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SUCCESS STORY:

EMPOWERING FOREST USERS TO PREVENT ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES THROUGH MONITORING NETWORKS

Preventing environmental crimes in the Peruvian Amazon in a post-pandemic reality represents an unprecedented challenge. Despite ongoing efforts by the Government of Peru (GOP) to combat illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and illegal mining, these illicit activities persist throughout the Amazon, particularly in its largest regions: Loreto, Ucayali, and Madre de Dios, which cover over 50 million hectares.

“When we, as women, assume a responsibility role within a community, we put everything on our part to do it the best we can. Just in the same way we take care of our house and children. We can do it as good or even better than men, we are equal to men.”
Iveth Peña, member of Ucayali’s Regional Environmental Crimes Monitoring Network.

This challenge demands innovative strategies to conserve biodiversity and ensure related benefits for people’s wellbeing. Therefore, the involvement of civil society organizations plays a crucial role in combating and mitigating the impacts of environmental crimes on public safety, human rights, and cultural diversity. Forest users, including concessionaires, local communities, and indigenous groups, are facing increasing threats and as a result have begun developing their own practices to address these crimes, such as community-based patrolling.

However, to effectively reduce deforestation and ensure the safety and well-being of local peoples, it is necessary to better integrate and organize these efforts. Hence, since 2021, the USAID Prevent Activity has actively promoted the establishment and consolidation of Environmental Crimes Monitoring networks in Loreto, Ucayali, and Madre de Dios. These regional networks serve as platforms for coordination, capacity building, and the exchange of lessons learned among civil society actors.

In 2022 the two first regional monitoring networks were created in Madre de Dios and Loreto and since then, their members have been trained in the use of technology tools to perform monitoring activities in their home territories and effectively report environmental crimes. This includes, among others, training in drone piloting and the use of the Mi Bosque application – developed by OSINFOR and Prevent - to timely report and monitor forest users’ commitments. Today, the networks regularly carry out field monitoring activities, with technical assistance from Prevent and have already coordinated efforts with relevant authorities, approved internal rules of proceedings as well as an annual work plan, and keep updated threat maps.

Additionally, in 2023, eight indigenous communities have come together to protect their territories through the first environmental monitoring network in Ucayali, covering approximately 100,000 hectares of forests. Jamer López, president of Ucayali’s regional indigenous organization ORAU, publicly acknowledges the creation of this network as the result of almost three years of collaborative efforts with USAID and as example of much needed synergy between civil society, the Government, as well as international cooperation.

Three Environmental Crimes Monitoring Networks have been established in Loreto, Ucayali and Madre de Dios.

8+ organizations are involved in these initiatives.

The networks cover over 300,000 hectares of territory.