

AGRI-FOREST AGENTS



Location: Acre, Brazil

Partner: Ashoka: Innovators for the Public

Issue Area: Environmental Sustainability

Points of Interest: Indigenous Rights, Environmental Advocacy, Contact with Project on Twitter

The Organization

Agri-Forest Agents is a grassroots organization that serves many purposes, not the least of which is creating an avenue for dialogue between indigenous people and those exploiting their land. Forest Agents help indigenous communities understand and talk about the intrusion of logging and mining operations on their lands, which cause many community problems, and then develop strategies to combat this invasion. One strength of this methodology is that the model can be adapted to any indigenous culture, helping them develop self-advocacy skills while respecting the individualities of their communities and traditions.

This system allows Agents working with diverse tribes in the region to network with each other and share techniques and approaches to creating sustainable solutions. Many different tribes have come together to form the Association of the Indigenous Agri-Forest Agent Movement, which represents the interests of indigenous people and negotiates with government, businesses, and citizen sector organizations. Recently, this association succeeded in convincing the state government of Acre to officially hire Agri-Forest Agents to work on community development.

Why the Need?

The Brazilian state of Acre, occupied mainly by indigenous people, contains some of Brazil's most valuable natural resources. Lack of state-enforced regulation on extractive industries like mining and logging is threatening the land and the people that live on it. The Ashaninka tribe is one of the biggest indigenous groups in South America. The Ashaninka live on the border between Brazil and Peru, the majority on the Peruvian side, inhabiting an area of 91,200 hectares that is increasingly invaded by the logging industry. It has been difficult to control these incursions because Ashaninka land spans two countries, who have not successfully developed a joint protection plan. Ashaninka communities lack the tools and mechanisms to respond to this exploitation or defend themselves, receiving little support from the state. Agri-Forest Agents educate indigenous peoples about the long-term damage being done, and represent and defend them against outside interests. In addition, Agri-Forest Agents teach indigenous communities forest management practices that allow them to benefit from the sustainable use of their natural resources. Because they work with communities on an individual basis, Agents promote bottom-up, tailored strategies that are culturally and ecologically appropriate to each community.

How Team Efforts Translate to Impact

The funds that NGC teams raise will go to help develop educational programs and training in how protect indigenous lands and resources. The information will provide new knowledge about sustainability to young people as well as adults to help them learn a new way to manage the forest and the natural resources around them. They will learn methods of animal management, plant management (including forest plant recovery – fruit bearing plants as well as of different tree species) and other diverse ways to care for the environment.

The Partner

Ashoka's vision is that of a global society that is able to respond quickly and effectively to social challenges everywhere. The organization's mission is to shape a citizen sector that is entrepreneurial, productive and globally integrated, and to develop the profession of social entrepreneurship around the world. Ashoka identifies and invests in leading social entrepreneurs - extraordinary individuals with unprecedented ideas for change in their communities - supporting them, their ideas, and institutions through all phases of their careers. Rather than leaving societal needs for the government or business sectors to address, social entrepreneurs are creating innovative solutions, delivering extraordinary results, and improving the lives of millions of people. Ashoka has invested in more than 1,700 Fellows (recipients of support) in 60 countries. Those Fellows have transformed the lives of millions of people in thousands of communities worldwide.

NGC's Approach to Sustainable Global Change

NGC and our Global Partners believe that people in communities all over the world are the real experts and know their community and solutions to their problems. We want to advocate and educate others on behalf of this model of sustainable global change. Additionally, we seek to empower our grassroots Global Projects with the financial resources to create change at the grassroots level. 100% of funds your team raises are sent to Agri-Forest Agents.

By sending your team's funds directly, your project organization has the power to decide the best way to use the money. Since money will be spent in the community, your funds will also support the local economy.

Agri-Forest Agents utilizes indigenous environmental conservation techniques that have historically been used in the region. The organization implements a model that can be used in any indigenous culture who is undergoing challenges similar to the challenges faced by Agri-Forest Agents and their community.

Additional Resources

Partner Website: <http://www.ashoka.org/>

Ashoka Fellow: <http://www.ashoka.org/fellow/benki>

CIA World Factbook (Brazil): <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html>

Embassy of Brazil: <http://www.brasilemb.org/>

See your team binder for more ways to educate your team about your project.