

Peru & the Wampí

There are about 15,000 Wampis living in the Amazon rainforest in Peru in an area of 1.3 million hectares (Wales is 2 million hectares!).

They live in settlements, with most people just growing food for their family. Some also make a bit of money from growing organic cacao, having a small fish farm and growing bananas.

The forest is very important to how the Wampí feel, as they believe all living things have guardians who live in sacred parts of the forest. The Wampís are an ancient community that for many centuries have preserved a belief that they must maintain the forest in balance with all living things. Protecting the environment isn't a decision to be made, it's part of who the Wampís are.

Deforestation is reduced in areas where local communities who have been living with the forest for centuries are given rights to their land.

Problems the community faces

There are many problems. People are moving in to grow crops like palm oil on a large scale and mine for gold. Gold mining puts toxic chemicals into rivers and kills everything. Companies are looking for places to drill for oil and gas. There's a plan to build a highway through the area and a huge dam that would flood a large area.

There is also pressure on the Wampis to cut and sell timber.

Andres Noningo, one of the Wampís' leaders, explains that they need to have a say on what happens in the forest so that they can protect themselves from companies and politicians "who are only able to see gold and oil in our rivers and forests".

What they want to do

The project aims to make sure that the Wampi can control their own land and support people to make a living in the forest without damaging it.

The community's own long-term vision is:

“to become more resilient and self-sufficient and to empower our youth and women through better education and awareness.”

What's the project doing?

The Project is led by the Wampi themselves. They need the forest to be protected. Bringing the people together to discuss their plans is important so the project bought a boat and set up a radio system that broadcasts across the territory.

It is supporting them in securing the legal rights to the lands that they have lived in for centuries. Some of the Wampi have been trained in GPS monitoring so that they can collect information on what is happening to their lands in order to plan and prevent damage.



They want to replant trees and produce craft products that they can sell. They are encouraging the growing of cacao and keeping fish in ways that do not damage the forest.

Success so far:

Peaceful action by 300 men, women and children has got rid of illegal miners working on the River Santiago, where forests have been destroyed and water sources contaminated. They are now resisting the building of a highway and a mega dam. They have succeeded in stopping oil and gas activities for the moment near the River Morona on their land and they are taking action against the Peruvian Government over damage from oil drilling in the past.

They have now got an autonomous Government for the Wampis (Wampis-GTA), whose main aim is to get recognition of the rights of the Wampis people to control their area. They have involved local people in creating a land use plan for their area.