



DEFENSORAS

Amplifying the voice of Indigenous women in Bolivia

SES Explorer Award for Inspirational & Scientific Trailblazing

Bethan John, Eilidh Munro & Ruth Alipaz Cuqui

Bolivia: October - November 2022



CONTENT:

Project Summary | 3

Team Members | 4-5

Itinerary | 6

Expedition Details | 7-15

1. Madidi National Park | 9

1.1 Community engagement | 10

1.2. Gold mining threat | 11

2. Tariquía National Reserve | 13

2.1 Short documentary | 14

2.2 Oil & gas extraction | 15

Project Aims & Results | 16-17

Adversities & Challenges | 18-20

Risk Management | 21

Communication & Reach | 22

Impact & Legacy | 23-24

Personal Reflections | 25

Future Research & Projects | 26

Budget | 27

Conclusion | 28

Acknowledgements | 29-30



PROJECT SUMMARY

Across Bolivia, a network of Indigenous women are fighting to protect their forests against destruction by companies who are forcing entry into their ancestral territories.

Defensoras is amplifying the plight of female Indigenous leaders, as they risk it all to stand up against violations to Indigenous rights and Mother Earth.

It is a media project run in collaboration with Ruth Alipaz Cuqui, coordinator of the grassroots Indigenous rights organisation: Coordinadora Nacional de Defensa de Territorios Indígenas Originarias Campesinas y Áreas Protegidas (CONTIOCAP).

The project is bringing awareness to the fight of Indigenous women who are being abused and criminalised for protecting their natural and cultural heritage.

BETHAN JOHN

RUTH ALIPAZ CUQUI

EILIDH MUNRO

TEAM MEMBERS

BETHAN JOHN

Bethan is a freelance journalist and filmmaker, specialising in climate justice, indigenous rights and biodiversity conservation. For over 10 years, she has worked alongside conservation scientists and communities across Latin America, leading award-winning expeditions that investigate and report on environmental and human rights abuses.

Her multimedia work has been published in leading international news outlets, such as Al Jazeera, Mongabay and The Ecologist, exploring the complex social, political, economic, environmental, and climate issues facing communities living in some of the most biodiverse places on Earth.

In recognition of this work, in 2021 she was invited to become a member of the Explorers Club; chosen as one of the 16 extraordinary women of this new Millennium in honour and celebration of the original 16 outstanding female members inducted into the club in 1981. The same year, she won the Scientific Exploration Society's Explorer Award for Inspirational & Scientific Trailblazing.

As a communications specialist, Bethan is highly experienced at raising significant funds for projects and promoting them to a worldwide audience, through online and in-person engagement campaigns.

wildlandscreative.com

EILIDH MUNRO

Eilidh is a BAFTA nominated documentary director, editor and cameraperson who specialises in stories about the climate and social injustice. She has worked in some of the world's most extreme and beautiful places, from the Amazon Rainforest - where she lived for over a year - to the Saharan desert, the mangroves of Senegal and Icelandic glaciers.

Eilidh thrives in challenging environments and with challenging subjects. Her films have been screened across the world in film festivals and broadcast and

have been used to influence policy and decision making, both in the UK and internationally.

Having worked with marginalised and remote communities, Eilidh is passionate about ethical filmmaking practices with empathy and respect at its core, and is a fellow of One World Media, an organisation that champions filmmakers covering stories globally with creativity and integrity.

She also has a distinction from the Edinburgh College of Art's MA in documentary directing.

eilidhmunrofilm.com

RUTH ALIPAZ CUQUI

As an indigenous leader and activist, Ruth coordinates CONTIOCAP's campaigns across Bolivia and represents the movement on a local, national and international stage.

In 2019, she successfully forced the UN to denounce the Bolivian Government and insisted that they respect the international standard for indigenous rights, which was a strong political statement that enabled CONTIOCAP to prevent several mega-dam projects, including Chepete-Bala hydroelectric dam.

Supported by the Bolivian Government, this mega-dam project, if approved, will flood an area equivalent to seven times the size of the capital city La Paz, displacing 5,000 Indigenous People from their ancestral homes.

Ruth was the first female in her community to attend secondary school and the first person (male or female) from her community to go to college and graduate.

Since then, she has overcome enormous obstacles as an indigenous woman fighting for the Amazon.

twitter.com/CuquiRuth

16 Bethan and Eilidh fly from UK to Bolivia

17-19 Stay in La Paz, capital of Bolivia, for expedition prep

19 Travel to Rurrenabaque and meet up with Ruth Alipaz

20 Travel to the Native Community of San Jose de Uchupiamonas in Madidi National Park

OCT

21-25 Facilitate a series of Participatory Video workshops with an Indigenous women's group and the co-production of a short film

26-27 Filming and interviewing at Sadiri Lodge in Madidi National Park, a ecotourism project that is managed and administered by community members of the San José De Uchupiamonas

27 News breaks of miners strikes in La Paz. Plus, strikes in Santa Cruz over the government's failure to carry out a census, with strikes soon spreading across the country

27-28 Leave Ruth in Rurrenabaque after interviewing her about the miners' strike and travel to La Paz

ITINERARY 2022

28-03 Investigate and write up the article for Al Jazeera on the miners' strike and its threat to Bolivia's National Parks and Indigenous territories

04 Eildih flies back to the UK

04-05 Bethan travels to meet in-country fixer and expert, Sebastian Herzog, in Cochabamba to get advice on travel safety during country-wide strikes

07 Bethan travels to Tarija

NOV

08-10 Meetings with translator and guide to discuss travel plans and safety during strikes

11 Travel to Tariquía National Reserve with translator and guide

11-12 Interview with environmental defender Paula Gareca and filming in the reserve

13-16 Travel back to Tarija to avoid the strikes. Then fly to Santa Cruz and back to the UK



EXPEDITION DETAILS

Between October and November 2022, Bethan John (freelance journalist) and Eilidh Munro (documentary filmmaker) travelled to two remote regions of Bolivia – Madidi National Park and Tariquía National Reserve.

They were there to work alongside Indigenous activists, Ruth Alipaz Cuqui and Paula Gareca, who are leading the fight against violations to environmental and human rights.

“Ruth and Paula’s dedication to protecting the natural world and defending Indigenous rights is remarkable; Latin America has one of highest murder rates in the world for environmental activists, so Ruth and Paula are risking their lives as they stand up against gold, oil, and gas companies to defend their ancestral homes from destruction.”

- Bethan John



Ruth and Paula are part of an independent grassroots movement, CONTIOCAP: a network of activists who are rising up against exploitation. The movement represents Indigenous communities and environmental defenders across Bolivia - unusually, women make up 85% of the organisation.

These women are not only battling environmental destruction but also sexism, hostility, and abuse from men with a vested interest in silencing them.

“Male authorities disqualify us and say we don’t have the right to speak for our people or defend the territory. This is repeated at other levels of Indigenous organisations and even within the government itself. In other spaces too, such as access to the press, it is very difficult to be heard. Women’s struggles are invisible.”

- Ruth Alipaz Cuqui

A low-angle photograph looking up into a dense tropical forest. Sunlight filters through the thick canopy of green leaves, creating a dappled light effect. Several large, dark green leaves with prominent veins are in the foreground, some showing signs of insect damage. A thick tree trunk is visible in the center, and the overall atmosphere is lush and vibrant.

MADIDI NATIONAL PARK

The first stop on the expedition was to meet up with Ruth in the town of Rurrenabaque and travel to her Native Community of San José de Uchupiamonas in Madidi National Park, along the upper Amazon river basin in northeastern Bolivia, bordering Peru and Brazil. Established in 1995, Madidi is part of the largest protected areas in the world and in 2018 it was recognised by the Wildlife Conservation Society as the world's most biologically diverse national park.

It has such rich diversity due to its unique natural topography, from its high mountain tops covered in cloud forest, down into the steaming heat of lowland jungle. It's home to a variety of incredible and rare species, such as the spectacled bear, jaguar, river dolphin, and the andean cock-of-the-rock.

1.1 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We were visiting Madidi National Park to collaborate with the Quechua Tacana Indigenous People of San José de Uchupiamonas, whose ancestral home is Madidi and who have been protecting the area long before it became a national



park. This Ruth's community and for years she's been tirelessly leading the fight to protect Madidi and her ancestral territory from exploitation.

The team facilitated a series of Participatory Video workshops with eight women from San José de Uchupiamonas. Through role play, games and technical training, the team created a safe space for the women to explore the issues and challenges they face, while learning interview, presentation, and camera skills in a fun and supportive atmosphere.

After discussing many possible themes for their film, the group voted to document the threat of gold mining and how its impacting their community. One of the workshop participants, Fadi Aliaga, explained the impact of gold mining on their neighbouring community:

“There's a lot of child trafficking. There are bars and there is a lot of prostitution. As a mother with two girls, I don't want that to come here, to our town, to destroy us.”

- Fadi Aliaga

The workshop gave the women the confidence to voice their opinions and take control of their own narrative, so that they could communicate their fears and demands to the male decision makers within the community. Together, they co-produce a short film that concisely demonstrates the various threats, from gold mining's severe impact on human health, the threat it poses to the safety of women and girls, and how it drives deforestation and pollutes the rivers.

As the group progressed through the workshops day-by-day, Ruth was delighted by the women's response, as they increasingly became more self-assured and vocal. She explained that the women are usually quiet in community meetings and generally do not speak out against male authority figures.

“We want more women to empower themselves. We want them to know their rights. We want them to know that claiming their rights is not a crime. I believe that with this project we can make them understand this.”

- Ruth Alipaz Cuqui

1.2 | GOLD MINNING THREAT

While the team was in Madidi, the reality of the threats facing protected areas and Indigenous Peoples became very real; in a shock announcement, the government declared that they would open up three of the country's most important National Parks to gold mining - including Madidi. The government's statement was met by an outcry from the scientific community, environmentalists, and Indigenous rights defenders.

“Mining will destroy our territories and force us to leave. Our villages will be invaded and filled with other people, and we'll simply disappear as a culture.”

- Ruth Alipaz Cuqui

The team was able to publish an article with Al Jazeera, entitled Bolivian activists push back against mining industry, which documented events as they unfolded. Thanks to the intense public pressure, the government was forced to make a dramatic u-turn and annulled the agreement that they had signed with the gold mining companies. This was a huge win for environmental and social justice, but it demonstrates the threats that Indigenous People are facing every day.



This threat is even greater if you are a woman; all the female Indigenous leaders who work together through CONTIOCAP have experienced violence, oppression, or discrimination as they try to claim their rights and protect our natural world from destruction.

“

“When you defend Mother Nature you become a focal point of constant attack. It is already difficult to be a woman in this context; in a culture where just for being a woman you can be excluded, you can be abused, you can be raped [...] If you are a woman, who is also Indigenous, and who also speaks out - you are considered to be the worst. You are considered to be an obstacle, a dangerous person.”

- Ruth Alipaz Cuqui



A photograph of a lush tropical forest. The scene is dominated by dense green foliage. In the upper center, a large, dark silhouette of a tree with a complex, spreading canopy stands out against a bright, overexposed sky. The foreground is filled with various types of green leaves and branches, some in sharp focus and others blurred. The overall atmosphere is one of a wild, undisturbed natural space.

TARIQUIA NATIONAL RESERVE

The next stage of the expedition was in the very south of the country, near the border of Argentina, to visit and interview environmental defender Paula Gareca. She is leading the fight to protect Tariquía National Reserve from oil and gas companies who, with government support, are opening up this protected area for exploitation.

Ranging from an altitude of 1500m to 400m, Tariquía National Reserve is a diverse mix of cloud forest and dry forest, and is the only place in Bolivia that protects well conserved examples of the Forest of the Tucumano - Bolivian Yungas. It's home to a variety of rare wildlife, from spectacled bear and jaguar, to the threatened rufous-throated dipper and the spectacular military macaw.

Paula lives in the community of San José within the reserve; she is a mother of three grown up children and has escaped domestic violence. She has faced abuse and intimidation, making countless sacrifices in her family life to protect Tariquía from exploitation. Her worldview sits in defiance against the systems that are driving the ecological and climate collapse.



“We’re more involved in this fight because we are mothers. We believe that the land is Mother Earth - that is why we defend her. We consider the land to be borrowed; we are passengers in this life and then, when we leave here, it is left for those who come after us.”

- Paula Gareca

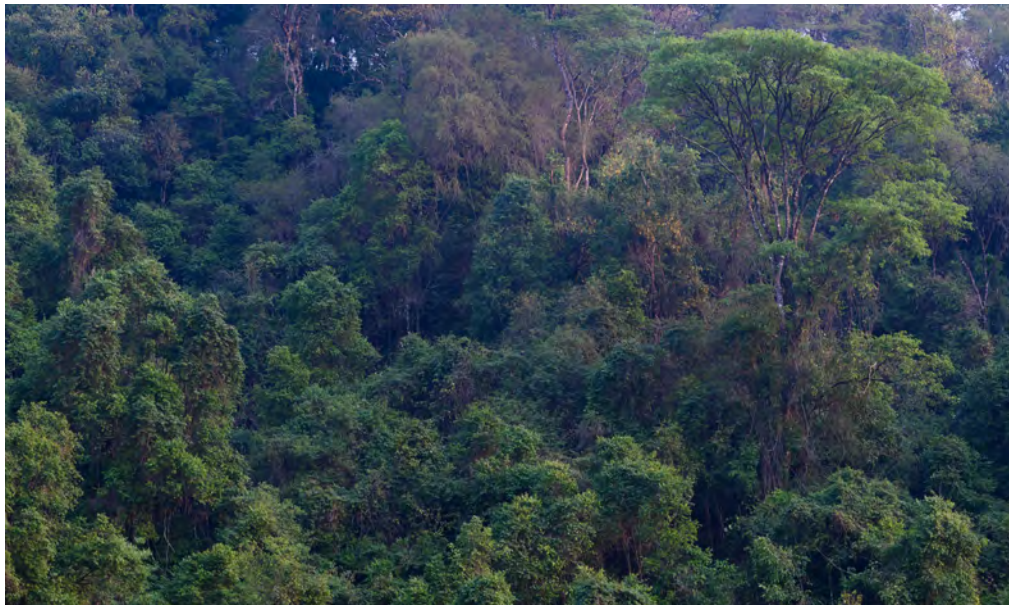
2.1. Short documentary

We travelled to Tariquia to interview Paula and create a short documentary about her struggle to protect the reserve from exploitation. She explained how the destruction of the environment and climate change was impacting communities, and how they are uniting to fight for justice.

“There is already a total change. Stronger heat, drought. It must be that Mother Nature is getting angry that they are ruining her. But we, as mothers, want to defend Mother Earth. We are not only meeting in Tariquía, we have to reach other territories and unite them. So it is not a small fight, it is a big fight, and a fair fight. That is why we’re not afraid of the government coming to attack us, because we’re not alone in carrying out this struggle.”

- Paula Gareca

Unfortunately, due to the country-wide strikes we could only safely travel between Tarijia and Tariquia for a limited time, so had just two days with Paula in the nature reserve, instead of the 10 days that we had initially planned. (For more details, see info on Adversities & Challenges on page 10-11). This severely limited our ability to capture sufficient footage for the short documentary we plan to produce and are currently working on a plan to overcome this challenge.



2.2. Oil & gas extraction

Paula has led her community with inspirational strength, conviction, and dignity. As the president of the ‘SubCentral de Tariquia’ during the last period of Evo Morales’ government, Paula took direct action by organising a march against the gas company and government.

She then took legal action to sue the government with a ‘Popular Action’, claiming that their oil and gas exploration plans do not comply with laws that are supposed to protect Indigenous rights, such as obtaining Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. Although these claims were rejected by the court, she continues to fight to get them recognised.

“The government only wants to live on gas and oil, more gas and oil. We live by having water, sowing seeds. Soon, we will no longer be able to produce, since it is no longer raining. So we will enter into tremendous poverty.”

- Paula Gareca



PROJECT AIMS & RESULTS

The project Defensoras is an female-led collaboration between Indigenous leaders from the Bolivian organisation, CONTIOCAP, and mediamakers in the UK.

Its aim is to:

- Amplify the fight of indigenous women who are being abused and criminalised for protecting their natural and cultural heritage.
- Empower indigenous women across Bolivia by sharing stories of female environmental defenders, giving communities agency over their rights.

While conducting research on these project aims, we created a large volume of unique primary data, including: interviews, video, photography, audio, visual materials (i.e. storyboards), and field notes. We also used existing published data, such as research papers, government records, journalism articles, and NGO publications.



The results of this project are:

- An Indigenous women's group in Madidi National Park were provided with training and capacity building, which empowered them to take control of their own narrative and communicate their demands to decision makers. This will be used as a tool for knowledge-sharing and awareness raising.
- Through in-depth interviews, the project captured the experiences and demands of female leaders Ruth Alipaz and Paula Gareca. Their stories can now be used to inspire and empower other Indigenous women and environmental defenders across Bolivia.
- The project has produced evidence and coverage of environmental and human rights violations by the Bolivian government and the National Service of Protected Areas (SERNAP).

For more on the impact of these results, please see Impact & Legacy on pages 23-24

A close-up photograph of a plant with green leaves and red buds, with a black text box overlaid.

ADVERSITIES & CHALLENGES

There were a wealth of adversities and challenges that had to be overcome with this project: Covid-19, changes to team members' availability, changes to costs and budget, safety, communication, project time schedules, and country-wide strikes across Bolivia.

COVID-19

We received the SES award in 2021 and we had hoped to travel to Bolivia that year. However, we had to postpone our visit several times due to the changes in travel restrictions and the fear of transmitting the disease within rural communities where there had been limited access and uptake in vaccination. The decision on when to travel and the constant rescheduling did cause a high level of anxiety and had knock-on consequences for the project, which I outline below.

TEAM'S AVAILABILITY

The initial plan was to spend six weeks in Bolivia, however the need to delay and reschedule the project numerous times, we could no longer find a date when all team members were available. We compromised on a four week expedition, with Ruth being available during the first two weeks and Eilidh available for the first three weeks. For the final week, Bethan was accompanied by a translator and guide who we hired in-country.

BUDGET

Our expedition budget was based on costing that we obtained at the end of 2020, so by the time we came to book in 2022, many of the costs had risen substantially - especially flights. This change in our budget, along with the reduced availability outlined above, meant we needed to make some changes to our travel plans and reduce the number of locations we were aiming to travel to.

SAFETY

In addition to the cost of travelling to some locations, the situation and level of risk had also changed significantly in the time between creating the project proposal and departing on the expedition. We had planned to visit the remote region of Isiboro Secure National Park and Indigenous Territory (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Secure, TIPNIS), a protected area situated between the

north of the Cochabamba Department and the south of the Beni Department. However, the area is known for coca production and drug trafficking; by the time we were able to visit Bolivia in 2022, the risks associated with this activity were deemed too high for us to safely travel to the region.

COMMUNICATION

Initially, communication with our in-country collaborator, Ruth Alipaz, was very good and she was actively involved in the co-design and planning of the project. However, as time went on and Covid-19 restriction lessened, Ruth became increasingly busy on other projects that meant she had to travel to remote areas of Bolivia with very limited access to Internet or phone signal. Although completely understandable that Ruth had competing priorities that were often of much more urgent importance, the lack of communication did make the constant re-planning and re-scheduling quite challenging, especially as Ruth had specific insight into the communities and women who we hoped to



collaborate with. To overcome this, we did make contact with a number of other people who had expertise within the region to seek advice and they became an invaluable additional support network.

TIME SCHEDULES

We had planned to carry out a 10-day workshop in Participatory Video in Madidi National Park. However, shortly before we arrived in the community, we were told that a region-wide sports tournament - which had been rescheduled due to COVID - was now taking place half-way through our visit. The women who we were to work with had been training all year for the tournament and participating in it was a moment of great community pride.

So, we had to re-plan our series of workshops so that we could fit it all into 5 days. We had hoped to be able to organise a community screening of the co-produced film, but with the reduced time this was no longer possible. However, we were successful at running the workshops and producing the film in the time frame, leaving it with Ruth and the women's group to show to the community at a later time.



COUNTRY-WIDE STRIKES

There were numerous strikes across the country during our expedition to Bolivia due to public unrest over the government's refusal to have a population census ahead of the next election. The barricading of roads in and out of all main towns across the country often made travel impossible. This severely impacted the time we had in Tariquía National Reserve, where we had planned to have 10 days of filming but this was reduced to one night and two days.

We had hoped to film and produce a short documentary featuring environmental defender Paula Gareca, however the extremely limited time we had with her has meant that our ambitions for this documentary have had to be curtailed. Despite this disappointment, we have secured additional funds to produce a short film and we are currently planning the best way forwards to realise our vision.

We overcame all the above challenges and adversities by careful risk management, as outlined on the following page.

A scenic view of a mountain range with a winding road through a valley. The mountains are rugged and brownish, with a clear blue sky above. A dirt road winds through the valley floor, and a river is visible in the distance.

RISK MANAGEMENT

We produced a detailed Risk Assessment that we reviewed regularly and up-dated as plans changed. It detailed the likelihood, severity and risk, as well as the control measures we would put in place, for the following hazards:

- Illness or Injury in remote location [risk: high]
- Transmission of COVID-19 [risk: moderate]
- Transport [risk: high]
- Weather Conditions [risk: low]
- Political climate [risk: moderate]
- Theft, attack, rape [risk: moderate]
- The team [risk: low]
- Wildlife attacks [risk: low]
- Accidental contact with indigenous communities living in isolation [risk: low]

The hazards that we encountered on the expedition were:

- Political climate due to the country-wide strikes, and;
- The team due to the difficulty with communications.

Read more about both these points in the section Adversities & Challenges on pages 19-20.

We were able to overcome these two main challenges and mitigate risk by having created a network of expert advisors in-country who provided invaluable support before and during the expedition.

Also, we created a Security Briefing document in addition to the Risk Assessment, which listed all our key contacts and emergency numbers. Filling in this detailed form was a useful way of thinking through and documenting all the various risks and precautions. It was an invaluable reference document and provided our contacts with all the information they would need, had anything gone wrong during the expedition.



COMMUNICATION & REACH

Article: Al Jazeera - [Bolivian activists push back against mining industry](#).

Presentation: SES Explorer Talk - DEFENSORAS: Amplifying Indigenous women in Bolivia through storytelling & community-made films.

Workshop: Arts Council of Wales - Decolonising the Story: A workshop on co-creation with Indigenous Peoples.

Film: The team has secured post-production funding for a short documentary, thanks to support from the Netherlands Committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN NL), and we are working on a plan for the film.



ALJAZEERA

News ▾

Israel War on Gaza

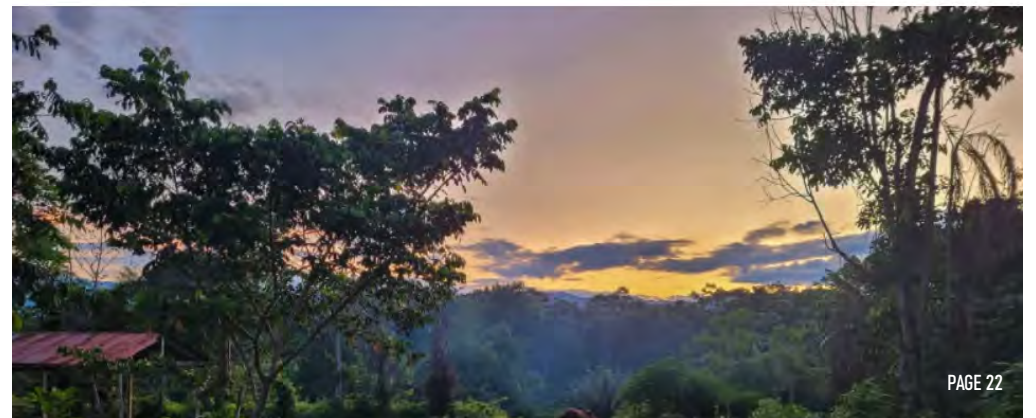
Features

Opinion

Video |

Bolivian activists push back against mining industry

Indigenous communities in several national parks say their way of life is threatened by the encroachment of gold mining.





IMPACT & LEGACY

The major impact of this project was to amplify the voice of Indigenous women in Bolivia who are rising up to protect Mother Earth and Indigenous rights from exploitation.

The Participatory Video workshops empowered the women's group to voice their opinion, concisely and powerfully demonstrating why gold mining will have such a devastating impact on their community. As the threats to Madidi National Park are escalating, this film stands in stark defiance against the powerful forces that want to exploit the Amazon and Indigenous Peoples.

Through her work with CONTIOCAP, Ruth will be able to use the film as evidence that many community members are strongly against gold mining; it will be a powerful tool, as often government officials try to strike private deals with community leaders through bribery, rather than obtaining consensus agreement from the whole community, as is their legal obligation through Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Ruth will also distribute this film within Indigenous communities across remote corners of Bolivia. Crucially, this will



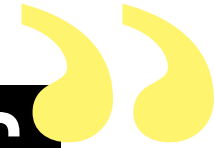
inspire other women, showing them that they are not alone in their struggle and they too can claim their rights.

Through researching the article for Al Jazeera, we unearthed many claims of corruption within the Bolivian government and the National Protected Areas Services (SERNAP), who are actively supporting extractive industries to open up the country's protected areas to exploitation, which is in violation of Indigenous rights and Bolivia's constitution. By publishing this article, we were able to add to the evidence of this corruption within the Bolivian government and SERNAP. This type of media coverage and public pressure led the government to make a dramatic u-turn on their decision to open-up three of Bolivia's National Parks to gold mining.

By donating all the media - the community-made film, interviews, film footage, and photography - to the Indigenous rights organisation CONTIOCAP we are leaving a lasting legacy; this evidence will strengthen their capacity to fight for environmental and social justice across Bolivia.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Often, as an environmentalist, I find it difficult to remain hopeful. The escalating ecological and climate crises are driving environmental and social injustices across the world.

At times, it feels impossibly daunting to face the colossal challenges that we need to overcome. We must create transformational change across society, if we are to stop the destruction of our planet and reduce suffering. Without doubt, there is a great chasm between where we are and where we need to be. It's easy to think: 'What's the point? What will my small actions achieve? Why not just give up?' Then, I meet people like Ruth and Paula, who are risking their lives to defend the natural world and human rights. I am inspired by their unwavering commitment and humbled by the sacrifices they make.

Through my work, I have been lucky to meet many Indigenous activists and environmental defenders across Latin America - collectively, through grassroots action, they are driving the change we need in the world. They are standing in defiance against the extractivist way of being that is causing ecological collapse, climate breakdown, and human rights abuses. They give me hope. They remind me that there are other worldviews where the wellbeing of people and nature comes before profit, power, and greed.

By amplifying these alternative voices and by supporting collective action, we can begin to challenge the dominant narrative and create new, powerful stories that can shape a sustainable and just future.

Thank you for supporting the Defensoras project and for standing in solidarity with Indigenous women across Bolivia.

A low-angle photograph of a dense tropical forest. Sunlight filters through the thick canopy of green leaves, creating a bright starburst effect in the center. Several tree trunks are visible, rising from the bottom and branching out into the foliage. The overall scene is lush and vibrant, with various shades of green and brown.

FUTURE RESERACH & PROJECTS

In October 2023, Bethan started a PhD to research participatory filmmaking and community engagement on the ecological and climate crisis. It is a funded project, through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the application process was highly competitive. In the application, Bethan detailed her experience of working with communities on participatory filmmaking thanks to the support of the Scientific Exploration Society. Without doubt, the award for Inspirational & Scientific Trailblazing and the expertise she gained through the Defensoras project greatly strengthened her application - she cannot thank the SES enough.

In November 2023, Eilidh won a BAFTA Scotland for her documentary, A Long Winter, in the Short Film & Animation category. As an environmental documentary that explores the relationship between people and nature, this film builds on Eilidh's body of work which has of course been supported by the Scientific Exploration Society, such as the Voices on the Road documentary.

Ruth continues to work tirelessly as the coordinator of CONTIOCAP, risking her life to stand up for Mother Earth and Indigenous rights. We are discussing the potential of future collaborations together - hoping to build on and strengthen the Defensoras project.



CONCLUSION

Defensoras was an extremely ambitious project that set-out to create meaningful community engagement, impact, and lasting legacy. Through the Participatory Video workshops these goals were achieved; the Indigenous women's group were empowered through the training and their community-made film will be an important tool for CONTIOCAP to use in the protection of Madidi National Park. The additional media footage - in depth interviews, video, and photography - that the team produced while investigating and documenting the threats to the National Park and Indigenous rights can be used by CONTIOCAP as they continue to build evidence of corruption within the Bolivian government and SERNAP.

Despite these important achievements, from the outset of the project there were many challenges to overcome and the team had to continuously re-assess plans (please see pages 19-20 for more details). This has meant that some objectives, such as creating a short documentary about Indigenous leader Paula Gareca, have had to be re-imagined. Despite this set-back, the team has secured additional funding and continues to collaborate, building on the success of the Defensoras project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funders:

Scientific Exploration Society
Netherlands Committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN NL)
One World Media

Advisers:

Ruth Alipaz
Sebastian Herzog
Bennett Hennessey
Yolima Cipagauta Rodriguez
Hayley Stuart
Alex Villca Limaco

Indigenous women's group:

Magali Macuapa
Nelida Navi
Maria Apana
Dora Apana
Fadi Aliaga
Vivian Macuapa

Interviewees:

Ruth Alipaz - CONTIOCAP
Paula Gareca - CONTIOCAP
Gonzalo Mondaca - CEDIB
Rafael Anze - College of Biologists of La Paz
Alex Villca Limaco - CONTIOCAP
Mariel Cabero Ugalde - IUCN NL

Translators:

Jone Troconis Aldaz
Juriko Rupay



THANK YOU

A massive thank you to all the team and supporters of
the Scientific Exploration Society (SES) - we are so grateful for what you have made possible.