



WHAT IS AMAZONIA 2.0?

Amazonia 2.0 is a project that focuses on populations that “live in the forest and of the forest”, in a “bottom-up” work, that strengthens local capacities to create their management models to prevent, address and mitigate damage, safeguarding natural heritage.

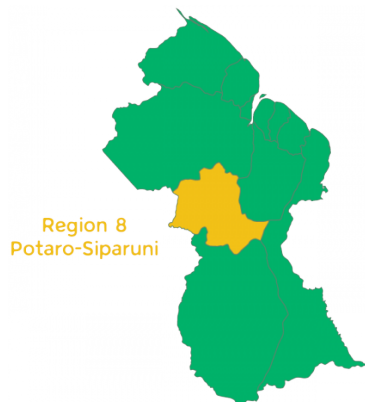
The project was birthed as a strategic alternative to confront and reduce the threats and pressures induced by deforestation, exerted on Amazonian forests through indiscriminate use, and seeks to mitigate these impacts by building capacities of Indigenous and Campesino communities to participate directly in the sustainable management of their territories.

It is funded by the **European Union, coordinated by IUCN-South American and executed by partners in six countries; Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Guyana and Suriname** in a set of territories that cover more than 1.5 million of hectares in total.

Amazonia 2.0 has three main objectives: organizational strengthening and empowerment, strengthening organizations to identify and participate in advocacy spaces and inter-regional learning exchanges.

Ideally, the Amazonia 2.0 intervention model has as its fundamental tool, local oversight or monitoring which engages indigenous communities in a participatory role to ensure their direct involvement in the sustainable management of their natural resources. It is expected that the work of the local monitors will resonate in their communities and extend beyond to impact on decision making by local, regional and national and international authorities.

AMAZONIA 2.0 – THE GUYANA CONTEXT



Much of Guyana's forested lands are located within traditional indigenous territories and already managed through customary rules. However, as indigenous communities face increasing external threats to their lands and ecosystems, they are also moving towards monitoring these threats and developing management plans to protect their territories.

The five-year Amazonia 2.0 project began in 2015 and ended in December 2020.

However, Guyana only entered the project in February 2020 with the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA), in collaboration with the North Pakaraimas District Council

(NPDC), working towards the implementation of the project in seven Indigenous communities in Western Guyana that have been impacted by mining and forestry issues.

The participating communities, which are predominately home to peoples from the Patamona and Macushi nations, are **Campbelltown, Micobie, Moruwa, Karisaparu, Chenapou, Kopinang and Monkey Mountain.**

The majority of indigenous villages and communities in **Region 8**, including five of the seven participating in this project, are members of the North Pakaraimas District Council (NPDC), making them natural allies in this evidenced-based monitoring activity.

As part of the project, environmental monitors were to be identified and trained to conduct environmental monitoring activities in the identified areas. Additionally, two data managers would have been tasked with collecting

storing, processing and analyzing the data to present as reports to the NPDC.

At the end of the project, technical reports were to be developed for use by the NPDC and others in their meetings and other engagements with state officials and as part of other advocacy campaigns.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant interruption of these activities under the project and while some environmental monitoring activities did take place, it was done by in-house technical persons who were previously trained under different projects.

PROFILES OF VILLAGES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE AMAZONIA 2.0 PROJECT

CAMPBELLTOWN

Campbelltown is a village located adjacent to the Mahdia township, Sub-Region 2, Region 8, Potaro-Siparuni and is home to around 1200 residents who are mostly of the Patamona Nation.

The main threats to land and natural resources in Campbelltown include mining and logging. Villagers report that there are many logging and mining concessions on the village's titled and untitled lands, and that the village was not consulted prior to the granting of these concessions. The village



**S-BEND IN CAMPBELLTOWN
– SITE OF THE RECENT GOLD RUSH**

has agreements with about 50 small-scale miners, many of who are residents of the village; these miners work with the permission of the village and pay royalties to the village council.

However, although some of the mining happens with the village leadership's permission, that does not mean that all residents



are happy with the mining activity.

Importantly, residents note that mining has destroyed lands and forests and polluted waters used for drinking and fishing. They believe fish have been poisoned by mercury, and in fact, report that many fish have largely disappeared from the larger rivers, which have become muddy. Residents now have to fish in small creeks and they depend upon rainwater and springs for drinking water. Residents are worried that their soil quality is becoming poorer for farming, and that their hunting grounds are being destroyed. Logging activities compound these fears.



CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS WITH RESIDENTS OF CAMPBELLTOWN

MICOBIE



ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION BY ILLEGAL MINERS

Micobie is located on the right and left banks of the Potaro River, Sub-region 2, Region 8 and is home to an estimated 500 residents who are mostly of the Patamona Nation. The main threats to land and natural resources in Micobie include river mining, which according to residents, has resulted in pollution of their waters which has affected fishing. Additionally, mining has caused significant destruction to the banks of the Potaro River. Mining activities have also affected the health of farming grounds, especially in Sugar Hill, as well as access to game and cleaning drinking water. Mining activities are reported to occur in both titled and titled lands.



PREPARING THE DRONE TO FLY OVER THE SITE OF ILLEGAL MINING

MORUWA

Moruwa is located along the Moruwa River, sub-region 2, Region 8 and is a community of about 75 residents who are of the Patamona Nation. Unlike its Region 8 counterparts in the Amazonia 2.0 project, Moruwa does not have official title for their lands. However, the people see themselves as part of a larger Patamona territory and the area they occupy and use is in fact a critical resource area for most of the NPDC villages as well as Campbelltown and Micobie. Residents of Moruwa are concerned about logging and mining interests which currently overlap more than half of their

customary lands. The community has never been consulted or even informed prior to the granting of these concessions. Residents are deeply concerned about these outside interests intruding upon their hunting and fishing grounds. They have already noticed pollution from mining in the head of North Moruwa River.



ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION BY MINING



KOPINANG

Kopinang is located on both banks of the Kopinang River, North Pakaraimas, sub-region 1, Region 8 and is home to an estimated 1000 residents (including the satellite communities) who are primarily Patamona.

In terms of threats, villagers have expressed concern about conflicts with miners, the overuse of resources, as well as pollution in the Potaro River and the stretch of Kuribrong River downstream from Amaila Falls.

In addition to problems caused by mining activity, some villagers have noticed that overhunting, overfishing, and overuse are causing a depletion of available game and forest products, such as mukru, hiari and resins, near the village.

KARISPARU

Karisparu is located along the Echerak and Potaro Rivers, North Pakaraimas, sub-region 1, Region 8. This village is home to over 400 residents who are primarily Patamona. Threats faced by Karisparu include mining, logging and road construction activities. It has been reported that although the Karisparu Village Council has granted permission for two miners to operate within the village's titled lands, the village faces significant conflicts with other miners who are operating without permission. Mining activities in Karisparu have not only created significant human rights abuses, but have caused environmental harm, including pollution of the river by tailings which is the waste material left after raw gold is refined through the use of mercury and dumped directly into the river at the end of the process. Residents also report that logging activities and road building activities in the Tipuru and Moruwa area have made hunting more difficult.

CHENAPAU

Chenapau is located in the Upper Potaro River, North Pakaraimas sub-region 1, Region 8 and is populated by over 500 residents who are primarily Patamona. Residents report that mining around the village has caused environmental damage. For example, mining activities in the Ayanganna Mountains appear to be affecting water quality in the Potaro River. Residents have also reported pollution around the Echerak River, another area exposed to outside mining interests, and the pollution appears to be killing fish which then flow into the Potaro River.

MONKEY MOUNTAIN

Monkey Mountain is located on the left bank Ireng River, North Pakaraimas, sub-region 1, Region 8. Monkey Mountain is a village of over 800 residents, who are primarily Patamona. The main threats to land and natural resources in Monkey Mountain include mining, logging and cattle ranching. There are concerns in the village about mining activities, especially in and around the Echilebar, Siparuni, and Mariaparu Rivers, where mining is threatening game, fish, waterways, and forest. Residents are particularly concerned about water security in dry season, when water levels are low and pollution is likely concentrated.

Residents also report that there are logging activities taking place in the Echilebar and Siparuni areas, as well as cattle ranching in the village's untitled customary lands towards the Taruka side, which continue to cause resource conflicts with villagers



THE MAMAI LUCILLE WILLIAMS STORY

Mamai Lucille Williams is an elderly Patamona woman, who over a year ago was forcibly removed from the land she has lived on for more than **70 years** by miners who were granted mining permits by the **Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC)**. As reported by the **North Pakaraimas District Council (NPDC)**, the miners had cruelly demolished Mamai's house post, throwing out her belongings from her home and destroying her farm.

Though there had been some intervention by the **former Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Raphael Trotman** after Mamai's situation was highlighted by the **APA** and local media outlets, her situation has remained the same.

At the time of the Minister's intervention, the miners were

instructed to rebuild a house for Mamai. Mamai has now resettled in another area where she has replanted her cassava and other crops. However, the structure which was seen by APA's team during the visit to Karisaparau, can only be considered a shed, which leaves her exposed to the elements.



MAMAI'S HOUSE

Mamai also complained to the team that she has heard that the miners are again threatening to remove her from the new location. However, she made it clear that she has no intention of being pushed out by them again.

RIVER MINING – TALES FROM MICOBIE



ISAAC WILLIAMS

Isaac Williams, a resident of **Micobie** says that he has been living in the community for over 60 years and has witnessed the pollution of the river caused by continuous river mining. He noted that though reports have been made to the relevant authorities, the community has seen little change. Mr. Williams explained that the **Potaro River** was once home to an abundance of fish which sustained the community and fishermen like himself. However, this has changed as fish is now scarce, something he attributes to the river mining taking place in the Potaro River.

"We got the big Potaro River with polluted water; Tiger Creek, our boundary line is also polluted...It is affecting us because we are not getting our fish anymore. Even if you tie a seine now you can't catch anything, sheer moss coming up on the seine," Mr. Williams shared. "It is hard, especially for me because I use to go fishing, but I can't do that anymore," he added.



REVIEWING AERIAL FOOTAGE OF MICOBIE VILLAGE

AMAZONIA 2.0 EXPERIENCES



JEAN LA ROSE

“It is unfortunate that at the very start of the project, we were hit with the COVID pandemic which stopped our work from taking place as we had planned. With an already very tight timeline, we were unable to accomplish the expected outputs we had desired.

The lack of technology and lack of communication would have also caused the work to suffer to a large extent. However, it has been a good learning experience for us as it revealed the need for improved communication and the use of technology to complete our work more efficiently.

Although it cannot replace the face-to-face interactions, it is something that we will have to continue to explore to see how we will adapt, considering COVID is still here with us.

On a different note, the consultancies done as part of this project will allow us to strategize, using the information gathered on various topics. They would also provide us with both broad and very, specific insights into different situations and how we can approach them concerning REDD+, community monitoring, and advocacy in these areas.

- Ms. Jean La Rose, Executive Director, Amerindian Peoples Association.



SHERRY ANN BALKARAN

“I think environmental monitoring projects like the **Amazonia 2.0 project** would benefit us here in the North Pakaraimas because it will help our people be aware of what is really happening presently in the Region. I would very much like to see our youths be trained so that they can be dispersed into the different areas and monitor our environment so that that when they do so, they would be able to bring the information to the different villages and the different village councils so that they can be aware of what is happening and put systems in place to rectify or curb these things.”

- Mrs. Sherry Ann Balkaran, Secretary, North Pakaraima District Council.



KEMAL ROBINSON

*Environmental Monitor and Mapper
- Kato Village, Region 8.*

From the age of 16 some four years ago, **Kemal Robinson** began working with the Amerindian Peoples Association as a mapping apprentice. Today, he still works on projects with the APA but he is no longer an apprentice as he is well versed in things related to mapping. He has also received some training in Indigenous rights issues.

As a Patamona youth from **Kato Village in the Region 8– Potaro-Siparuni Region**, his introduction to this field of work came through an opportunity to work alongside other resource persons collecting critical information for the Region 8 Land Tenure Assessment (LTA).

The Region 8 LTA publication is the second in a series of APA research publications titled,

“Our Land, Our Life - A Participatory Assessment of Land Tenure,” which highlights the land tenure situation of Indigenous Peoples in different regions of Guyana. It is supported by the Forest Peoples Programme and the Rainforest Foundation US through funding from NORAD and the Rainforest Fund.

From there, Kemal moved on to working on other projects with the **APA** that allowed him to expand his knowledge of the work required and the importance of mapping Indigenous lands as well as better understanding his own home territory. Over time, Kemal also became one of several Indigenous youths trained in video production under the APA's NORAD funded Youth-Led Media Programme, applying the knowledge he gained as a mapper.

At present, Kemal is skilled in using GPS activated software to collect data and plot maps that can be used by communities or District Councils in advocacy-based campaigns.

“When we go in the field, we

take pictures, videos and GPS points and plot them on a map. When someone is asking what's going on there, we can show them this. And we also take names so that we can identify persons who are living and working in specific areas.

Kemal believes that issues affecting Indigenous Peoples in Guyana are often times not a priority for those in authority. However, this only motivates him to continue raising awareness on these issues through evidence-based advocacy.

“The environmental monitoring programme would be a very good thing since this would allow us to gather evidence to show those who do not believe what's going on the ground. With the environmental monitoring you take GPS points, you take videos and photos that you can give back to the community and show on a wider scale for them to see what is going on,” Kemal shared.

“They say Guyana is one of the most beautiful countries in the world but, it's being destroyed, slowly but surely,” he added.



ORLANDO ANDREWS
Environmental Monitor
- Campbelltown

The **Amazonia 2.0 project** is Orlando's first opportunity to work in the area of environmental monitoring. At age 18, he has shown enthusiasm in using modern technology to assist Indigenous communities by gathering critical data on the ground which can then be used in evidence-based advocacy.

“I am really excited to be a part of this project and learn more about environmental monitoring. We are gathering information using modern technology like drones and smart phones so that we can help villages like Micobie show that illegal mining is being done on their lands. I am really excited to be an assistant on this project and I look forward to helping other communities.



LUCIOUS TORRES

Environmental Monitor & Mapper
- Waipa Village

20-year-old **Lucious Torres of Waipa Village** began working with the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA) in 2018 as a mapping apprentice with a team that was tasked with mapping traditional Indigenous lands in Region Eight through a project funded by NORAD and the Rainforest Foundation (USA).

He is also one of several Indigenous youths trained in video production under the **APA's NORAD funded Youth-Led Media Programme**, applying the knowledge he gained as a mapper. “I work with the APA as a mapper and I think that communities can benefit from this project because they can take the information gathered and create maps and videos that can be used as evidence to show what the reality of Indigenous Peoples is,” Lucious shared.

HOW DO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROJECTS LIKE AMAZONIA 2.0?



Although overall levels of deforestation remain low in Guyana, satellite data suggest increasing rates of deforestation in Region 8 over the past decade. Community reports of land and resource conflicts and environmental concerns suggest that the deforestation is linked to the same activities causing these conflicts, most importantly, mining and logging. The use of satellite data of tree cover loss combined with on-the-ground evidence of deforestation and other impacts

on the environment can be a powerful tool for understanding the impacts of different activities on forest cover and forest loss.

The communities in Region 8 do not yet have existing territorial management and monitoring programmes but there are important existing governance structures and resources in the region. The villages have increasingly begun to collaborate on territorial and land issues. Some have previous experience participating in mapping projects and can draw upon the experiences of those who had been previously trained to use smartphones, GPS, and computer technologies, as well as those who have undergone legal empowerment training.

Engaging in capacity building and empowerment training and workshops, in addition to community discussions, would help the participating villages in this project achieve their goals of developing and implementing a robust territorial monitoring and management system.



During this short time, the APA has been able to complete a situational analysis of the current state of Region 8, focusing specifically on the seven participating communities. This was done by consultant Lan Mei. Two short videos were produced, which captured not only the essence of the Amazonia 2.0 project but also APA's extensive experience

in implementing environmental monitoring projects in Guyana.

An environmental monitoring trip was also conducted in early November when a team from the APA and three environmental monitors visited the seven communities to gather evidence of new and existing threats they face. This specific activity also brought much-needed visibility to the realities of these communities as in the case of Mamai Lucille Williams and illegal mining on Micobie's land.

Additionally, under the project, two consultants, **Ms Vanda Radzik** and **Mr Josh Lichtenstein** were contracted to document and adapt Forest Governance Indicators at the Local Community Level with Special Attention to FLEGT criteria and REDD+ safeguards as well as provide an analysis of the contribution that Amazonia 2.0 could provide to REDD+, RIA and the National MRV System.



ABOUT THE A.P.A

The **Amerindian Peoples Association (APA)** is a non-governmental Indigenous peoples organization which was formed in 1991 at a conference for Indigenous leaders in Georgetown. These leaders had met to discuss various problems affecting their communities and felt that there was the need for an independent organization to represent their interests especially as these were not being addressed by the government.

The mission of the APA is to promote the social, economic, political and cultural development of Amerindian communities in solidarity with each other and to promote and defend their rights. The APA works with indigenous communities throughout Guyana and largely focuses on policy and legislative reform and implementation.

ABOUT THE N.P.D.C

The **North Pakaraimas District Council (N.P.D.C)** was formed at a meeting in 2016 by the majority of Indigenous villages and communities in Region 8 in hopes of reviving the historical modes of collaboration across villages. Since its first meeting in September 2016, the NPDC has met quarterly to discuss issues of common concern to the district. The main topic of concern has been that of land – the NPDC villages agreed to continue the work of their fore parents and seek joint legal tenure over collective customary lands. The NPDC villages have mapped out the collective customary use areas and are now seeking official government recognition of the District Council (through publication in the Official Gazette).

