



A 2033 vision for a new era of rainforest protection

LOCAL ACTION, SYSTEM CHANGE



01 Foundations of our vision

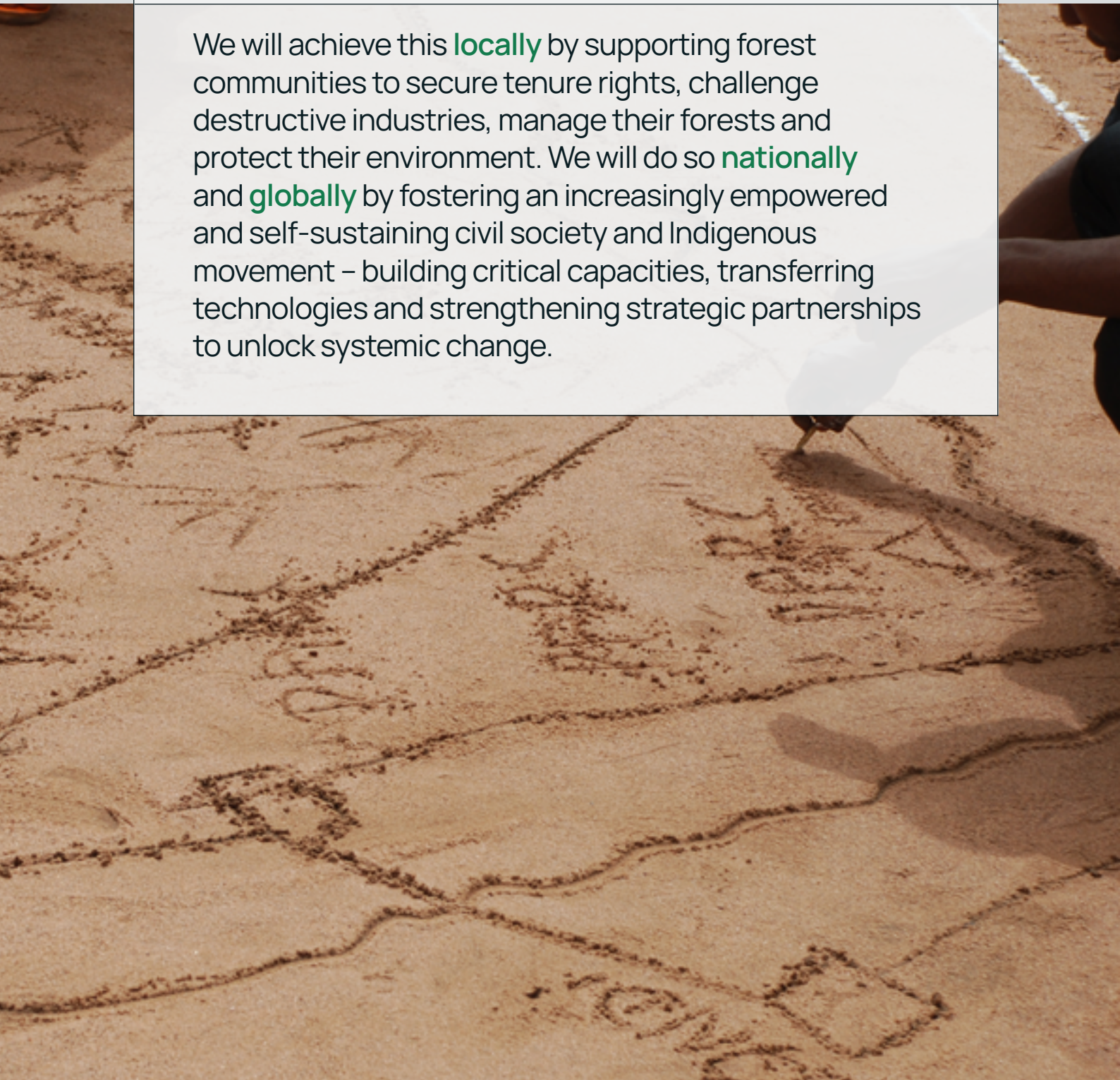
1.1 OUR MISSION

The mission of Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) is to support Indigenous Peoples and other communities of the world's rainforest in their efforts to protect their environment and fulfil their rights to land, life and livelihood.

1.2 OUR 2033 VISION STATEMENT

RFUK envisions a world where forest communities live securely and sustainably on their lands, and where a more equitable distribution of power, resources and consumption patterns leads to rainforest protection and greater social and climate justice.

We will achieve this **locally** by supporting forest communities to secure tenure rights, challenge destructive industries, manage their forests and protect their environment. We will do so **nationally** and **globally** by fostering an increasingly empowered and self-sustaining civil society and Indigenous movement – building critical capacities, transferring technologies and strengthening strategic partnerships to unlock systemic change.



1.3 OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our core belief – supported by growing evidence – is that the most effective and just way to protect tropical forests is by entrusting stewardship to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

To achieve this, we focus on a constellation of enabling conditions. We work to strengthen **legal frameworks, policies and institutions** at all levels to secure land and human rights for forest communities. However, legal recognition alone is insufficient; **effective monitoring, enforcement, transparency and access to justice** are essential.

We advocate for a transformation of global economic systems – moving away from harmful extractive industries and false solutions that exacerbate the ecological crisis and social harms, **toward a green economy** that benefits communities through fair market access and finance.

Our approach centres on **empowering vibrant civil society and Indigenous movements** to participate in decision-making, promote equity and hold governments and companies accountable.

Communities must lead their own development, supported by inclusive governance structures and capacities that ensure participatory and transparent management of territories, with special attention to Indigenous Peoples, women and other marginalised groups.

Across all domains, we seek **more direct funding and political support** for forest communities and local civil society.





02

Our blueprint for forest protection

RFUK will catalyse a new era of rights-based forest protection and stewardship through three interlinking focus areas: (i) promoting the tenure rights and sustainable livelihoods of forest communities as the foundation for good forest governance and self-determined development; (ii) enabling communities to respond effectively to threats to their forests while also tackling the structural causes of deforestation through research-led campaigns; (iii) and building strategic partnerships, skills and movements to drive impact at scale.



An empowered civil society and Indigenous movement

An enabling policy, technology and business environment

Strong community governance (inc. participation of Indigenous Peoples, women and youth)

More direct funding for Indigenous, community and grassroots organisations



2.1 Land & Livelihoods

SECURING LANDS, SUSTAINING LIVES

The Rainforest Foundations' founding principle is that the most effective and equitable way to protect forests and sustain livelihoods is by securing land rights and self-determination for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. We will support an increase in the amount of land under their effective control and management through:

2.1.1 Advancing laws and policies that favour community land and resource rights

- Strengthen local capacities to push for laws, policies and institutions that recognise and strengthen community control over lands and forests.
- Enhance participation of communities and civil society in forest and land governance reforms as well as in international climate and biodiversity negotiations.

2.1.2 Putting communities on the map

- Expand provision of community mapping tools and methods that enable communities themselves to demonstrate their occupation and use of the forest.
- Support an exponential increase in forest lands under the formal control and management of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- Participatory land-use planning of these areas to underpin community development and conservation objectives while supporting integration with wider land-use planning and other reform processes.

2.1.3 Supporting vibrant and self-sustaining rural economies

- Provide technical support to community enterprises and help foster strategic partnerships with responsible private sector actors.
- Facilitate the creation and strengthening of community cooperatives to pool resources, enhance bargaining power and improve market access – moving beyond isolated pilot projects to achieve economies of scale.
- Pilot community stewardship models including payment for environmental services (PES), whilst advocating for more sustainable non-market-based sources of funding for such schemes.



2.2 Forests & Rights

REPORTING THREATS, DEFENDING RIGHTS

Promoting the land and resource rights of forest communities is not enough if we do not confront the threats posed by extractive industries and illegal logging, the widespread impunity that enables them, shrinking civic space and escalating risks for environmental and human rights defenders (EHRDs). We will mitigate threats to forests and rights by:

2.2.1 Expanding community monitoring of forests, territories and rights

- Scale up provision of real-time community monitoring tools and methods to support defence of forests and territories, shifting towards ever greater local autonomy and control of data.
- Enable local analysis of remote-sensing deforestation data to better target interventions and support ground-truthing.

2.2.2 Strengthening forest governance, the rule of law and opening of civic space

- Work with state agencies and mandated independent forest monitors to improve law enforcement and promote transparent and accountable in forest governance.
- Build legal capacities to underpin community-driven advocacy campaigns and legal cases including through the roll-out of the community paralegal model.
- Strengthen support to communities and other EHRDs so that they can operate securely and with proper access to justice.

2.2.3 Targeted research, advocacy and campaigns to change the rules of the game

- Utilise locally generated data to support grassroots-led campaigns and media outreach to drive systemic change, bridging the gap between remote forest communities and national and international decision-making processes.
- Research and campaign on the structural causes of deforestation, the false solutions to these threats that undermine community rights or permit environmental destruction elsewhere and for more direct funding and support for frontline defenders.
- Strengthen local capacities to advance laws, policies and institutions that protect forests and communities' rights, to elevate the role of community-led monitoring as a climate solution and to participate in international climate and biodiversity negotiations.

2.3 Partnerships for Change

ENABLING IMPACT AT SCALE

To achieve lasting improvements in tenure security, local livelihoods and forest protection, our approach is built on four mutually reinforcing pillars that catalyse the partnerships, people, skills and movements needed to advance rights-based tropical forest protection at the speed and scale demanded by the climate and biodiversity crises.



2.3.1 Increasingly resilient local partners

We will support our core partners in their organisational development journeys so they can design and deliver larger programmes and confidently engage with institutional donors.



2.3.2 An expanded partner network

Together with our core partners, we will expand, diversify and mentor a new generation of Indigenous and civil society leaders including women's, human rights and economic empowerment organisations.



2.3.3 Knowledge and Skills Hubs

We will drive change beyond our immediate projects by strengthening and multiplying capacities through peer learning in strategic areas critical to our vision, such as community mapping and legal empowerment. These hubs will be complemented by the wide dissemination of accessible tools and approaches to encourage broad adoption and deliver impact at scale.



2.3.4 Movement building

We will advance accountability in forest governance by amplifying the voices of forest communities and grassroots organisations in decision-making and foster deeper collaboration and solidarity between these actors, national civil society and international organisations, ensuring that campaigns are rooted in local realities and achieve system-level change.

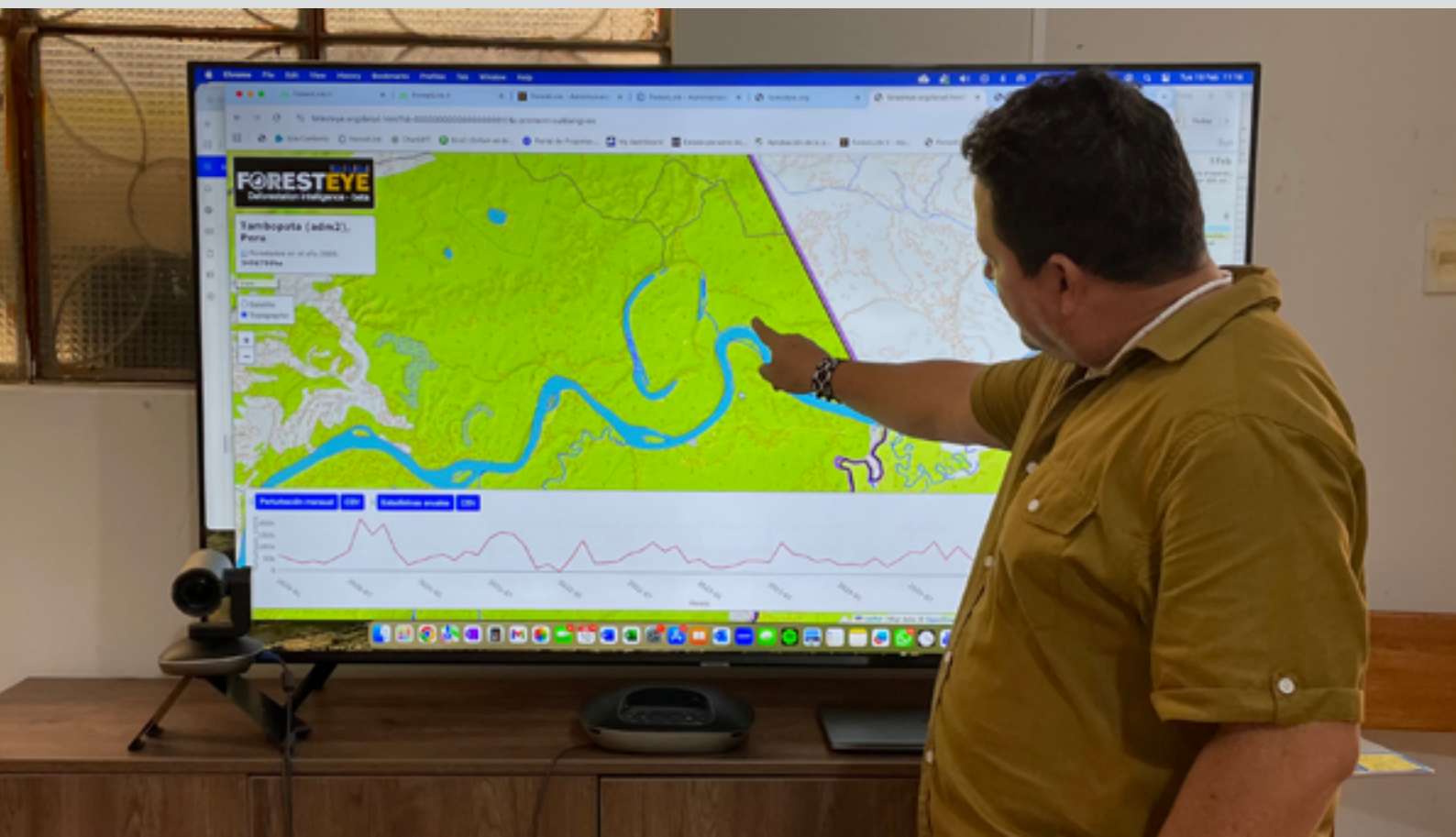
Technology

RFUK sees the power in harnessing technology to support forest communities to map, monitor and protect their forests, shift power dynamics and hold decision-makers to account.

Our technology, developed with local partners and communities, strengthens transparency in forest governance and enhances data sovereignty, ensuring that communities can decide what data they use, how it is used and when it is shared.

Our vision is to equip communities with appropriate technological tools in order to:

- Put themselves on the map by building a clear picture of community land use and ownership, documenting customary forest use and supporting tenure claims.
- Report quickly on forest crime and human rights violations, even in isolated areas with limited connectivity.
- Collect systematic evidence that supports law enforcement and advocates for change through end-to-end case management and data analysis.
- Empower community observation to monitor and respond to forest-threats in their territories by providing satellite data intelligence directly into their hands.
- Take ownership of a digital mapped representation of their lands, culture, products and the issues they face.
- Monitor the effects of our programme work so we can continuously learn and improve what we do.



03

An evolving role for a shifting landscape

As part of RFUK’s commitment to long-term sustainability, our role will gradually evolve to meet partner needs over the vision cycle as they gain greater autonomy and strengthen their capacities. Looking ahead, we will increasingly focus on supporting emerging organisations, providing technology solutions and fostering learning, collaboration and joint campaigning across rainforest basins and between Global South and Global North partners.

2026



2033



An illustration of the size, growth, type and number of civil society and Indigenous partners relative to RFUK



OUR GENDER PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

At RFUK, promoting collective land rights has always been central to our mission, and we are now deepening our gender approach and commitment to women's rights. This is a moral imperative, as threats to rainforests have distinct gendered impacts – from gender-based violence linked to extractive industries and fortress conservation models to violations of women's land rights and livelihoods. Moreover, gender equality is essential to achieving our broader goals: women's participation and knowledge are indispensable for sustainable forest management, education and building a vibrant civil society.

Our Commitment to Gender Equality

- **Collaborate and co-define:** Work with women's organisations, community groups and experts to identify learning questions, document women's specific needs and develop tailored approaches.
- **Empower and advocate:** Lead interventions that advance women's rights and development, support women champions and promote their participation in national and international forums.
- **Strengthen partnerships:** Build long-term alliances with women-led organisations, expanding networks that foster solidarity and collective influence.
- **Measure and influence:** Define gender objectives and indicators within our MEL processes, gather data on land, resources and gendered impacts, and contribute to global debates on gender and climate justice.

04

Our geographical focus

PERU



CAMEROON
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
GABON
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



We will deepen our engagement in the Congo and Amazon Basins, regions where our history, knowledge and networks position us to drive meaningful change. **Locally**, we will focus on priority areas facing intense deforestation pressures and where rights-based conservation can advance, building capacities where they are most needed.

Globally, we will collaborate with local and allied partners to shape climate and biodiversity discourse, share our tools and approaches with others that share our vision, and strengthen advocacy and learning through deeper collaboration with Rainforest Foundations Norway and the US across our shared tropical belt network.

05

Our history and impact

Since 1989, the Rainforest Foundation family network has supported Indigenous Peoples and local communities in securing legal title to over 326 000 km², and today we support the active protection of approximately 930 000 km² – an area roughly the size of France and Italy combined.

2002

DRC declares national moratorium on the allocation of new logging concessions, keeping tens of millions of hectares of forest out of timber industry

2009

Central African Republic becomes the first African country to ratify Convention ILO 169 on the rights of Indigenous Peoples

2011

Republic of Congo adopts an Indigenous Peoples law, the first of its kind in Africa

2015

RFUK's MappingForRights initiative is awarded the UNFCCC Momentum for Change prize for innovative and scalable climate action

2016

DRC adopts legal framework for community forests, enabling hundreds of communities to secure legal rights to ancestral forests covering millions of hectares

2020

International biodiversity conservation funders and agencies undertake major reforms following investigations into human rights impacts of strictly protected areas in the Congo Basin

2023

Peru seizes and destroys £14 million worth of illegal mining equipment in Madre de Dios following ForestLink alerts

2025

DRC creates the Couloir Vert, the world's largest tropical forest reserve, with key protections for forest communities, primary forests and peatlands

06

Our core strengths



07

Our values



Self-determination

Self-determination is a fundamental human right. Secure land rights and civic participation are cornerstones of this, enabling communities to control their territories, preserve their cultural identity and shape their own futures.

Sustainability

Providing better and more direct support to communities and civil society is the most effective, sustainable and just way to protect tropical forests and the many vital functions they provide. Promoting sustainability also means ensuring efficiency in our own practices – we must walk the talk.

Integrity

Integrity is the foundation of trust in all our relationships and operations, and it's how we contribute to a better world. Promoting transparency and accountability is fundamental to effective forest governance and the fulfilment of human rights.

Collaboration

Achieving a fairer world requires more than the sum of individual efforts. Driving meaningful change means building partnerships for change including with actors beyond our immediate community that share our values.

Innovation

Innovation is essential to shifting power dynamics and reshaping systems, so they work for forest communities. In an increasingly interconnected world, technology – especially when rooted in participatory approaches – can help bridge the gap between marginalised peoples and the decision-making processes that shape their lives.



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