

Project Update: September 2002

We started with an international campaign against illegal logging activity in the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve which included the development of our website as a campaign tool and the production of a video documenting the problem using borrowed equipment. This, combined with visits to government departments, resulted in the government and the First Lady herself becoming involved, placing the issue as a top priority. We also coordinated a commission to visit the zone which, based upon a unprecedented legal agreement as a result of our campaign that recognised the Nahua as legal owners of the wood, resulted in a compensation agreement between the Nahua community and the loggers of USD 66,000.

As this was progressing, we initiated a dialogue to address the short and long term security of the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve through organising a one day workshop with 33 government and non-government participants with the help of support from the British Embassy in Peru. Based on the recommendations of this workshop and a series of follow up round table discussions and analysis we organised two field trips to the Reserve in April and May 2002.

In April, we visited the Nahuas in Serjali to conduct a series of participatory mapping workshops to map Nahua current and historical territory use, and train the Nahua in the use of maps and GPS units. We then travelled with the Nahua through their territory, working to help them map their own lands with GPS. The work resulted in a 3 metre square map of their territory, created and owned by the community, and a database of over 300 river and place names with GPS coordinates marking out their territory.

In May, we coordinated with anthropologists Lev Michael and Chris Beier to visit the Nanti communities of Montetoni and Marankiato in the Alto camisea with a delegation of 3 Nahua, facilitating the very first meeting between these two isolated groups to discussed their shared problems and land rights issues, tied together by sharing the same reserve. Working with Lev and Chris we conducted similar participatory mapping workshops with the Nanti, resulting in a detailed picture of current Nanti territory use, and through interviews and discussions with the Nahua and the Nanti we were able to triangulate the location of isolated and uncontacted peoples living inside the reserve.

Meanwhile, Proyecto Gas Camisea has been going full steam ahead with seismic testing work, of which over half is inside the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve in an area where uncontacted and isolated people are believed to be living. We adopted a role to communicate the actions of the petrol companies and their infringements upon indigenous rights to form a basis of international campaigns coordinated between AIDSEP, Amazon Watch, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

As part of this, we coordinated with the Peruvian environmental press agency EcoNews to conduct a two week investigative trip with support from Friends of the Earth and Amazon Watch to document evidence of contact between the Petrol Company and isolated people, resulting in a press release to put the international spotlight on the actions of Pluspetrol.

In August we travelled with a investigative team coordinated by the international NGOs to investigate the actions of the Camisea Gas Consortium and monitor the funding body's (IDB) consultation process. The team included representatives from Amazon Watch and the Institute of Policy Studies, and two indigenous leaders from Ecuador. We accompanied them on a 10 day trip through the Urubamba upon their request as their guide and documenting the process with a borrowed video camera. I am currently editing the footage to be used as a campaign tool here and in the US.

Our focus at the moment is on continuing the process of securing land rights within the reserve, for which we are organising a 4 day workshop, to be held in the jungle, as an opportunity for the indigenous groups of the reserve to present their case the problems they face directly to the government and engage in the process to protect their rights. We hope it will result in firm commitments from the government to fulfil their responsibility to acknowledge indigenous land rights.

We very much want to continue the work we have been doing, and to expand it, as this type of work is so urgently needed, can make such a difference, and is sorely lacking involvement from NGO's and government.