



IRI COLOMBIA

IRI Colombia advocacy leads to approval of landmark bill in Congress criminalizing deforestation

An extensive advocacy campaign conducted by IRI Colombia played a critical role in the recent adoption of landmark legislation in the country criminalizing deforestation. On April 6th, the House of Representatives of the Colombian Congress approved replacing the ‘crimes against natural resources and the environment’ section of Law 599 of 2000. The bill is of particular importance because it not only updates and adapts the Colombian Penal Code so it can better address the serious environmental challenges facing the country, but also so it can confront and combat criminal forms of deforestation that are destroying Colombian forests. The bill criminalizes, among other things, deforestation and the promotion and financing of deforestation, in addition to the crime of illegal appropriation of state-owned land. The bill still has to receive a third and fourth debate in the Senate before it becomes law. However, it is expected to pass without major difficulties, as it had broad political support during the debate. The bill preserves the artisanal and subsistence economic activities practised by indigenous communities. IRI Colombia, through its Advisory Council and religious leaders in the country, undertook an extensive campaign pushing for adoption of the bill, calling on each of the members of the House of Representatives to approve it. This represents a historic legal victory in the country for forests and the rights of indigenous peoples.

IRI Colombia featured in Amazon Climate Forum

IRI Colombia national facilitator, Blanca Echeverry, was invited to contribute to an esteemed program of speakers as part of the recent Amazon Climate Forum. The meeting was organized by Amazon Watch, Repam, Artists for Amazonia, Amazon Aid Foundation, Pan-Amazon Social Forum and COICA, and brought together leaders from different fields to express to the U.S. President Joe Biden their strategic vision and recommendations to address the threats facing the Amazon. They addressed issues such as the pandemic, deforestation, governance, the protection of environmental defenders, the illicit use of glyphosate on

crops, the challenges indigenous peoples face and their vital role in protecting the Amazon rainforest. “New strategies to protect the Amazon rainforest must respond to the threats to human rights posed by the fumigation of illicit crops and the causes of violence against environmental defenders,” said Blanca Echeverry, in a program of speakers that included actors Morgan Freeman, actress Rosario Dawson and singer Barbra Streisand, prominent Amazonian indigenous leaders, environmental organizations and political leaders. See a link [here](#) to the full event and see 1:46:07 for Blanca Echeverry’s intervention.



IRI Colombia video nominated as finalist in a global film festival



An animation video that tells the story of IRI Colombia was selected as a finalist in the Films for the Forest film festival, a juried collection of 11 short films that highlight the importance of forests worldwide and the ongoing threats they face. The film festival was coordinated by Rainforest Partnership and films were selected by a jury that included Oscar nominated filmmaker Richard Linklater, “Game of Thrones” and upcoming “Avatar” sequel actress Oona Chaplin, Iwan Rheon (“Game of Thrones”) and actress/film producer Florence Ordesch (“Departure”). The animation video was screened three times as part of the film festival on Earth Day. Watch the animation video [here](#) in Spanish and [here](#) with English subtitles.

IRI Colombia launches its bi-monthly edition of “El Bosque es la vida”

IRI Colombia released their bi-monthly newsletter of “El Bosque es la vida” January to February edition. The newsletter includes illustrations, a review of IRI Colombia events over the last two months, as well as an interview with climate experts that breaks down the basics of forests and climate change. Click [here](#) to download a copy.





“We call on the Congress to enter into the Escazú Agreement and [...] raise our voices where the leaders and caretakers of Creation are murdered [...].”

Reverend Gloria Ulloa,
President of the World
Council of Religions
for Latin America

IRI regional event celebrates the Escazu Agreement

The Escazu Agreement aims to guarantee access to environmental information, help protect environmental defenders and ensure public participation in environmental decisions. On April 22nd, the agreement officially became operational. IRI Colombia and IRI Peru celebrated this important milestone by gathering prominent voices from religious communities and indigenous peoples' groups to discuss the impact this agreement can have in Latin America. Participating speakers included Rabino Guillermo Bronstein; Reverend Gloria Ulloa, President of the World Council of Religions for Latin America and the Caribbean, Jeque Mohamad Al Bukai, Director of Religious Affairs at Islamic National Union of Brazil; Gregorio Diaz Mirabal, General Coordinator for the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA); Monseñor Leonardo Steiner, Archbishop of Manaus; and Andrea Sanhueza Echeverria, elected representative of the public in the regional

mechanism of the Escazu Agreement. Throughout the event, leaders pointed out the urgency of caring for the planet, especially the Amazon, a region highly threatened by deforestation. They called on their governments to ratify the Escazu Agreement as a tool to ensure life on Earth and of those who dedicate their existence to care for and defend Creation. “The Agreement must get off paper, free itself from bureaucracy, walk through the territory and see the inequality and the situation of the most excluded peoples,” stressed Gregorio Mirabal. “We call on the Congress of the Republic of Colombia to approve the bill that has already been presented by the national government and thus enter definitively into the Escazú Agreement and guarantee that we can continue to raise our voices in this country where the leaders and caretakers of Creation are murdered, threatened and persecuted,” added Reverend Ulloa. Click [here](#) for a video of the event.



IRI Colombia releases comprehensive pastoral guide on Earth Day

In celebration of Earth Day, IRI Colombia released a pastoral guide that includes prayers, meditations, poems, workshops and biblical studies for the pastors, priests and religious leaders working with and through IRI Colombia's 36 local chapters. The intention is for the pastoral guide to provide a tool for faith communities across the country to raise awareness about the importance of caring for the planet and, in particular, tropical forests. The guide, which was developed in partnership with Reverend Dra. Loida Sardiñas, speaks to the importance of environmental protection within the Christian teachings and how it is intrinsically embedded in the Bible and Genesis. It affirms the responsibility of religious leaders to ensure their teachings and sermons speak to the moral and ethical responsibility people of faith have to care for the planet and for our forests. The guide was created in response to working sessions carried out by IRI Colombia throughout February and March to support local chapters in their actions. Click [here](#) to download the pastoral guide.

IRI Colombia and Voces 2030 Colombia form a new partnership

IRI Colombia and Voces 2030 Colombia have joined forces to work in partnership for the protection of forests. Voces 2030 Colombia is an interdisciplinary collective that seeks to advance sustainable development and brings together more than 40 leaders from NGOs and top universities in the country. To kick-off the new partnership, they organized an event to mark the official start of the Escazú Agreement. “Our commitment to fight deforestation is also a commitment to help build a fairer and a more inclusive society and to restore the deep wounds we have caused to our Common Home, the inheritance of future generations,” said Blanca Echeverry, National Facilitator of IRI Colombia, who spoke about IRI, the importance of moral, ethical and spiritual leadership of religious leaders to address deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, and the urgency of ratifying the Escazu Agreement by the Congress of the Republic. “We need more strength and more voices to demand that the countries that have not ratified the Escazú Agreement do so and demand its correct implementation,” said Lina Muñoz-Ávila, director of Environmental

Law and Management at the Universidad del Rosario and member of Voces 2030 Colombia. Watch a video of the event [here](#).

“Our commitment to fight deforestation is also a commitment to help build a fairer and more inclusive society and to restore the deep wounds we have caused our Common Home, the inheritance of future generations.”

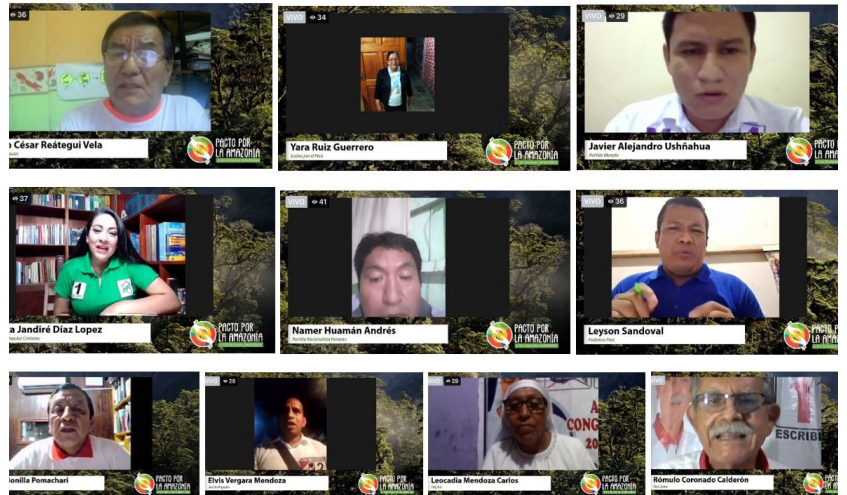
Blanca Lucia Echeverry,
national coordinator
of IRI Colombia



IRI PERU

IRI Peru continues electoral dialogues on forests with presidential and congressional candidates

Over the last month, IRI Peru organized a total of 11 Amazonian dialogues in four regions of the country: Loreto, Huánuco, Ucayali and Madre de Dios. The intention of the dialogues was to have candidates for Congress discuss their policies on the protection of forests and the rights of indigenous peoples, and to secure political commitments to act to end deforestation if elected. Links to the events can be seen [here](#). Overall, at least 7 of the 10 benches of the new Congress participated through their candidates or local representatives in the Amazonian dialogues. Madre de Dios alone had a total of 9 live Facebook sessions (viewed by thousands of people) where candidates from each region presented their proposals for one of the regions most affected by deforestation and illegal mining. After the final results of the election, at least two candidates who participated in the dialogues were elected to the new Congress for the Madre de Dios and Ucayali regions. These dialogues were carried out in partnership with different organizations like PREVENIR



of USAID, SPDA, ORPIO, URAU, among others. IRI Peru will continue working to consolidate space for dialogue with the two final presidential candidates and present arguments in favour of forest protection in the next Congress. IRI Peru will also now invite 17 members of congress to form an Amazonian parliamentary block within Congress and collectively advance laws and policies that protect forests in the country.



IRI Peru holds dialogue with Ministers, religious leaders on threats to the country's indigenous peoples

In partnership with the ProPurús Association, IRI Peru organized a dialogue on indigenous insecurity in the Amazon in response to the alarming increase in violence and deaths of indigenous leaders and environmental defenders. The event included the participation of Cardinal Pedro Barreto, President of the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network; Eduardo Vega, Minister of Justice; and Alejandro Neyra, Minister of Culture. The dialogue had a diverse panel from faith communities, indigenous peoples, government and civil society. Panellists included Monsignor Alfredo Vizcarra, Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Jaén; Apu Jiribati Berlin Diques, President of the Regional Organization AIDESEP Ucayali; Daniel Sánchez, Vice Minister of Human Rights and Access to Justice; Jorge Chávez Cotrina, National Coordinator of the Specialized Prosecutor's Offices Against Organized Crime of the Public Ministry; and Andrea Tello, Regional Coordinator in Loreto of the Peruvian Society of Environmental Law. During the dialogue, Minister of Justice Eduardo Vega presented the Supreme Decree N° 004-2021-JUS "Intersectoral Mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders", signed the same day at the Council of Ministers. This new mechanism will allow the State to act through eight ministries in protection of environmental defenders – through effective prevention, rapid protection and access to justice. A link to the video of the event can be found [here](#).



Today the Peruvian government has created a new mechanism [...] to guarantee the protection indigenous leaders when facing threats. I would like to count on IRI to disseminate this mechanism in the different regions of the country, starting with those that have suffered the most."

Eduardo Vega, Minister of Justice and Human Rights

IRI Peru advocacy leads to approval of law on rights of nature in congressional commission



On April 9th, the Commission of Amazonian, Andean, Afro-American Peoples, Environment and Ecology (CPAAAAE) approved, by majority, the opinion proposing a new law that recognizes the rights of nature, ecosystems and species. This bill was promoted by various indigenous, religious and civil organizations, including IRI Peru. This is a first step on the way to approval of the bill in full Congress of the Republic. As part of the same commission, IRI Peru has been working to refine advocacy strategies for a Plenary of Peoples and Environment before the end of the legislature. IRI Peru is developing a communications campaign with four prominent religious leaders who have requested space to debate 17 bills on people and the environment that are awaiting a ruling from the Congress of the Republic. It is expected that the plenary session will be held during the third week of May.

IRI Peru launches its bi-monthly edition of “Somos Bosque”



IRI Peru released their latest edition of “Somos Bosque”, a bi-monthly newsletter with an overview on the activities of the past months including a live event on indigenous spirituality and the relationship communities have with nature and its protection, a new law protecting “Mother Nature”, a meeting to ensure the protection of indigenous peoples, the advancements of “[Pacto por la Amazonia](#)” and much more. Click [here](#) to download a copy.

IRI INDONESIA

IRI Indonesia launches new provincial chapter in East Kalimantan



Declaration being read in presence of all religious representatives



Keynote Speech by Prof. Rizaldi Boer (Climate Expert)



Opening ceremony: traditional Dayak Dance

On April 9th, IRI Indonesia launched its second provincial chapter in East Kalimantan. The launch event included the participation of 50 leaders from religious organizations, NGOs, indigenous peoples’ groups, government and academia, all coming together to launch a new platform for action on the protection and restoration of East Kalimantan’s forests. The opening ceremony included a traditional Dayak dance and introductory remarks from Professor Din Syamsuddin, Chairman of IRI Indonesia’s Advisory Council. The Governor of East Kalimantan presided over the event and shared remarks endorsing the launch of the new IRI Indonesia chapter in the province. A declaration committing all participants to the protection of East Kalimantan forests as a moral and ethical priority was read aloud by the Regional Chair of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and a banner was signed by all leaders in attendance to show their commitment to the work ahead. The launch also included a keynote address by Professor Rizaldi Boer, Director of the Centre for Climate Risk and Opportunity Management in Southeast Asia and Pacific (CCROM-SEAP) on forest protection as a priority strategy in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. All participants were presented with IRI Indonesia Resource Guides and Sermon Books for their respective faith tradition. A press conference was held with 23 journalists and the event was widely covered in the media and on national TV.

IRI Indonesia hosts roundtable on ethical business with industry leaders



Participants at the ethical business roundtable

IRI Indonesia recently organized a roundtable discussion with several prominent corporations and associations to discuss ethical business practices and how to take deforestation out of supply chains. Participating groups included Sinarmas – the largest conglomerate in Indonesia working in pulp and paper, real-estate, financial services, agribusiness, telecommunications and mining – as well as the national sawmill, plywood, forest industrial estate, wood panel, coal and gold mining, and palm industry associations. The Chamber of Commerce and environmental impact and certification auditors also participated. Participants discussed business ethics and emerging solutions to transform business practices. They focused in on the issue of enforcement, agreeing that boundaries and regulations need to be provided and enforced by the local



Rudi Sasgo, Sinarmas Director

government in order realize a new business model that protects forests, safeguards the environment, and respects indigenous peoples.

“Deforestation means there are still forests lost,” Grita said. “In the span of two years [since 2019], a total of 578,000 hectares [1.4 million acres], almost the size of the province of Jakarta [was deforested]. So don’t get fixated with the percentage drop without looking at the real size [of deforestation].”

Grita Anindarini, program director at the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law. Mongabay article

IRI Indonesia holds training for religious leaders on rainforests in East Kalimantan

IRI Indonesia held a full-day training on the protection of forests for 30 participants from different religious groups. The training was organized as part of an effort to build the capacity of religious leaders that will work together with and through the newly launched IRI East Kalimantan chapter. Themes of the training included the status of deforestation in East Kalimantan, the connection between forests and climate change, the challenges of enforcing the rights of indigenous peoples, and the theological basis in different faiths for acting to protect and restore forests. The program was led by an expert team of trainers assembled by IRI Indonesia and including Prof Daddy Ruhiyat (DDNPI), Ir. Niel Makinuddin MA (YKAN), Abdon Nababan (AMAN), Suadi D Pranoto (PBNU), Fachruddin Mangunjaya (UNAS), Reverend Jimmy Sormin (PGI), Romo Agustinus Heri (KWI), Priest Astono Chandra Dana (PHDI), and Ahmad Ali (PBNU). Breakout sessions were held to tailor key messages for each faith tradition and to consider how each religious group can contribute to the protection and restoration of forests in the East Kalimantan province going forward.



Training held by Mr Abdon Nababan (AMAN) on the rights of Indigenous peoples



Hindu breakout training session



Christian breakout training session

IRI Indonesia holds tree planting lecture on forests with Hindu community



Hindu participants at the training



Participant planting mangrove in Bali

“The more we preserve mangroves, the more welfare we receive. Through mangroves, Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (Hindu God) gives us oxygen, fish and crabs. It saves us from high waves and protects our lands.”

Astono Chandra Dana, Hindu Priest

To celebrate Earth Day, IRI Indonesia organized a mangrove tree planting event and a lecture on forests and climate change in Bali with Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia, the Indonesia Hinduism Society. More than 70 people participated in the tree planting and the workshop. The lecture was given by Astono Chandra Dana SE., MM, a high-level priest and Head of Environment and Natural Resources at Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia. He spoke about the importance of mangroves and their role in protecting coastal communities from land erosion, floods and Tsunamis. The event was part of IRI Indonesia’s program of raising awareness about deforestation and the role that religious communities across the country can play to protect and restore forests. The program also included a ‘Caring for Forests’



Participants planting mangrove in Bali

movement which encourages communities to plant trees, preserve endangered species and protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

IRI Indonesia holds ‘talk show’ on forests and environment for Islamic schools

On April 10th, IRI Indonesia held a live-streamed talk show-style event for Muslim representatives from Islamic schools and organizations from across the country, including 30 in-person participants. The discussion focused on the need to include environmental sermons at mosques and to incorporate teaching about forest protection and environmental conservation at Muslim schools. As an outcome of the event, the Ministry of Religious affairs agreed to introduce environmental ethics as part of the curriculum in Islamic Schools and will provide didactic tools like animations and stories to familiarize children with the need to protect forests and the environment. This work will be done in cooperation with IRI Indonesia. Speakers at the event included Professors, School directors, a representative from the Secretary of Environment and more. A video of the event can be seen [here](#).

IRI Indonesia shares videos of religious councils endorsing work on forests, recognizing AMAN

IRI Indonesia has released a [video](#) of leaders from the country’s Religious Councils committing to work together through the initiative and to make the protection of Indonesia’s forests a moral and spiritual concern. It contains statements from Muslim, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian leaders who are working collaboratively and through their respective faith networks to make care and protection of rainforests part of religious teaching and education. Prof. Dr. Din Syamsuddin, chair of the IRI Indonesia Advisory Council, also recently shared a video of congratulations to the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN), the country’s national indigenous peoples’ organization, on 22 years of work on behalf of indigenous peoples and forest communities. The video [message](#) includes words of appreciation and respect for the tireless work that AMAN has done to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and to raise the profile and visibility of indigenous peoples’ issues. Dr. Syamsuddin Wexpressed hope that AMAN can continue its important work on securing the rights, territories and resources of indigenous peoples in the country.



IRI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

IRI DRC launches a new provincial chapter in Equateur



Participants during the launch of the provincial chapter of Equateur

On April 12th, IRI DRC launched a new chapter in the province of Equateur with the aim of mobilizing moral urgency and spiritual resources in different religious communities to protect forests and ensure a sustainable future for the inhabitants of the province. The launch took place in the Bébé Iyongo conference room in the Government office and welcomed religious leaders from different faiths, indigenous peoples' representatives, NGOs and environmental experts. More than 50 religious community leaders from Equateur participated in discussions on the moral, ethical and spiritual arguments

in favour of the protection of the forest and its inhabitants. Participants also attended a presentation on community-based political advocacy, and working on the development of an IRI Equateur action plan. The goal was to identify where faith communities in the province of Equateur can advocate for policies that ensure the protection of intact forests and the land rights of local and indigenous communities. The launch of IRI Equateur marks an important milestone for the protection and restoration of forests in the province, which is more than 80% forest cover.

PROVINCE OF EQUATEUR

80%
of the province
is forest cover

26%
of DRC's forests
are located in the
province of Equateur

34%
of the country's
total forest cover
has been lost
between 2002
and 2020

"IRI DRC is expanding by establishing chapters in key provinces to raise awareness about the importance of nature and ensure that one of the world's largest tropical forests is protected."

Reverend Matthieu
YELA Bonketo, IRI DRC
National Facilitator

IRI DRC holds the first IRI Equateur Advisory Council meeting

The first official meeting of the IRI Equateur Advisory Council was held at the Eala Botanical Garden as part of the provincial chapter launch. IRI Equateur is now composed of 26 members and is co-chaired by Bishop Theophile Duale, President of the Provincial Synod of the Church of Christ in Congo, and Archbishop Ernest Gboko of the Archdiocese of Mbandaka-Bikoro of the Catholic Church. The technical team set up by the Advisory Council is made up of four leaders: a supervisor, a communications focal point, an administrative support person, and a technical assistant, as well as four indigenous peoples' representatives. At the first meeting, IRI Equateur made recommendations on the principles underlying their joint action plan, including: that actions carried out by different faith groups be recognized officially and be directly embedded within pastoral activities; that members of the IRI Equateur Advisory



First meeting of the Advisory Council in the province of Equateur

Council commit themselves to share IRI's vision with faith communities including churches, schools, and members of civil society and report back during the next meeting; that members and trained stakeholders should all be equipped with the necessary tools and arguments in favour of the protection of forests at the national, provincial and local level; that adoption of the law on the rights of indigenous Pygmy peoples in the National Assembly is a guarantee for all and that securing land and forest rights for local communities and indigenous peoples through a participatory approach requires true dialogue between the different communities; that strategies put together to produce a collective action plan need to take into account policy reforms to reduce deforestation; and that the Advisory Council is committed to reminding decision makers of the importance of forests and our shared responsibility to protect God's creation.



First meeting of the Advisory Council in the province of Equateur

IRI DRC advocacy contributes to historic adoption of law protecting rights of Pygmy communities

IRI DRC engaged in a months-long campaign advocating for the adoption of a new law recognizing the rights of Pygmy people in the country. Advocacy efforts included video spots of senior religious leaders calling for adoption of the law, as well as a policy paper and joint statement on behalf of IRI DRC and religious leaders in the country arguing for why securing the rights of Pygmy people is a shared moral responsibility. The videos can be seen [here](#). This achievement rewards a struggle that began more than a decade ago and was guided by leaders of the indigenous movement, in collaboration with local and national authorities and NGOs. The commitment, dedication and leadership of indigenous organizations such as DGPA, REPALEF, LYNAPICO, and PIDP were decisive in achieving this major result, as was the advocacy of IRI DRC. The law for the protection and promotion of indigenous peoples was adopted on April 7th with several IRI DRC members present during the process. The adoption was almost unanimous, with all but one member of parliament voting against it. The Senate will examine the text in the coming weeks before it is promulgated by the President of the Republic. This is a milestone as DRC will soon become the second African country to have legislation in favour of indigenous peoples.



IRI DRC holds capacity building workshop in North-Kivu



In late March, IRI DRC held a two-day capacity building workshop in Goma, North-Kivu. The workshop was designed as a training on key rainforest issues as well as an inception mission to establish a basis for launching an IRI North-Kivu provincial chapter. The event was attended by 30 leaders and included support and presentations by Rainforest Foundation Norway and IPDP. A comprehensive overview was given on the mission, mandate and goals of IRI DRC and an in-depth training provided on the rights of indigenous peoples in the country. Participants signed an act of support asking for the implementation of IRI DRC in the province as soon as possible. A press conference was held regarding the intention of IRI DRC establishing a provincial chapter in North-Kivu which was attended by the advisor to the provincial Minister of the Environment.

IRI DRC holds training for religious leaders on rainforests in the province of Equateur

IRI DRC held a full-day training for 40 participants from different religious groups including Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguist, Muslim, Revivalist, and Bahai leaders, as well as representatives from civil society, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Education and a delegation of scientists. Themes of the training included the causes of climate change, deforestation, forest degradation and solutions to counter them. The training was designed as a capacity building workshop for religious leaders in Equateur, to expand their understanding of key rainforest issues and to provide a foundation of knowledge on which to build a clear and effective program of work mobilizing religious leaders across the province. IRI DRC will hold follow-up trainings with IRI Equateur to encourage collective action and effective advocacy for the protection and restoration of forests.

IRI DRC secures agreement with Provincial Coordinator to establish commission to monitor and promote the protection of forests in Equateur

While launching the IRI Equateur provincial chapter, IRI DRC held meetings with several government authorities, including the Governor and the Coordinator of Environment and Sustainable Development for the province. IRI DRC shared information about their four pillars of work: education and raising awareness, mobilizing action on the ground, advocating for policy changes and law enforcement that protect forests and the rights of indigenous peoples, and influencing the private sector. IRI DRC urged that a tangible action plan be put together to protect forests in the province. The Governor agreed and IRI DRC was asked to be a part of the team and to work hand-in-hand with technical staff to implement projects that ensure the protection of the province's forests. IRI DRC also secured agreement with the Provincial Coordinator of Environment and Sustainable Development to create a permanent working group or commission to regularly share information on forest protection and sustainable management programs, which will include representatives of IRI Equateur, the Provincial Coordinator

and project/program implementers. The provincial authority agreed that IRI Equateur would be fully integrated into all provincial bodies concerning the protection of forests.



IRI DRC meet with medical leaders in Equateur, holds training for youth



IRI Equateur and IRI DRC met with the doctors responsible for the Church of Christ's medical projects in the province and shared information about the mission and mandate of IRI DRC. By establishing the link between human health, forests and zoonotic diseases, the attendees agreed on the physician's role in raising awareness to preserve rainforests and therefore protect the well-being of local populations. The doctors present agreed to work within IRI DRC to mobilize their peers and requested a training session to allow for effective advocacy and outreach. IRI DRC also held a training for youth of the Church of Christ in Congo and the Catholic Church. The training covered the importance of forests to biodiversity, climate, jobs and livelihoods, and community health, and provided a basis on which youth can mobilize other youth groups and develop a work plan to protect local forests.

IRI BRAZIL

IRI Brazil announces Carlos Vicente as new National Facilitator

Following an extensive recruitment process by the IRI Brazil Advisory Council, Carlos Vicente has been selected as the new National Facilitator of the IRI Brazil program. Carlos Vicente is a forest engineer (Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRRJ) and holds an MBA in Natural Resources Management (Costa Rican Institute of Business Administration - INCAE). He has vast experience in Brazilian Amazon issues, having served as State Secretary for Forest & Traditional Populations in the State of Acre, Director of the National Forestry Program at the Minister of Environment of Brazil, Technical Adviser for former-Environmental Minister Marina Silva and, currently, as a Legislative Advisor on social-environmental issues for the Leadership of Political Party Sustainability Network at the Federal Senate. In his 32 years of experience in the fields of forestry research and sustainable economic development, Carlos worked closely with

social environmental movements, including the National Council of Rubber Workers, the Amazon Workers Center, rural workers unions and environmental non- profits. He was one of the co-authors of the Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation at the Brazilian Amazon (PPCDAM), that reduced deforestation rates by 83%, avoiding the emission of 4 billion tons of CO2 into the atmosphere; and also lead the creation of Amazon's first program of Payment for Environmental Services. During his time as State Secretary, Carlos also supported the foundation of the Central Cooperative of Non-Timber Products Commercialization of the State of Acre, the largest producer of processed Brazil nuts in the country. As recognition for his efforts to advance conservation in the Amazon, Carlos received in 2001 an Appreciation Award from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

