

INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVE

Updates: July 2023

BRAZIL

IRI BRAZIL LAUNCHES NEW LOCAL CHAPTER IN STATE OF AMAZONAS

The IRI local chapter of Amazonas was launched in the presence of 40 religious leaders from Catholic, Evangelical, African traditional, and Spiritist religions. During the event, religious leaders agreed to work in cooperation and shared purpose through IRI Amazonas and agreed to initiate their first collective campaign against wildfires and deforestation in the state.

IRI BRAZIL LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN, 'ACTION GUIDE' ON WILDFIRES AND DEFORESTATION THROUGH LOCAL CHAPTER IN ACRE

The IRI local chapter in the state of Acre took proactive steps to address wildfires and deforestation concerns by initiating a campaign called "Breathe Clean Air". In response to the grave impacts on health and the environment, the campaign has been carried out in four stages. Stage 1 encompassed the training of religious leaders about deforestation dynamics, air quality monitoring, and related health and environmental effects. Stage 2 involved disseminating awareness messages within communities and to government interventions. IRI Brazil also produced an 'Action Guide' tailored to the different spiritualities present, including Catholicism, Evangelicalism, African traditions, Spiritism, and Ayahuasca communities. Stage 3 engaged chapter member networks to amplify messages for fire mitigation and conservation (see an example [here](#)). Stage 4, still upcoming, will facilitate dialogue between religious leaders and authorities, culminating in actionable proposals to counter forest fires and deforestation. See photos of the launch [here](#).

IRI BRAZIL ORGANIZES AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES FOR EVANGELICAL YOUTH IN THREE STATES

IRI Brazil facilitated awareness-raising sessions, using the Amazonia Viva virtual reality movie, in Recife-PE, Mossoró-RN, and Belo Horizonte-MG, engaging youth from organizations including Rio de Paz, Brazilian League of Legends Championship, Church of the Nazarene's National Commission of Adolescents, Youth for Christ, and Inspire-se. Over 300 youth participated in these activities.

IRI BRAZIL PARTICIPATES IN FIRST FORUM OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF ACRE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

IRI Brazil actively engaged in the inaugural Forum of Indigenous Peoples of Acre on Climate Change and Environmental Services. During its presentation, IRI Brazil highlighted the nationwide reach of its work, particularly through the establishment of Local Chapters, endeavors to combat wildfires and deforestation, and the advocacy for forest preservation and indigenous rights through the film "Amazônia Viva" (see photos [here](#)). This outreach targeted both governmental leaders and the general public. The event yielded significant outcomes, including the initiation of partnerships with the Indigenous Peoples Directorate of the Environment Secretariat to protect indigenous rights, collaboration with the Acre Climate Change Institute to raise awareness among staff about conservation and climate responses, and strategic discussions with the State Secretary for Indigenous Peoples to support indigenous communities.

IRI BRAZIL RAISES AWARENESS AND INCREASES ENGAGEMENT OF KEY INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF ACRE

In a meeting with the Rector of the Federal University of Acre, IRI Brazil introduced its initiatives and screened the "Amazônia Viva" film. This engagement garnered significant interest from university administrators, department heads, and professors, fostering active involvement in awareness-building, training, and public advocacy (see an article [here](#)). A formal cooperation agreement is being discussed and should be signed in the coming months. Further, IRI Brazil connected with advisors to the Acre Court of Auditors, conducting an awareness-raising event featuring the "Amazônia Viva" film. The initiative sparked deliberations about a specialized course focused on climate change and Amazon rainforest preservation. Collaborative efforts are in motion to organize a dedicated course at CEMADEN and INPE, aiming to enhance environmental awareness of their staff, as well as leveraging their commitment to enhancing awareness among the students attending public schools throughout the state. Lastly, IRI Brazil engaged with prosecutors from the State of Acre, conducting an awareness-raising event involving the "Amazônia Viva" film. This led to plans for a comprehensive campaign spanning all prosecutors within the organization. Additionally, arrangements have been made for a knowledge-enhancing visit to INPE and CEMADEN, targeting improved expertise in climate and forests.

IRI BRAZIL MEETS WITH AMBASSADORS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

IRI Brazil organized a meeting with ambassadors and embassy delegates from all European Union countries. During the briefing event, the IRI Brazil team showcased its ongoing work and conveyed its intention to establish collaborations with them, with the aim of extending the scope and influence of its efforts. In the coming months, IRI Brazil will coordinate bilateral

meetings with representatives of the countries that have demonstrated keen interest in deepening their understanding of and supporting IRI Brazil's work.

IRI BRAZIL ORGANISES AWARENESS RAISING FOR TEACHERS, STUDENTS IN STATE OF ACRE

IRI Brazil organised two awareness-raising sessions in Acre to assess the impact of the film "Amazônia Viva" in student-oriented initiatives. One session took place at Faculdade Católica do Acre, and the other at Colégio Municipal Raimundo Melo, involving a total of 80 participants comprising teachers and students. At the college session, educators expressed a desire to engage their students in environmental activities. At the public school session, which was primarily attended by teenagers, instructors chose to incorporate discussions about forest conservation and indigenous community protection into their curriculum.

IRI BRAZIL SHOWCASES ITS WORK DURING 64TH MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

IRI Brazil was invited to present its work during the 64th Meeting of the International Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This occasion provided an avenue to present the ongoing activities and projects of IRI Brazil, as well as provide a screening of the "Amazônia Viva" film, underscoring the commitment of IRI Brazil to environmental awareness and action.

COLOMBIA

IRI COLOMBIA PARTICIPATES IN PRE-AMAZON SUMMIT IN LETICIA

IRI Colombia participated in the installation of the Technical Scientific Meeting of the Amazon, held in Leticia (Amazonas) from July 6 to 8, a preparatory event for the Amazon Summit, which took place on August 8 and 9 in Belém do Pará, Brazil. With diverse organizations and institutions converging, the meeting aimed to shape a new, shared regional agenda. Focused on science, ancestral knowledge, and public policies, it sought to elevate the Amazon's global responsibility and forestall its irreversible decline. IRI Colombia contributed by engaging in discussions during side events, including "Protecting the great flying river of the Amazon" and "How to save the ecosystem and socio-cultural connectivity of the Amazon based on indigenous knowledge systems." It also actively participated in working groups deliberating on deforestation, indigenous rights, and financial mechanisms. Blanca Lucia Echeverry, National Facilitator of IRI Colombia, chaired the international advocacy agenda.

IRI SAN JOSÉ DEL GUAVIARE HELPS RESTORE THE SERRANÍA DE LA LINDOSA

Religious leaders from the IRI San José del Guaviaro chapter carried out a large tree planting event on July 12. At the event, they planted 200 yopo trees in the Beraka farm, located in a sector of the Serranía de la Lindosa, which is part of the "Jaguar Corridor". With this activity, part of their environmental action plan, IRI San José del Guaviare aims to contribute to the recovery of areas of the Serranía de la Lindosa degraded as a result of deforestation and the misuse of natural resources. Additionally, participants made a spiritual reflection on the care of tropical forests and an educational exercise that sought to raise awareness about how individually and collectively, IRI Colombia joins efforts to care for the Amazonian forests.

IRI PUERTO LEGUÍZAMO FEATURED IN MEDIA

Pastor Miguel Antonio Varón, coordinator of the IRI Puerto Leguízamo local chapters, gave an interview on July 6 to the program, *El Vicariato Informa*, on the community radio station La Voz de la Esperanza. During the interview, the religious leader referred to the objectives and processes behind IRI Colombia trainings, and the central themes of the workshops carried out by IRI Colombia in the municipality last June, in which 80 religious, social and community leaders, indigenous peoples, teachers and representatives of the local government of Puerto Leguízamo, and the indigenous reservation La Samaritana and El Triunfo participated. The pastor also referred to the importance of the work carried out by religious leaders in the different IRI Colombia local chapters related to the protection of Amazon forests.

IRI PUERTO RICO ADVANCES ITS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN

The IRI Puerto Rico local chapter and the municipality's Religious Freedom Board held two ecological workshops on July 14 and 21, with the objective of planting Bismarckia palms in a plot of land on the outskirts of the municipality. During the workshop on July 14, participants prepared the land and on July 21 they planted the trees, along with the placement of 80 stakes, donated by IRI Colombia. The second day brought together 40 people and was attended by religious leaders from IRI Puerto Rico and members of their spiritual communities, religious leaders from the municipality's Mesa de Libertad Religiosa, representatives of the government secretary's office and UMATA, and presidents of community action boards.

IRI CHARRAS BOQUERÓN PLANTS 1,000 NATIVE TREES

With the objective of advancing their pastoral and environmental action plans, on July 14, members of the IRI Charras Boquerón chapter met to plan a series of ecological activities. Coordinator of the local chapters in San José del Guaviare, Pastor William Porras, delivered 100 seedlings of ornamental species to be planted alongside the natural barrier of the main road of

the village and the members of IRI Charras Boquerón carried out a symbolic planting, as an activity prior to the restoration day.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

IRI DRC INITIATES NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE TO DISCUSS ZERO DEFORESTATION POLICY

IRI DRC initiated a two-day conference, held from July 5 to 6, 2023, in Kinshasa, to discuss and clarify concepts influencing sustainable forest management. Over 40 participants, including members of the IRI DRC Advisory Council, religious representatives, experts, and customary authorities, engaged in the discussions. The roundtable aimed to advance concepts like "zero deforestation," "high-value forest," and "forest definition," as outlined in the second letter of intent signed between the DRC and CAFI in 2022. IRI DRC's National Facilitator, Mathieu Yela, emphasized the importance of promoting a clear understanding of these concepts to achieve the dual goals of forest protection and national development. Through this initiative, IRI DRC seeks to advance ecological citizenship in all levels of forest and natural resource governance. The conference sparked deep discussions about concession usage, including conservation and local community forest concessions. Participants proposed legal mechanisms for sharing benefits from these concessions and connecting CAFI law with the nationally determined contribution (NDC) roadmap.

IRI DRC ORGANISES DIALOGUE WITH LOGGING COMPANIES ON ZERO DEFORESTATION POLICY

IRI DRC organized a dialogue with logging companies on July 7, 2023, engaging 44 participants including public administration, environmental civil society, logging companies, and religious representatives. The focus was on presenting and discussing a risk matrix concerning extractive industry practices, aligned with the Zero Deforestation policy. The event aimed to adopt a protocol of commitments across sectors such as hydrocarbons, mining, forestry, and livestock breeding. Five presentations covered (1) Socio-pastoral and ethical guidelines by IRI-RDC, (2) Status and prospects of "Zero Deforestation policy" for timber industries by the Federation of Wood Industries (FIB), (3) Status and prospects of "Zero Deforestation policy" for artisanal operators by the Association of Artisanal Wood Operators (ASSEFA) and Publish What You Pay (PWYP), (4) Transparency culture and deforestation combat imperatives in extractive industries by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in the DRC (EITI DRC), and (5) Economics of the risk matrix, draft charter of good practices, and draft commitment declaration by the Consultant. The presentations prompted a recommendation for further dialogue, aiming to enhance documents with input from organizations like the Federation of Congolese Enterprises (FEC) and the Federation of Wood Industries (FIB). The goal is to develop a comprehensive risk mitigation strategy for timber industries and the charter of good practices for extractive industries, which will subsequently be presented to the public administration for endorsement.

IRI DRC LAUNCHES PROVINCIAL CHAPTER IN TSHOPO PROVINCE, TRAINS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

From July 17-20, 2023, a new IRI DRC provincial chapter was launched in Tshopo. At the launch event, 34 representatives from 7 religious denominations, civil society organizations, scientists, Pygmy indigenous peoples, and public administration received in depth training on the importance of securing forest concession titles for local and indigenous communities, as well as forest protection more broadly. The training covered IRI DRC's mandate, goals and methods. An IRI Tshopo Advisory Council was formed and will be co-chaired by ECC, CENCO, and the Church of Awakening. Prof. Adrien MOANGO from UNIKIS Faculty of Science leads the supervisory team. The 24-member IRI Tshopo Advisory Council underwent further training in climate change, smart agriculture and malnutrition and committed to collaborating to apply the techniques they learned, aiming to promote sustainable agriculture and reduce pressure on the rainforest.

IRI DRC SECURES FOREST CONCESSIONS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN TSHOPO PROVINCE

Monsignor Marcel Utembi Tapa, President of the Catholic Church (CENCO) and co-President of IRI DRC, led a multi-stakeholder roundtable on community forestry organized in Kisangani from July 11 to 14, 2023. IRI DRC outlined the issue of forest concessions requested since 2019, and the Governor of the Province of Tshopo signed two provincial decrees allocating forest concessions for local communities (CFCL) in YAINYONGO (the administrative entity of Opala whose area is 3402 hectares) and YAINYONGO-Romée (in the administrative entity of Isangi whose area is 7994 hectares). Roundtable participants welcomed the involvement of religious denominations in supporting the community forestry process in all the provinces where they are active.

IRI DRC PARTICIPATES IN CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE ON COMMUNITY FORESTRY (CF) IN TSHOPO

The 8th Provincial Multi-Stakeholder Round Table on Community Forestry in the Democratic Republic of Congo took place from July 11 to 14, 2023, in Kisangani. Around a hundred participants, including representatives from local communities and Pygmy Indigenous Peoples (CLPAP), forestry and provincial administrations, civil society organizations, research institutions, and partners, engaged in discussions. IRI DRC was represented by delegates from the facilitation team, the Co-President of IRI DRC/CENCO, and members from the Catholic Church and Church of Christ in Congo. The round table addressed challenges and opportunities of community forestry in improving CLPAPs' livelihoods and sustainable forest management. Sessions covered the legal framework, forest concessions management, operationalization of thematic working groups, and the synergy between community forestry and national reforms. A communiqué summarized recommendations, including addressing local community forest concessions (CFCL) application files, budget allocation for community forestry in the provincial

executive, collaboration enhancement, and stability of community forestry focal points' assignments. Other suggestions involved inclusive mapping, elevation of community forestry in the Inter-Donor Group for Environment and Climate (GIBEC), fund mobilization for capacity-building, and support for management plans and compliance with legal texts.

IRI DRC PARTICIPATES IN LAUNCH OF INNOVATIVE FUND TO DIRECTLY SUPPORT TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

IRI DRC participated in the launch of the IPLS Forest Facility program, aiming at supporting local communities and indigenous peoples' forest protection efforts in Mbandaka, Equateur. The event convened 112 delegates from diverse sectors, and IRI DRC was represented by three delegates. The program focused on safeguarding high-integrity forests while addressing the development needs of communities. Its interventions encompassed community projects, protected areas, and land-use planning. The initiative simplifies funding access, empowering communities to govern their forests effectively. Initially targeting the Equateur province, the pilot program will extend to South and North Kivu and Maniema. IRI DRC's representatives joined discussions on land use planning, conservation, and governance within the program. The significance of religious denominations in advocacy and community forestry was emphasized, highlighting their role in funding distribution and promoting sustainable forest management.

IRI EQUATEUR COMMITS TO PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HIGH-VALUE FORESTS

The IRI DRC provincial chapter in Equateur advanced its commitment to forest preservation by organizing a workshop to enhance project development skills and fundraising. Attended by 12 individuals, including IRI DRC's Technical Agent and local Advisory Council members, the session focused on environmental governance projects in Equateur province. Insights were shared on supporting Rainforest Foundation Norway's (RFN) IFF program. Challenges highlighted included limited awareness of forest regulations among religious leaders, decentralized efforts by Advisory Council members, and communication gaps. To address these challenges, key solutions emerged: (a) educating religious leaders on land use planning and community forestry regulations, and (b) assisting communities in community forestry processes while advocating for Pygmy indigenous peoples' rights. Funding strategies included consortium collaborations and engaging indigenous support structures. Additionally, recommendations were made to encourage IRI Equateur participation in IFF's governance through RFN advocacy.

IRI-DRC ORGANISES WORKSHOP IN SOUTH KIVU TO BUILD CAPACITY TO PROTECT FOREST CONCESSION IN KAHUZI-BIENGA NATIONAL PARK

The IRI DRC chapter in South Kivu organized a workshop on July 5-8, 2023, focused on enhancing the responsible and sustainable management of the Local Community Forest Concession in KALONGE within the Kahuzi-Bienza National Park (PNKB). The workshop gathered

60 participants, including 53 men and 7 women, one of whom was an indigenous Pygmy woman. The primary goal was to build the capacity of the KALONGE local forest monitoring committee members in various areas such as advocacy strategies, conflict resolution, benefit-sharing mechanisms, transparency, anti-corruption measures, and complaint management. The workshop successfully enriched the advocacy skills and capabilities of the local forest monitoring committee, enabling them to effectively represent the interests of the communities near PNKB. This effort contributes to amplifying the voices of local populations, ensuring their rights are acknowledged, and promoting responsible and sustainable use of natural resources in the area.

IRI DRC JOINS THE ONE HEALTH PROGRAM

IRI DRC has engaged in discussions with GIZ project teams in Kinshasa and Bukavu, as well as the national coordinator of CCUS (Comité Coordination Une Santé, Kinshasa), to integrate IRI DRC into the DRC's One Health program. The program is led by the Ministry of Health and Hygiene and is part of the BGF/GIZ initiative. The objectives of the program include supporting the decentralization of the One Health provincial coordinating committee, conducting research on various health and environmental aspects, raising awareness about One Health, developing a multi-sectoral system for disease monitoring, and promoting medicinal plant production and trade. IRI DRC's contribution to environmental education, particularly through the production of an environmental education guide, positions it as a significant partner in the CCUS program.

IRI SOUTH KIVU ADVANCES PLANNING FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN THE REGION

The IRI DRC chapter in South Kivu organized a workshop to identify innovative projects for tropical forest protection. The event, held from July 24 to 26, 2023, aimed to amplify existing initiatives and attract additional funding to forest protection efforts. Ten provincial supervisors, religious denomination representatives, and local Advisory Council members participated. Four initiatives emerged: (1) Monitoring the pygmy peoples' roadmap in Kahuzi-Biénga National Park (PNKB), (2) Environmental education in schools with potential support of GIZ, (3) Restoration of degraded landscapes in Lake Kivu basin and Ruzizi River, and (4) Community forestry and biodiversity conservation. The IRI South Kivu members are seeking donors interested in collaborating on these themes. The workshop concluded with a guided tour of a medicinal plant nursery.

IRI NORTH KIVU CHAPTER COMMITS TO MAPPING GREEN SPACES OF RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS, IN COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES

IRI DRC met with professors from the Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs (ULPGL) and the Université Catholique la Sapiencia de Goma (UCS), as well as religious denominations, to discuss how research results should be communicated to administrative authorities, religious leaders

and local communities, who in turn should work together to commit to the fight against deforestation. Professors from both institutions committed to mapping the green spaces of religious denominations to enable them to manage them properly, and to propose reforestation actions for empty spaces. Through a greening campaign in the city of Goma, an action called "One Tree Per Plot" will be carried out under the initiative of the IRI North Kivu chapter.

INDONESIA

IRI INDONESIA LAUNCHES FIVE LOCAL CHAPTERS IN PAPUA

IRI Indonesia successfully launched a series of local chapters in Papua, Southwest Papua, Central Papua, South Papua and Pegunungan Papua through a two-day event attended by over 150 participants, including religious leaders, indigenous community representatives, as well as local government officials. The event involved discussions and activities focused on the protection of Papua's nature and tropical forests using a religious approach. It began with a meeting between IRI Indonesia's representatives and local religious leaders, followed by presentations and a focus group discussion where participants identified issues, proposed solutions, and developed action plans. The event garnered commitments from local governments to support preservation efforts in collaboration with IRI Indonesia. The proceedings were extensively documented, including videos, photos, and reports summarizing discussions and collaboration outcomes. The program aimed to raise awareness about the role of religious leaders and indigenous communities in forest preservation, promote diversity in participation, and facilitate collaboration for effective action. A next step includes the establishment of a cross-province working team comprising religious leaders and indigenous community leaders to develop a joint action plan to protect tropical rainforests. See photos [here](#).

IRI INDONESIA COORDINATES MEETING WITH INDONESIA'S PEATLAND RESTORATION AGENCY (BRGM) TO DEVELOP COOPERATION IN EAST KALIMANTAN AND RIAU REGIONS

IRI Indonesia held a meeting at the headquarters of Indonesia's Peatland Restoration Agency (BRGM) to bring together stakeholders, experts, and thinkers for a discussion on preserving peatlands and mangroves in Riau and East Kalimantan. The aim was to raise awareness about the contributions religious communities can make to preserving peatlands and mangroves, along with increased engagement from various stakeholders in forest conservation, safeguarding indigenous communities, and addressing digital communication challenges. The outcomes of the meeting are expected to foster collaborative networks among participants, religious organizations, and stakeholders to ensure the protection of these ecosystems. Participants are projected to take concrete actions to protect peatlands and mangroves, contributing to ecosystem preservation and supporting indigenous communities, while

generating actionable recommendations and strategies for maintaining social diversity and harmony in conservation efforts.

IRI INDONESIA FACILITATES MEETING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL FUND MANAGEMENT AGENCY (BPD LH) TO EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

IRI Indonesia met at the headquarters of the Environmental Fund Management Agency (BPD LH), aiming to discuss the importance of engaging religious leaders and practitioners in discussions and activities concerning the protection of forests and indigenous communities. The focus of the meeting was on understanding the role of religious communities in advocacy, as well as building collaborative networks among religious organizations and other stakeholders to collectively address challenges around forest protection. The anticipated outcomes encompass active participation from key stakeholders, including religious leaders, academics, practitioners, and community leaders; increased awareness-raising activities about forests and indigenous community protection; collaboration among diverse participants to tackle environmental challenges; and the generation of new ideas through discussions on the role of religious approaches in addressing forest protection.

IRI INDONESIA VISITS INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OF AYAPO VILLAGE, PAPUA PROVINCE

Representatives from the IRI Indonesia Advisory Council, comprising prominent religious leaders from Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism visited the indigenous community village of Ayapo, Papua Province, to build relationships and enhance their support for forest preservation efforts. The goal was to foster dialogue and collaboration among various religious denominations and indigenous peoples for forest protection, including to (i) create religion-based environmental education programs for both religious leaders and indigenous communities, (ii) to advocate for local government support and recognition of the roles of religious leaders and indigenous communities in preserving nature and forests, as well as (iii) advocating for public policy that aligns with IRI Indonesia's goals. The event featured a welcoming dance, speeches by local leaders and IRI Indonesia representatives, and concluded with a communal meal, fostering connections between the religious representatives and the indigenous community members. See photos [here](#) and video [here](#).

PERU

IRI PERU PRESENTS "COMMITMENT FOR THE AMAZON AND CALL TO ACTION" TO THE MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

IRI Peru conducted a meeting with Minister of Environment, Albina Ruiz, and Vice Minister, Nancy Chauca, on July 21 to discuss the Amazon Summit in Belém do Pará (Brazil) and present IRI's "Commitment to the Amazon and Call to Action." The commitment document outlined

IRI's dedication to uniting faith communities for forest protection and urges national authorities to address deforestation, biodiversity loss, soil and water degradation, threats to indigenous rights, and the improvement of their living conditions. The Minister acknowledged the alignment of IRI's proposals with the Ministry's priorities for the summit. Laura Vargas, IRI Peru's National Facilitator, emphasized the need to safeguard environmental defenders, particularly those impacted by illegal activities. Collaborative efforts between IRI Peru and MINAM are underway to ensure the health and sustainability of forests. See picture [here](#).

IRI PERU HIGHLIGHTS NEED TO PROTECT RAINFORESTS TO COUNTRY'S MAIN AUTHORITIES

On July 25, the interfaith prayer event "We pray for Peru 2023" marked the National Holidays, gathering prominent religious and political figures, including the President of the Republic, ministers, congressmen, and social organization leaders. The event was broadcasted nationally on TV. During the event, IRI Peru leaders emphasized the significance of forests for the planet's well-being and the urgent need for protection. Laura Vargas, IRI Peru National Facilitator, highlighted the interconnectedness of humans and nature. Azam Sahih, Bahá'í community representative, emphasized Peru's diverse geography and climates (see [here](#)). Guillermo Estrugo, IRI Peru Advisory Council member, underlined the Amazon's importance for global services and Indigenous Peoples' role in safeguarding nature (see [here](#)). Nonie Reaño, IRI Peru Advisory Council member, stressed the need to conserve nature and support indigenous peoples (see [here](#)). Beyond the viewers on national television, the event had 47,000 Facebook viewers and 5,700 YouTube views.

IRI PERU ADVISORY COUNCIL HOLDS MEETING IN PUCALLPA, AMAZON REGION

The IRI Peru Advisory Council conducted a decentralized session in Pucallpa from July 4-6 with the aim of understanding the challenges faced by the region due to illegal activities. Religious and indigenous leaders, forest specialists, and representatives of key Amazon-defense organizations attended the meeting. The Advisory Council's program involved meetings with prominent regional indigenous groups, including ORAU and ORNAU, where discussions encompassed threats to environmental defenders, sustainable alternatives to deforestation, and legal protections for indigenous communities. Meetings were also held with authorities from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Ministry of Culture, focused on their forest protection efforts. Additionally, a visit was organized, supported by IRI Puerto Inca, to Samiri in the Huanuco region, to stand by indigenous peoples efforts to defend the forest from illegal mining. The Advisory Council supported the cause, bringing attention to their plight and advocating for their rights. The trip also facilitated interactions with local IRI Peru chapters and culminated in a press conference attended by 14 local media outlets, where Laura Vargas, Julio Cusurichi (AIDSESP), Rabbi Simantob Nigri, Silvana Baldovino (SPDA) and Jose Alvarez (AMANATARI) discussed urgent tasks for preserving forests and defending indigenous communities. Advisory Council members also provided interviews that made headlines in local newspapers. See a group photo [here](#).

IRI PERU ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER, MONSIGNOR ALFREDO VIZCARRA, HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEFORESTATION IN PRESS

Monsignor Alfredo Vizcarra, IRI Peru Advisory Council member and president of REPAM in Peru, spoke with several members of local media to highlight the adverse effects of deforestation for agriculture, particularly monoculture, on ecosystems, climate, biodiversity, and local populations. His statements, along with other Advisory Council members' contributions, were covered by various media outlets, including Ímpetu de Ucayali newspaper, La Voz Ucayalina, El Choche newspaper, Periodismo Ciudadano, and TV channels Oriental TV and UTV, generating substantial coverage and awareness about the importance of responsible forest use. See [here](#), for example.

IRI PERU HOLDS WORKING MEETING FOR PROTECTION OF FOREST DEFENDERS WITH MINISTRIES OF JUSTICE, WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT

On July 11, IRI Peru conducted a working meeting with Angel Gonzalez Ramirez, Director of the Directorate of Human Rights Policies and Management at the Ministry of Justice (MINJUS), along with his team. The purpose of the meeting was to assess potential support for Gladys Yesika Diaz, a resident of the Paucarsito community in Puerto Inca. Diaz has been facing land dispossession due to her opposition to illegal mining. This matter was brought to the attention of IRI Peru and its Advisory Council during a visit to Diaz's land. The meeting concluded that Diaz should be acknowledged as a defender, allowing her to access the Protection Mechanism. IRI Peru facilitated communication between MINJUS and Diaz's legal representation to coordinate efforts to prevent her eviction from her land. Fabiola Muñoz, a member of IRI Peru's Advisory Council, was also present at the meeting.