptions to understand why initiatives succeed or fail, and adapt initiatives to improve their effectiveness.

We have drawn up percentage targets for our goals and desired outcomes for 2020. These are benchmark values against which we evaluate progress towards our vision.

With respect to our current project sites, targeted ecosystems and partner communities, the following table contrasts our 2017 measured progress toward our global goals with our aspirational progress for 2020, expressed as a percentage attainment of those goals.

GLOBAL GOALS	2017	2020
Goal 1. The forest ecosystem is healthy and robust. Project sites and targeted ecosystems that reach or maintain desired ecosystem health	44%	56%
Goal 2. The communities achieve and maintain their desired state of well-being. Partner communities that achieve desired community well-being	15%	48%

The following table compares the same with regard to our desired outcomes

OUTCOMES	2017	2020
Threat reductions Project sites where threats have been reduced to or maintained at acceptable levels	0%	33%
Ecologically and culturally significant lands and resources are protected and sustainably managed by local communities. Project sites in which targeted ecosystems are under satisfactory levels of sustainable management and protection	16%	33%
Local communities' basic needs are met, allowing them to live securely and sustainably within their own lands. Partner communities that have their basic needs met (food, water, energy)	17%	29%
Local communities achieve self-determination of their society, land and resources, increasing their cultural resilience. Partner communities that achieve satisfactory levels of self-determination Project-level strategies that are autonomously managed by our community partners	27% 03%	29% 29%
Empowerment of local communities Partner communities where participants in each project-level strategy are empowered to take action	46%	58%
Actions/initiatives are determined by communities. Project sites where action portfolios have been developed hand-in-hand with community partners	40%	61%

Illustrating Our Work

SACRED SITES

We know that our partner communities can best safeguard their forests when they have their territories, sustainable livelihoods, and intact traditions. But there is often more. The elders frequently tell us that in order for their communities to truly flourish, they want and need to control lands that are sacred to them.

From our conservationist perspective, we recognize that sacred sites frequently coincide with areas of exceptionally high biodiversity, or are located at headwaters of rivers, in fragile transitional zones, or in areas of vital habitat for endangered species. But we can't always draw a direct line from indigenous beliefs to a modern interpretation of them; the "explanation" for some sacred sites eludes us.

Many of these sites were lost when indigenous people were forced to flee the European conquest of the Americas. One example is the sacred world of the Kogi people, who now live high in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta on the northeast coast of Colombia. The Kogi believe their territories are connected by a network of invisible points. Certain nodes in this web are considered places of power wher ceremonies are held to help sustain the processes of nature.

The Kogi once kept a ring of fifty-four sacred sites around the Sierras, which they call the Black Line. When we began our partnership with the Kogi, most of the Black Line was out of their control and all the sites were gravely endangered by development or mining.

The most significant of these sites are along the Caribbean, where Kogi come to gather shells for important ceremonies. We were able to purchase one of those sites, Jaba Tañiwashkaka, a very degraded piece of land along the ocean, and with help from the national government the land was returned to the Kogi in 2013.

While we are unable to directly perceive the sacred nature of Jaba, we have witnessed the phenomenal resurrection of an ecosystem. Since the Kogi took control of the land, they have cleared the land of trash and established a small community of families to guard it. Wetlands and mangroves have been restored, the waters are slowly decontaminating, and wildlife is returning. The community has built two temples where people from related indigenous groups can come, in safety, to make offerings to the sea. This restoration inspires our partners and strengthens their resolve to recover the entire Black Line.

FOREST HONEY AND THE PATH TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As mobile phones and consumer goods infiltrate even the most remote forests, local communities that once thrived without money now need ways to pay for their modern conveniences. In Suriname's Kwamalasamutu, many young men leave the village to work in gold mines or logging, and some young women turn to prostitution. A number of social and environmental ills soon follow as the cultural fabric of the village is torn.

Together with our partners, we look to find sources of cash income that can strengthen local economies and protect the forest.

Tropical forests are home to hundreds of native species of stingless bees that produce a variety of honeys and pollen, some medicinal. We determined that these products could make a high-value, renewable, and attractive product for Suriname. Because stingless bees can only live in a standing forest, a flourishing honey industry would protect both the pollinators and the environment.

We faced several problems at the outset. Though many of the indigenous people once named themselves after bees and wasps, and possessed highly detailed knowledge about the ecology of pollinators, few in the village remembered much about bees. The other problem was that there is no tradition of beekeeping in the forests of the interior. Men will literally risk their lives climbing trees in search of sweetness for their families. When found, the hives are usually destroyed when they are broken apart, and the bees die or move elsewhere.

We interviewed local experts, mostly older men, who were able to describe and name more than thirty-five kinds of bees. An indigenous cartographer mapped the locations of sixty nests in and around the village. We sampled many wild honeys to determine which ones were the tastiest or most unique and might be marketable.

A stingless bee expert introduced the community to the basic techniques of beekeeping. Together, we transferred some colonies from wild nests in the forest into bee boxes that are kept closer to the village.

We learned which species of stingless bees are best adapted to domestication, and how to harvest their honey without disrupting the health of the hive.

Because surplus honey and pollen from the stingless bees is meant to be sold, product storage had to be considered. Would the products spoil? What would be the transport cost from village to city? These and other details had to be researched, discussed, and implemented, as we slowly built the value chains that map the progress of a product from the forest all the way to the market. The community is learning not only the basics of beekeeping, but also marketing, accounting, and inventory management.

Two other communities have since initiated stingless bee and honey projects of their own. The work with bees reinforces the ancient bonds that tie local people to their forests, bringing sweetness, medicine, and culture into their lives. The forests thrive when they are filled with pollinators. Income from the honey insures that local people can continue to prosper in the modern world without losing their unique place in it.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

When we work in the field, we may behold the extraordinary vitality of nature, or we might witness the environmental and human havoc created by deforestation. Beauty, poverty, possibility, danger, and hope are all close at hand. Working with satellite images, however, reveals perspectives and priorities that may otherwise remain hidden from view.

Looking from above at the eastern slopes of the Andes, where the great Caquetá and Putumayo rivers flow down from the mountains, we are able to see how forests have become increasingly fragmented over the years, which impacts the ability of wildlife to thrive. We have seen the slopes denuded of trees and lose their ability to soak up rain. We have seen how mega-ranching and agriculture projects are impeding and poisoning the rivers as they flow east from the moutains into the Amazon plains. And we can see how human trouble also travels the rivers, reaching deep into the heart of the forest.

The stark realities of global climate change dictate that if we are to preserve life in the Amazon, we must prioritize the protection of water. One strategy that we have utilized in Colombia is to create connected corridors of protected areas that safeguard headwaters and watersheds.

From satellite images of the eastern slope, we can see that patchworks of indigenous reserves, national parks, endangered forests, and degraded lands exist side by side. Some of the parks are too remote to be effectively guarded. Some of the reserves are too small to sustain their communities. Why not work to legally expand those indigenous reserves, especially as buffer zones alongside the parks? The communities can reclaim and guard their ancestral territories, help recover the blighted areas, and regain control of the river valleys.

The work of connectivity is a slow and deliberate process. Building a network involves collaboration on a massive scale, not only with the various indigenous organizations and communities who are affected, but also with the many governmental agencies and ministries who must be engaged. In 2017, in Colombia, in the area of the Chiribiquete National Park, a 24-million-acre corridor of protected areas was connected via expansions. On the ground, there was celebration, and hope.

LAND AND HISTORY AMONG THE MATAWAI

Along the Saramacca River, whose watershed covers a significant part of Suriname, live the Matawai people. They are descendants of Africans who escaped slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries by fleeing into the jungles, and eventually won their freedom. In the contemporary era, many of the younger Matawai leave their forest homes to work in the city or in gold mines.

In the rainforest, the survival of the Matawai has always depended on an intimate knowledge of their territories. In the course of collaboratively mapping the Saramacca River, we discovered that the Matawai elders have stories connected with over 800 points on the map. When plotted to the map, the stories create a multi-dimensional document of the present and the past. Many of the stories describe what resources can be found at the points, helping us understand the biodiversity of entire regions. Many stories encode the Matawai history and beliefs along with the specifics of place. The stories even capture changes to the geography of their lands over the last three hundred years. But as with so many Amazonian cultures, the stories are in danger of dying out.

Since our inception, we have worked with communities to reconnect the threads that join one generation to another, so that the process of knowledge transmission can continue. Our goal with the Matawai is to create an offline-compatible interactive portal that connects the important points on the map to the stories, along with their rich cultural and historical information. To do this, we are training young people to record the stories of their elders on audio, and when possible, on video.

By using the overlapping strategies of Land and Governance, together we are protecting and strengthening the Saramacca River, its surrounding lands, and its guardians.

SECTION V

STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANIZATION

Introduction

For twenty-one years and counting, we have been developing strong and enduring bonds with our partner communities. We have connected ourselves to a web of strategic alliances with like-minded organizations, governments, and prominent thinkers. After years of consistent effort, we now participate in a network of resilient relationships that contribute to our success.

As we move forward, we want to increase our influence as an organization. If we are to apply our proven strategies to the conservation of more forests, lands, and communities, we need to fortify our institutional infrastructure. We have already begun this process by learning the language and skills of adaptive management.

We affirm that ACT will remain a field-based organization. We are determined to grow carefully, remain nimble, and stay curious. Investments to be made in the organization over the next few years will strengthen our expertise, our reach, our resolve, and ultimately, our results.

Operational Goals

INSTITUTIONAL

GOAL:

Expand Our Impact

To be most effective, we need to work with whole ecosystems. If we are invited by a community to assist them in securing their territories, and those lands cross a national boundary, we want to work with them. If we can integrate European philanthropic partners into our work, and move and inspire our colleagues in the conservation community, we can broaden the support network of those committed to a more sustainable future for all.

WE WILL:

- Grow into other regions and countries that share borders with the traditional lands of our partner communities.
- Evolve ACT-Europe into a vigorous and active part of the ACT network.
- Develop instructional models from ACT's successful programs, to be made available to indigenous rights movements and the conservation community.

BY 2020:

- We are working in at least one new country or border region.
- ACT-Europe has an established office in Europe. The ACT-Europe Director actively pursues opportunities for funding, and building strategic alliances, within the European community.
- We have fully developed at least two "how-to" models for implementing projects, available in English, Spanish and Portuguese, in print and online.

EXPANDING OUR FRONTIERS: ACT "THINKS BIGGER"

Our 2017-2020 strategic plan contemplates expansion. By expansion, institutions typically mean the installation of offices in new territories. While we may consider such investments in the future, we see no intrinsic benefit in planting flags. Rather, the value we perceive in expansion is the ability to scale our work to benefit more communities and ecosystems, and we wish to do this as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. We describe two kinds of potential expansion: geographical, and thematic.

Geographically, we generally look to leverage opportunities in areas bordering our project sites, and with communities with whom we already have some type of relationship. We may also accept invitations from communities and organizations in those areas that have seen the power of our work and wish to replicate our successes. An example that embraces both is a recent invitation from the leadership of French Guiana's Parc Amazonien de Guyane, who have witnessed our capacity building work with communities across the border in Suriname and would like to capitalize on our experience; some of the ethnic groups in this national park also are present in ACT's work areas.

Thematic expansion refers to projects where ACT does not itself have a geographical footprint, but where we are making our models available to other efforts and communities. The emphasis is on replicating successful models or our approach in general, however that may take place. For example, other nations have observed our contributions to the protection of isolated indigenous peoples in Colombia, and would like our counsel. ACT may have no office or even a field presence in these lands, but our ideas and experience will indeed have reached new frontiers.

DEVELOPMENT

GOAL:

Increase to, and sustain, a USD $15 million annual budget

To expand our impact we will need more resources. In addition, we want to ensure the stability of our operations as we move into the future.

WE WILL:

- Increase unrestricted support from our donor base.
- Increase access to in-country sources of funding in Colombia and Suriname.
- Lay the groundwork for the establishment of an endowment fund for ACT.
- Expand our fundraising efforts to Europe.
- Develop a comprehensive corporate social responsibility partner program.
- Improve our technological infrastructure for fundraising.

BY 2020:

- Our annual budget is USD $15 million.
- We have tripled our base of individual donors who give at USD $1K level.
- At least five proposals are submitted annually for in-country grants.
- The first phase of the endowment fund plan is launched.
- Two multi-year grants from Europe, totaling at least USD $2M, have been secured.
- Five or more new corporate partners provide in-kind and funding support.
- An organization-wide system manages and tracks the lifecycles of grants pursued by all ACT offices.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

GOAL:

Improve ACT's visibility and increase recognition of our impact

To expand our impact and increase levels of support, we need to communicate effectively with many potential partners and advocates. The spread of digital and social media across all countries makes the need for clear and consistent messages more imperative than ever before.

WE WILL:

- Implement a comprehensive, organization-wide communications plan for external audiences.
- Complete a brand refresh.
- Develop a new website, with unified sub-domains for each office that employ appropriate messaging for local audiences.
- Design traditional media and social media campaigns to connect with a more diverse public.
- Diversify the voices of ACT who can represent the organization and speak passionately about our work.
- Develop scientific papers and policy white papers.

BY 2020:

- External communications are clear and compelling. Messaging is consistent across all platforms, support materials, offices, and spokespersons.
- All online content, whether website or social media, is simplified and relatable, attracting more diverse and loyal audiences.
- At least two spokespersons in each office are trained and supported to represent ACT.
- We have produced at least three publications to influence policymakers or to present at major international conferences.

BEING HEARD AT ACT

We are a multicultural and multi-ethnic organization. Though many of our team members speak several languages, good communication is one of the challenges we face on a regular basis. National languages include English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch. A typical group meeting involves simultaneous translation of English into one or more of the other languages, and vice versa. When indigenous elders or leaders are present, we might need multiple translators: one to convert the indigenous language into the local national language, and others to translate for everyone else.

Beyond the intricacies of accurately conveying the meaning of the spoken word lie the nuances of culture. Who speaks, for how long, and in what order? What are the appropriate ways of listening and responding? What is considered humorous?

Another challenge of communication is translating the written word. Cultural variations in the uses of idiom usually prohibit a literal transcription of documents. Skill, art, and much collaboration are needed to bridge the language gaps that we encounter on a daily basis.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

GOAL:

Strengthen the concept of ACT as a single organization.

Capture and maintain ACT's institutional memory.

Since we always begin our work in the field, we have traditionally given a great deal of autonomy to the leadership of our country programs. While we do not wish to institutionalize a corporate-style hierarchy for the organization, we do want to connect ourselves better with each other. In addition, we want to capture and integrate our twenty years of stories and experiences into an ACT culture of learning.

WE WILL:

- Formulate and implement an ACT-wide plan that outlines protocols for interoffice communication and information-sharing processes.
- Create standardized information-gathering templates, training manuals, presentations, and ready-to-use support materials in English and Spanish.
- Build communications skills within the team.
- Systematically gather stories and images from the field to be used in our communications efforts.
- Design and implement knowledge management practices across the organization.

BY 2020:

- We have accessible communications manuals for all staff, in all languages.
- Regular and well-coordinated interoffice communications foster improved unity and organizational intelligence.
- All offices use templates and tools that streamline production of documents and information sharing.
- Staff messaging and storytelling skills are cultivated, appreciated, and utilized.
- Searchable online databases improve staff access to images, maps, and stories.
- Core elements of ACT's institutional memory are systematically documented and maintained.
- There is extensive and methodical sharing of expertise between offices.

HUMAN RESOURCES

GOAL:

Ensure a committed and interconnected workforce

A healthy, well-focused, and well-trained staff is a tremendous asset. We believe that nurturing our hardworking staff by improving conditions and making investments in technology will keep them motivated and effective. It will also make ACT more competitive when recruiting new hires.

WE WILL:

- Improve working conditions in our offices by modestly expanding or improving the physical workspaces.
- Unify and streamline our staff on-boarding process in all offices.
- Promote exchanges between staff members from different offices.
- Ensure that staff and field expeditions are properly equipped for safety and health.
- Encourage the professional and intellectual growth of staff.
- Invest in state-of-the-art technology to facilitate staff collaboration across all offices.

BY 2020:

- All of our offices have enough space to comfortably accommodate all staff members.
- At each office, we have skilled communications and fundraising staff.
- A comprehensive onboarding manual, in English and Spanish, is in place for new hires.
- At least two exchanges are held annually between staff from different ACT programs for learning and the replication of successful project models.
- Staff and field expeditions are outfitted with appropriate and updated equipment.
- Regular trainings for our staff in communications, finance, fundraising and other skills have been institutionalized.
- Primary file storage has been migrated to cloud platforms to facilitate document management and sharing among all offices.
- All staff members have been trained in ACT's new technologies and are using them to their full capacity.

WHY AN INDIGENOUS COUNCIL?

Since our earliest days in the field, we have consulted with the elders and leaders of the communities in which we work. This is not simply protocol. The elders and other leaders not only give us permission to work, but also guide us in our understanding of their communities' physical, cultural, and spiritual needs. They are a treasured resource. At the species level, diversity increases resilience. Similarly, an increased diversity of viewpoints and perspectives strengthens ACT for the long term.

GOVERNANCE AND SUCCESSION

GOAL:

Diversify and secure our leadership for the future

Forests and the communities that live in them will need our advocacy for generations to come. We will need capable leaders on all levels. As we go forward, we need to ensure that our governing structures are resilient and responsive, and that their compositions reflect the many cultures that make up our organization.

WE WILL:

- Review the composition of the Board of Directors and recommend new membership.
- Increase the active involvement of Board members in the growth and direction of the organization.
- Evaluate the Advisory Board and increase the involvement of its members.
- Align the strategies and increase the participation of the ACT-Suriname and ACT-Europe Boards of Directors.
- Create an advisory board for ACT-Colombia.
- Establish an indigenous advisory council.
- Cultivate leadership for the next twenty years for all offices.
- Explore development of young indigenous and local community leaders for the future.

BY 2020:

- ACT-US has an ideally sized, well-informed, and diversified Board.
- The role of the Advisory Board is clearly defined, including the Board's purpose, individual expectations, and ideal composition.
- All Boards are actively involved in the organization, helping with fundraising, awareness, and guidance.
- An Advisory Board for ACT-Colombia has at least three active members.
- An Indigenous Advisory Council meets at least once a year and provides guidance regarding the direction of the organization.
- We have succession plans for the organization and the Boards, as well as contingency plans for each office in the event of unplanned absences.
- An indigenous fellowship program provides biocultural training opportunities to two indigenous youth per year.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING AND LEARNING

GOAL:

Measure the effectiveness of our actions on the ground

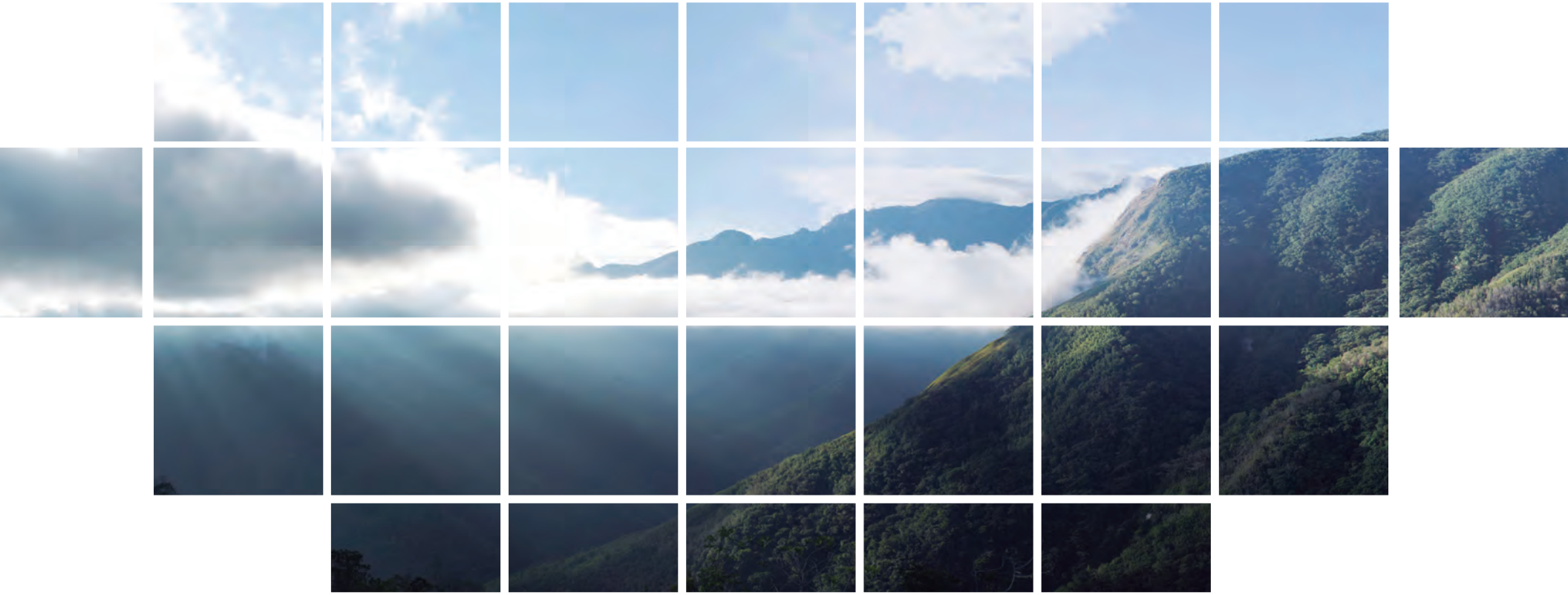
We are on track to fully institutionalize the tools and techniques of adaptive management over the next several years. Using these methods, we will be able to show, using rigorous data, that our programs are systematic, coherent, and results-driven. The methods also streamline our communications with each other, and greatly improve decision-making over time.

WE WILL:

- Complete and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan for all ACT programs and projects.
- Unify our programmatic knowledge management and reporting systems.
- Test the effectiveness of our initiatives, and adapt them when needed.

BY 2020:

- Data on the implementation and outcomes of our programs is systematically collected and analyzed.
- All ACT programs are integrated in the adaptive management software, Miradi, with groundwork laid for the development of a programmatic database.
- Processes for data management and reporting are established and documented.
- Annual ACT-wide meetings are held to review the status our programs and make strategic management decisions regarding their implementation.



SECTION VI

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges and Opportunities

Disruption is everywhere in the world: divisive politics, a refugee crisis, climate change. In the tropical regions where we work, violence and instability affect some areas. Cycles of serious drought in the Amazon are occurring more frequently than in the past. Our partner communities adapt where they can, but some threats to the integrity of forests, such as unsustainable logging, infrastructure projects, and mining, are near-constant and may never totally recede.

While we may be able to predict many of the challenges we will face, others are unforeseeable. To meet this future, we are establishing an organizational culture that embraces change and builds in protocols that allow us to respond rapidly to new disruptions. We have laid the groundwork by adopting the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. These rigorous standards provide a structure on which we can grow out past the boundaries of what we now think is feasible. Our aim is to become more nimble, more disciplined, and more effective.

A current challenge is that much better-funded organizations have nominally adopted our approach—at least in their external communications—but may not have the same commitments or intentions as expressed in our values. While we prioritize our mission over our institutional survival, we believe that an "ACT-lite" approach that supplants our own presence in our work areas would cause great detriment to our partner communities and their environment. How we respond to this existential challenge will test our resolve, and our creativity.

Another challenge we face is that fundamentalists are interfering with traditional cultures, and evangelical missionaries are trying to contact people who live in voluntary isolation, with potentially lethal consequences. Here we have an opportunity to turn this challenge to our advantage; we could initiate a dialogue with the churches, mediate our conflicts, and perhaps win strong allies.

Or we might create a network of organizations who have similar problems or goals to ours, and find strength in numbers. We are acknowledged as authorities in conservation with indigenous people, and many institutions want to collaborate with us. We could step forward into a leadership role and increase our spheres of influence.

We have the opportunity to bring in more supporters from the Millennial Generation, who are greatly concerned with climate change. Some of our partner communities, such as the Kogi, can be showcased as models of sustainable living. We can also continue to increase knowledge and science about the complex tropical ecosystems, and share this in social dialogues with interested stakeholders. We can look to technology for new ideas, and look into the past to see how ancient cultures survived and thrived through difficult times.

The “story maps” that we have posted online over the past few years help us meet the challenge of conveying complex information in an engaging, visual fashion. As digital technology becomes cheaper and easier to use, we have an exciting opportunity to fully exercise audiovisual storytelling, not only for communications but also to capture the place-based oral histories and environmental knowledge of our partner communities. This information can be linked to our maps, as with our Matawai project, and used in numerous ways to meet objectives in communications, development, the fortification of traditional knowledge, and our own knowledge management.

Another opportunity is to increase our connectivity: with each other, with like-minded organizations, with the next generations. We might form alliances with influencers, whose works can help transmit passionate messages about the forest, its mystery, and its human communities. We might reach out to city dwellers, to teach them how to appreciate and value the natural world that surrounds them.

Back on the ground, one of the greatest challenges our partner communities face is gaining control over their territories. Colombia has legal means through which autonomy can be achieved, but the communities need the basic skills necessary to navigate those pathways.

We assumed this challenge, collaborated with a group of new partners, and delivered high-quality governance education to twelve remote villages of the Amazon plains, facilitating the unprecedented expansion of legally recognized indigenous territories in the Middle Caquetá River region. This outcome inspired us to create a new program, called ***La Escuela del Rio*** (the River School), that will offer leadership training and other educational services (what we call capacity building) to local communities throughout our work areas. As more communities learn effective governance and management of their territories, more lands and ecosystems can be protected.

We wish to express our profound gratitude to the many members of our greater Team—our staff on two continents, indigenous partners, and advisors—who contributed richly to the production of this document over many months and many reviews. We also wish to acknowledge our team on the ground, who have taken on the challenge of implementing this vision. This collective spirit and dedication reinforces our confidence in our chosen path forward.

SECTION VII

GLOSSARY

What We Mean When We Say...

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

In conservation work, adaptive management can be defined as a process for the systematic management of complex biological systems, in which the unpredictable can and does occur. When we approach a problem, we take these steps: we think deeply about it; we develop a plan; we act on our assumptions; and we monitor, evaluate, and learn from the outcomes.

One of the most important components of adaptive management is the learning process, a structured method for understanding what works and what doesn't. If a plan fails, why did it? Were the assumptions incorrect or were the actions poorly executed? Did the conditions change, or was the monitoring faulty? From these rigorous evaluations of our actions, we can make decisions based on data rather than trial and error. Adaptive management allows us to deepen our expertise over time, and to share what we have learned with others.

BUILD CAPACITY

When we build capacity with our partners, we are providing them with new tools and skills to survive, adapt, and thrive in a changeable world. "Build" is an apt metaphor, because we work together to create frameworks on which communities can grow strong and gain control of their destinies. This may mean encouraging them to form associations that can interact effectively with external forces such as governments, or training them in skills such as GPS and other technologies that can help them protect their territories.

When we, as an organization, work to build capacity, we too look to increase our ability to respond to challenges. This may mean providing our staff with training, or if needed adding personnel. But in most cases, it involves analyzing the various building blocks that make up our institution and targeting improvements in critical areas.

ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

In general, an ecosystem is healthy if it is sustainable—in other words, able to maintain its organization and its vitality over time. A healthy ecosystem should also be resilient, and this quality has increasing importance in the face of global climate change. External stresses will continue to converge upon tropical forests, but if their ecosystems are robust, they can stand strong and thrive.

How we determine the health of a given ecosystem varies from place to place. Even though there are various indicators we can measure, such as extent of forest cover, water quality, or number of species, a variety of social and political forces interact within ecosystems. These human entities, which have a range of needs that the ecosystems can provide, may have quite opposite ways of defining health. Therefore, we understand that evaluating ecosystem health requires adaptive definitions and assessments.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The term knowledge management encompasses the entire process of creating, using, managing, and sharing the knowledge and information of our organization. In essence, this management strategy helps us to learn from our own history and thus improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

Specific assets can be stories, photographs, testimonies, document archives, models, and the documentation of the successes and failures of our initiatives. There are a number of strategic objectives that can be met by devising robust knowledge management systems for ACT: enhancing our standing in the conservation community, improving both internal and external communications, furthering our understanding of partner communities, fortifying the brand, and in general, insuring that ACT continues to grow and learn.

LIFE PLAN

A Life Plan is the collective voice of the community, which expresses in writing the goals for the future of that community. Aspirations regarding culture, education, traditional medicine and authority, language, and territory are articulated in the document. Life Plans also provide proposals for the sustainable management of the community's territories. In Colombia, these Plans are recognized by the government, and are an essential part of the bureaucratic process that leads to the expansion of an indigenous reserve. Compiling a Life Plan is an elaborate undertaking that involves input and consensus from all members of the community, including children.

TERRITORY

In English, territory generally means a piece of land, often delineated by a political boundary. For many indigenous peoples, territory is the source of their identity. The word territory encapsulates not only their community's land and the history embedded there: it also expresses culture, memory, sustenance, medicine, and spirit.

WELL-BEING AND BIENESTAR

In western cultures, the attainment of well-being—which can be defined as a state of being happy, healthy, and prosperous—is almost always a goal of the individual. The cultivation of certain personality traits leads to positive emotions, which lead to greater satisfaction and success, which in turn builds a happier society.

Our partner communities also have well-being (in Spanish, bienestar, or sometimes buen vivir) as a goal, though the path to it is different. For them, the state of well-being flows from the society to the individual, rather than the other way around. Each community defines well-being for themselves, though security, permanence, and social, physical, and cultural health are common themes in the quest for well-being.

For our partners, the achievement of autonomy is a top-tier marker of bienestar. So are strong community relationships, as well as cultures, which connect each person to the territories in which they live. If the land is healthy and thriving, so are the people.

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