



INDIAN LAW
RESOURCE CENTER

INDIGENOUS LANDS INITIATIVE PROJECT

2026 Success Memo

The Indigenous Lands Initiative is an Indigenous-led project created in response to this need to provide the technical expertise, funding, and other forms of assistance necessary to secure land titles for Indigenous communities, thereby seeking to place Indigenous lands under collective Indigenous ownership at a faster pace and on a larger scale.



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INDIGENOUS LANDS INITIATIVE



BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Indigenous Legal Resource Center (the Center), in collaboration with the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSEP) and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), launched the Indigenous Lands Initiative (ILI) Project to address one of the main causes of poverty and exclusion among Indigenous communities in Latin America: the lack of legally secure land rights. Through the ILI Project, we provide direct assistance to Indigenous communities in Mexico, Central America, and South America to secure legal title or other forms of legal security over their collectively owned lands. By strengthening territorial security and autonomy, the ILI Project defends indigenous rights, promotes racial equity, and fosters environmental conservation.

Land titling procedures vary across national and subnational borders. Therefore, efforts to achieve legal security over indigenous lands require a case-by-case approach. In some countries, this can be achieved through administrative procedures established for this purpose at the national or subnational level. In others, it is possible through political consensus or favorable court rulings. The Center and our partners are uniquely positioned to provide communities with a response tailored to their legal and cultural context. We are experts in providing direct legal assistance to indigenous communities throughout the region so they can navigate the various national legal frameworks that affects them.



In Peru, our collaboration with AIDSESP has led to significant success in securing land titles, obtaining legal recognition of the communities' legal status, and amending titles to include parcels of land that were previously excluded. In Brazil, in collaboration with COIAB, we are supporting initiatives for Indigenous communities that were forcibly evicted from their ancestral territories, as well as strengthening their legal claims to advance the titling process. In Guatemala, we are working to align land titling procedures with a binding and precedent-setting international court decision. In Argentina, we have begun working with the communities of Atacama and Ocloya to achieve legal recognition of their collective land rights.

Through these pilot projects, we are developing a broader base of practical experience with national land titling systems and building strategic relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations, with governments and with land titling experts. As we gain knowledge and create networks within countries and across communities, we are building a solid foundation for our future Land Titling Institute that will continue this work throughout the region for years to come, long after the ILI Project ends.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Our basic goal is to provide legal support and technical assistance to enable Indigenous communities in Mexico and Central and South America to overcome structural, discriminatory barriers so that they can secure collective ownership of their ancestral lands.



11 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Create an Indigenous institute for land titling

Establish a permanent institution, led by Indigenous experts, to serve as a hub to share lessons, innovate, test, and expand approaches to accelerate titling across Mexico and Central and South America.

Support Indigenous communities in obtaining land titles and other legal guarantees for the lands they traditionally occupy.

Provide technical and legal assistance

Train Indigenous leaders in land titling

Provide specialized training and access to experts to help communities lead efforts to overcome legal and administrative barriers.

Create spaces for the secure exchange of knowledge, collaboration, and strategy development among Indigenous rights advocates, lawyers, technical experts, and community leaders.

Promote knowledge exchange

Build a network of experts

Form an Advisory Committee made up of experts in land surveying, mapping, satellite imagery and geophysical data analysis, anthropology, ethnology, history, law, conflict resolution, and Indigenous economic development to guide the development of the Project and help expand our work into other countries.

Support the creation of rapid response protocols and tools for communities, leaders, and partners to respond quickly and effectively to violence and threats against those protecting Indigenous lands.

Defend Land Defenders

Engage in ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning

Develop and use tools to evaluate Project impact, facilitate reporting, and strengthen the effectiveness of our work.

LAND TITLING PILOT PROJECTS

PERU: SELF-DEMARICATION, LAND TITLING, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In Peru, the ILI Project aims to strengthen territorial security and the full enjoyment of rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon through technical, legal, and organizational assistance. In partnership with AIDSESEP, we support Indigenous communities in processes of legal recognition, georeferencing, expansion of existing titles, demarcation, and titling of ancestral territories. At the same time, we promote capacity-building initiatives for Indigenous leaders and public officials in order to promote a more sustainable movement in favor of titling Indigenous lands.

Current progress in Peru

Before launching the project in Peru, we developed a study on the main legal, political, and administrative obstacles that hinder the efficient and effective titling of Indigenous lands in Peru. Based on this analysis, the land titling work with AIDSESEP began in May 2023. Since then, we have achieved significant results in assisting 54 Indigenous communities in land titling procedures.

- **12 Indigenous communities obtained land titles**, legally securing 119,050.15 hectares and directly benefitting 3,133 Indigenous individuals.
- **05 Indigenous communities expanded their existing land titles**, incorporating 54,997.15 hectares previously excluded and directly benefitting 2,786 Indigenous individuals.
- **11 Indigenous communities received legal recognition**, the essential first step in the land titling process. These communities represent 33,943.66 hectares and benefit 2,866 Indigenous individuals. Six Indigenous communities have received legal recognition - the first step in the titling process.
- **26 Indigenous communities completed all technical work and the necessary paperwork related to their territorial claims** and are currently awaiting final resolutions issued by the government. These communities comprise 130,979.69 hectares and will benefit 11,303 Indigenous individuals.

Land titling in Peru is highly de-centralized, which leaves regional governments with complete authority over all aspects of titling Indigenous lands. It is also a very technical, scientific, and legal process, requiring great precision and careful partnership with regional government bodies to meet the regulatory standards.

PERU *PROGRESS* CONTINUED...

AIDSESEP has worked hard to consolidate working relationships with regional land titling agencies and form a technical team equipped with knowledge about Indigenous peoples' rights to accompany communities in land titling procedures. These relationships are critically important to advancing land titling procedures in the Peruvian Amazon.

Between 2024 and 2026, in partnership with the Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the East (ORPIO), the ILI Project has strengthened the technical and political capacities of 70 Indigenous women. This work involved training Indigenous women in the use of GPS and other territorial defense tools to better defend their lands and assert their rights. By the end of 2026, we expect a significant scaling-up in Loreto with the goal of empowering an additional 80 Indigenous women.

Additionally, the ILI has supported mechanisms to support territorial monitoring and protection strategies in order to prevent external threats to Indigenous territories and communities. This includes the provision of equipment, accompaniment on community patrols, and the development of maps. Together, these actions contribute to increasing legal security over collectively held lands and to strengthening leadership capacities of both Indigenous leaders and organizations to push for further reforms to the land titling process in Peru. This year, the ILI Project will continue to foster collaboration between the Center and AIDSESEP through technical, legal, and financial support. Likewise, we will continue to monitor land titling procedures in beneficiary communities to ensure their completion. As we expand our land titling efforts in Peru, we are learning best practices and developing strategies for this work in other countries.



54 INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

26

Indigenous communities completed all technical work and the necessary paperwork related to their territorial claims



11 Indigenous communities received legal recognition



05 Indigenous communities expanded their existing land titles

3,133

Indigenous individuals directly benefitted from legal land titling

LAND TITLING PILOT PROJECTS

BRAZIL: STRENGTHENING TERRITORIAL RIGHTS AND ADVANCING DEMARCATION

In Brazil, our partner COIAB has begun setting in motion work on the ground with Indigenous communities in 3 large Indigenous territories in the Brazilian Amazon - Taego Awa/Avá-Canoeiro in the state of Tocantins, Wajuru in Rondônia, and Tapayuna in Mato Grosso - to support advocacy strategies and advance titling efforts. Together, these three territories total nearly one million hectares. However, over time, these communities were forced to leave their lands due to incursions by agribusiness and mining industries, and infrastructure projects. In addition, political and legal pressures that block and delay land titling processes have paralyzed land titling procedures in these territories.

Given these challenges and complexities, we have adapted and expanded our strategy in Brazil to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the support provided to Indigenous communities and organizations. Our work is structured around two complimentary fronts: 1) Advocacy, including legal support, leadership engagement with decision-making bodies, and communications efforts to advance territorial claims; and 2) Territorial Strengthening, including support for community monitoring plans and equipment for surveillance, mobilization, and collective territorial defense.

Current progress in Brazil

Tapayuna (Mato Grosso): Representing 800,000 hectares and home to 425 people, this territory was recognized in 1968 and abolished by decree during the military dictatorship in 1976. Due to the steadfast efforts of the Tapayuna people, there have been concrete progress in the demarcation process. Recently, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), the government body responsible for Indigenous Affairs, established a Working Group to prepare the necessary technical studies to identify and delimit the territory.

Wajuru (Rondônia): The Wajuru people, a community of approximately 250 individuals, are seeking the recognition and protection of their 150,000-hectare ancestral territory in Rondônia.

BRAZIL *PROGRESS*

CONTINUED...

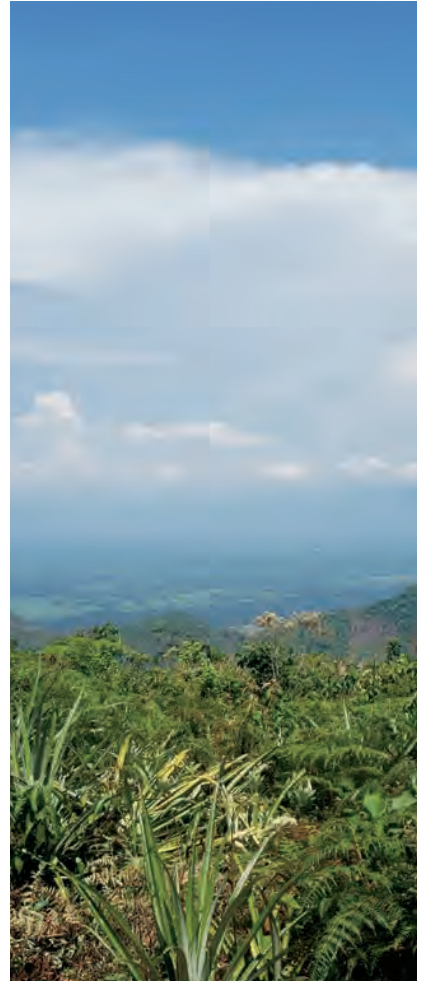
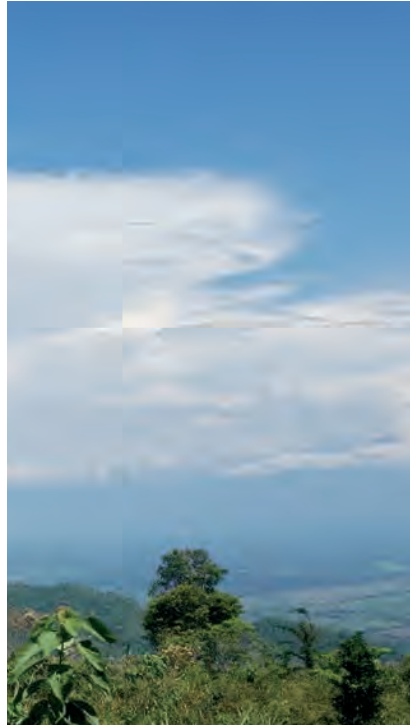


The Wajuru territory in Rondônia remains un-demarcated and faces constant threats of invasion and violence. This situation is exacerbated by the territory's status as a border area and a sport fishing zone. As a result of the Wajuru people's struggle to pressure the government to protect their rights, FUNAI has indicated that it is maintaining dialogue with the community and already plans to establish a Working Group to begin the identification and demarcation studies

Taego ãwa (Tocantins): Representing 29,000 hectares and home to approximately 40 survivors, the Avá-Canoeiro people have waited more than 50 years to return to their ancestral territory. Although the land was declared an Indigenous Territory by the Ministry of Justice in 2016, the demarcation process remains stalled. In 2024, a Federal Regional Court overturned a decision that reduced the territory by 30% and ordered the federal government, FUNAI, and INCRA to complete demarcation within 15 months. Final ratification and the removal of intruders, however, still depends on government action.

The three cases highlight the urgency and complexity of the advocacy work supported by the ILI Project. Throughout 2026, the Center will continue collaborating with COIAB to advance the demarcation of the three Indigenous Territories, providing technical, legal, and financial support. At the same time, the Center continues to advocate for the Guajajara and Awá peoples of the Araribóia Indigenous Territory before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights through a Precautionary Measures case, while monitoring removal processes in the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Indigenous Territory and supporting strategic communication efforts to demarcate the Kawahiva Indigenous Territory. Additional requests for support are under review and may further expand partnerships with Indigenous organizations including APIB and APIAM.

LAND TITLING PILOT PROJECTS: GUATEMALA



In Guatemala, we are focused on advocating for legal and policy reforms to secure the collective lands of Indigenous peoples and on aligning Guatemala's land titling procedures with the legal standards established by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In 2023, the Inter-American Court issued a landmark ruling in the Case of the Maya Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente Indigenous Community v. Guatemala (Agua Caliente Case), that ordered Guatemala to significantly change land laws to allow Indigenous communities to collectively own their land for the first time.

The Center's Senior Attorney Leonardo Crippa successfully argued this case, setting a historic precedent that will benefit Indigenous communities across Guatemala, who make up roughly 60% of the country's population—some six million people.

LAW AND POLICY REFORM



LAND TITLING PILOT PROJECTS

ARGENTINA: COLLECTIVE LAND TITLING

In Argentina, our work providing direct technical and legal assistance to Indigenous communities is already gaining momentum. We have taken steps to assist twelve Atacama communities in the Salta Province to obtain a single, collective title to the lands under their possession. These communities include: (1) San José de Esquina Blanca; (2) Cerro Negro; (3) Rangel; (4) Cobres; (5) Tipan; (6) Esquina de Guardia; (7) Casa Colorada; (8) Matancillas; (9) Likan Antai – Corralitos; (10) Agua Blanca; (11) Raíces Andinas – Pocitos; and (12) Inca Huasi – Pampa Cienega. The total population of these communities is roughly 1,900 people and covers a territory of 450,000 hectares.

Likewise, we have started to assist five Ocloya communities in the Jujuy Province in deciding on the best pilot case to file with the provincial court to achieve judicial recognition of land ownership. These communities include: (1) Tilquiza; (2) Normenta Pacha; (3) Tiraxi; (4) Las Capillas; and (5) Laguna de Tesorero. The total population of these communities is roughly 1,000 people and covers a territory of approximately 45,000 hectares.

Current progress in Argentina

Since November 2025, we have trained four community members selected by the Atacama communities in participatory mapping, georeferencing, map production, and field data collection and analysis. As a result, thirteen maps have been produced, including one map per community and a map covering the entire Atacama territory. These maps will subsequently be used in court as part of a body of evidence demonstrating the communities' traditional use and possession of their lands.

In April 2026, we agreed to fully support the efforts of the Atacama communities to obtain a single, collective land title. Over the course of three months, staff met with Atacama leaders to develop a one-year project to secure legal recognition of their lands. Since then, the Atacama communities have begun taking steps to obtain a resolution from the provincial government as a first attempt to secure legal title. If they are unsuccessful, the Atacama communities will seek judicial recognition of their land ownership by filing a major lawsuit in a competent provincial court.

LAND TITLING PILOT PROJECTS

ARGENTINA: COLLECTIVE LAND TITLING

That same month, we also agreed to assist five Ocloya communities. Over the course of four months, our staff met with each of these communities and their lawyers to understand their specific land titling needs. As a result, we were able to agree on a one-year project aimed at obtaining judicial recognition of a community's land ownership rights, defending land defenders in criminal proceedings, and advocating for provincial recognition of the ecosystem services provided by the Ocloya communities. This project will primarily involve a pros and cons analysis of the communities' legal land tenure situation to jointly decide which community is the best pilot case to support in terms of litigation.



OTHER IN IDIGENOUS LANDS INITIATIVE PROJECT WORK

While land titling in Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Guatemala remains central to the ILI Project, the Center also strengthened the systems, partnerships, and expertise that support this work. In 2025, the Center expanded its Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation (MEL) framework by developing tools, templates, and benchmarking systems that improved decision-making, streamlined project implementation, and strengthened responsiveness to community requests.

Building on this foundation, the Center convened the first ILI Annual Conference in Brasília, Brazil, bringing together Indigenous land defenders, legal advocates, government representatives, and technical experts to share lessons learned, strengthen partnerships, and advance Indigenous land rights across Latin America. The Conference also served as the inaugural meeting of the ILI Advisory Committee, a diverse group of Indigenous leaders and experts that provides strategic guidance to ensure the Initiative remains grounded in Indigenous priorities. The Committee will reconvene at the 2026 ILI Annual Conference. During the same week, Center staff presented the ILI Project at the Free Land Camp, Brazil's largest gathering focused on Indigenous territorial rights, and plan to continue participating in future years.

Recognizing that land titles alone are not always sufficient to protect Indigenous territories, the Center adopted a Land Defenders Policy in 2025 to guide support for partners facing threats related to defending their lands. Through this policy, the Center can provide financial assistance, legal support, political advocacy, and media advocacy tailored to community needs. In Peru, the Center partnered with ORPIO to train 40 Indigenous women in land-titling procedures, participatory mapping, and territorial monitoring, while supporting community-led patrols involving 44 community members in Flor de Ucajali. Together, these efforts strengthened local capacity to monitor and defend Indigenous territories.



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