



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

INTERAMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

# *A Message from our Executive Director*

This year, across Latin America and the world, the law is evolving to meet the urgency of our time.

From the historic Inter-American Court decision clarifying States' obligations to protect people from the climate crisis to new global agreements safeguarding our oceans, each of these milestones strengthens our collective legal framework for a more just planet, in harmony with nature.

At AIDA, we work to turn these and other legal advances into real impact across the region.

With strategic legal tools, we defend communities and territories, protect biodiversity,

and hold governments and corporations accountable.

One example is the Maya Poqomam community of Santa Cruz Chinautla. Their fight for environmental justice began locally, but it has the potential to inspire change across the Motagua River basin in Guatemala, and eventually throughout the region—showing how local action can drive transnational environmental justice.

The stories in this report show what's possible when law, science, and the strength of communities come together. Thank you for joining us in building a just and sustainable future across the Americas—one milestone at a time.

*Gladys Martinez*  
DIRECTORA EJECUTIVA DE AIDA



# AIDA in Numbers



**+40**

cases we work on in defense of the right to a healthy environment.



**+3,900**

people trained and informed through 12 webinars.



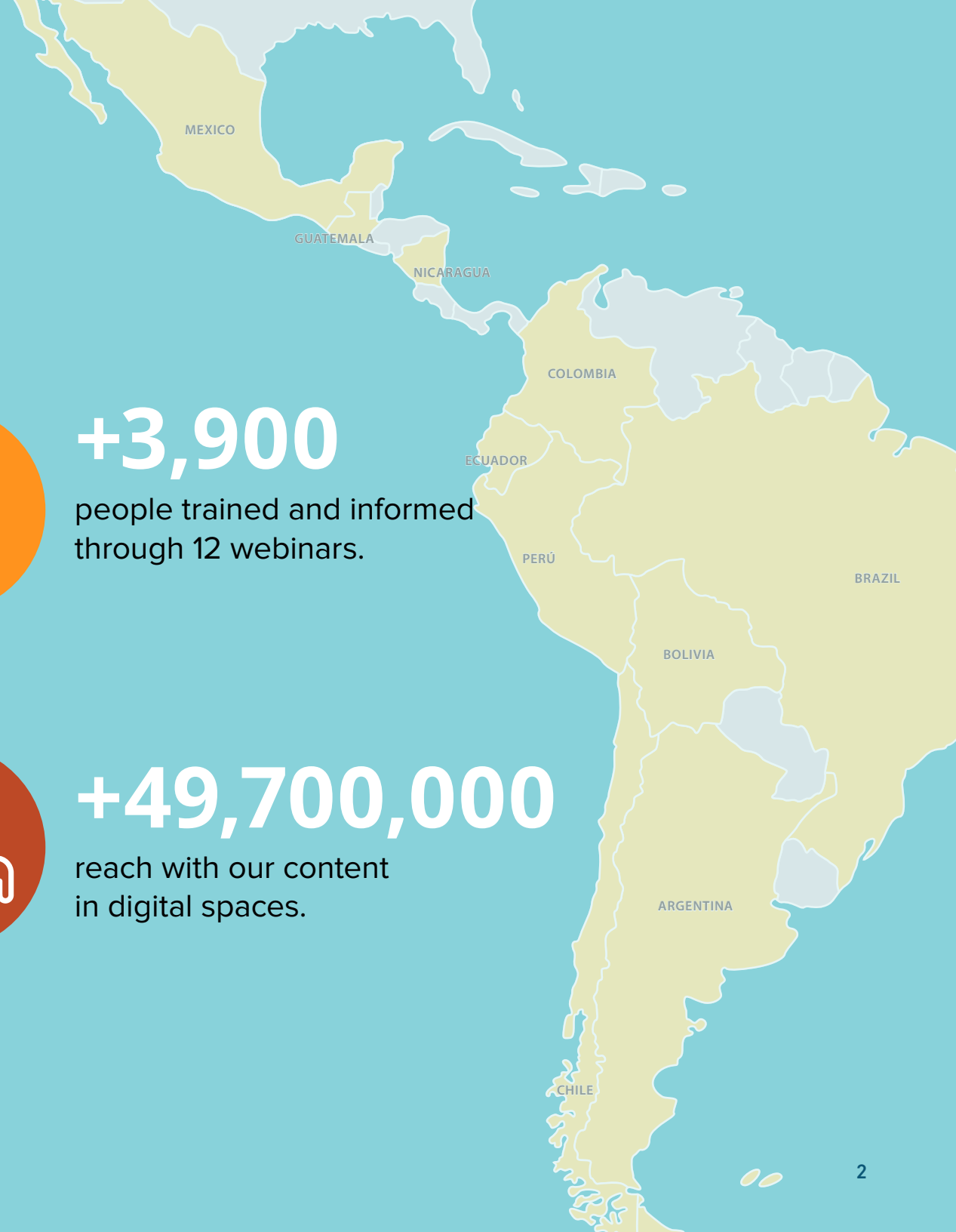
**+20,000,000**

people reached by coverage of our work in 120 media outlets.



**+49,700,000**

reach with our content in digital spaces.





# *Turning International Law Into Lasting Ocean Protection*

The ocean is the reason our planet is blue—its guiding force and the source of all life.

That vibrant color inspires our work to protect it from constant threats like pollution, overfishing, and the climate crisis.

This year, our efforts helped advance to two historic milestones with the potential to reshape the ocean's future—and our own: the activation of the High Seas Treaty for its swift implementation, and the entry into force of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.

Safeguarding an ecosystem as vast and vulnerable as the ocean is no easy task. It requires vision, collaboration, and years of work that often goes unseen.

For Gladys Martínez, AIDA's Executive Director, international law has long been the most powerful path forward—a transformative tool when government action alone is not enough.

That promise is reflected today in two treaties which, after nearly two decades of negotiation, are finally moving forward, renewing confidence in diplomacy and cooperation across nations and sectors.

The High Seas Treaty is the first binding international agreement to establish common rules for preserving the area of the ocean that belongs to no nation—nearly half the planet and one of its richest reservoirs of biodiversity.

“In addition to protecting key ecosystems through marine protected areas and rigorous

environmental assessments, the treaty moves us closer to environmental justice by ensuring our historically excluded region fair access to high seas resources and new development opportunities,” explains Martínez.

Meanwhile, the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies—which prohibits governments from providing direct or indirect financial support to illegal fishing and to the exploitation of overfished stocks—marks a turning point: the integration of environmental principles into international trade rules.

“It’s a much-needed boost for the recovery of numerous commercial and community food species across the continent,” she adds. “And a safety net for food security and the livelihoods of coastal communities.”

These achievements show that environmental protection is strongest when it reduces inequities and restores balance.

Our greatest contribution was ensuring that Latin America and the Caribbean had a strong voice

in both treaties. Throughout negotiations and ratification processes, we provided technical expertise to government representatives, helping secure their place at the tables where the agreements were shaped—and where their implementation is now being defined.

The ocean absorbs much of the pollution driving the climate crisis, making it our greatest ally. But it is also one of its main victims, pushed to the brink by warming waters and acidification.

In this context, these global milestones offer a hopeful path forward—one that promises lasting benefits for the ocean’s health and our own.

Turning them into concrete, effective action requires a new wave of effort. And AIDA is already riding it.



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## *A Legal Victory for the Poqomam People and Their Rivers*

Just twelve kilometers from Guatemala City, surrounded by eroded hillsides and wastewater streams filled with solid waste, a Maya Poqomam community is fighting to save its three rivers.

“When I was a child, we swam and played with the frogs in the rivers of Santa Cruz Chinautla. Now those memories are all that’s left. Today we live among trash from illegal dumps and sewage flowing down from the city,” recalls ancestral authority Efraín Martínez.

For decades, poor waste management in Chinautla and nearby urban areas has harmed the local population, disrupted livelihoods, and threatened the community’s pottery tradition—an artform that has shaped not only clay but identity for generations.

Tired of institutional neglect, the community organized and turned to the law and to science to make their voices heard.

With support from AIDA, the Bufete para Pueblos Indígenas and partners demanded that municipal authorities close illegal dumps and establish agreements with neighboring municipalities to stop the pollution and restore the rivers.

Working with a team of experts, residents used a digital app to document the illegal dumping sites. For AIDA scientist Javier Oviedo, the process was “a shared learning experience that produced precise information on the size and type of waste, and clear evidence of how poor waste management had intensified contamination.”

Armed with this knowledge, legal backing, and community resolve, their case became a strong lawsuit. In June 2025, it led to an unprecedented ruling: a court ordered the municipality to conduct studies, develop plans and programs to tackle pollution, and ensure meaningful community participation throughout the process.

“It’s the first time a Guatemalan court recognizes a people’s right to a healthy environment— and their central role in solutions,” explains AIDA attorney Bryslie Cifuentes.

The ruling is a seed—a precedent that could inspire action across more than 90 municipalities along the Motagua River basin, where trash flows to the Caribbean Sea and threatens the Meso-

american Reef, one of the world’s largest and most biodiverse transboundary reef systems.

For Martínez, the decision carries an even deeper resonance. In the Maya worldview, the earth, water, and trees are not resources—they are part of a living whole. “When we heal Mother Earth, we all heal.”

What began as a local fight now echoes across the region. The experience of the Poqomam people shows how women and men transformed indignation into organization—and how collective strength can open pathways for future generations to once again run beside clean rivers, where water is sacred and life can flow freely.





# *A Turning Point for Climate Justice in the Americas*

Transformative moments rarely appear out of nowhere. They emerge from countless decisions and actions that slowly build until they become a milestone.

That is what happened with Advisory Opinion No. 32 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights—a decision that feels like ours, not only because we contributed to it, but because it grew from a long chain of mutually reinforcing efforts across Latin America.

Published on July 3, this historic opinion confirmed something undeniable: States have a legal obligation to protect people and communities from the climate crisis, addressing both its causes and its impacts.

“The Court created a before-and-after moment for international law by es-

tablishing that States must confront the climate crisis through concrete obligations grounded in existing laws and treaties—obligations that are not optional,” explains Liliana Ávila, Director of AIDA’s Human Rights and Environment Program.

For communities already living with extreme droughts, fires, and floods, this decision opens a pathway to justice.

This milestone began in 2023, when Colombia and Chile formally requested the opinion. What followed was a consultation process without precedent: the Court received more than 200 written submissions from diverse actors, including communities directly affected by the climate crisis—voices grounded in their deep relationship with nature.

We served as a bridge, helping ensure many of those voices could speak directly to the Court, and we contributed our own submission rooted in more than 25 years of experience connecting environmental protection with human rights.

“The significance of this decision for global climate justice lies in its recognition that every person has the right to a healthy climate—not as a privilege for those alive today, but as an inheritance for future generations,” Ávila notes. “The Court also makes clear that companies are not exempt from responsibility: States must oversee their operations and prevent them from violating human rights in the context of the climate emergency.”

With tremendous transformative potential, this new tool can now be used to pursue justice in national and international courts, in climate negotiation forums, and in advocacy spaces where public policies are created or strengthened.

“There is now an international ruling that protects us,” says Julián Medina, a Colombian fisherman from the Gulf of Morrosquillo whose testimony reached the Court.

Released in a turbulent global moment, Advisory Opinion No. 32 offers a breath of hope. Alongside similar decisions, it strengthens a growing global movement calling for ambitious, effective action on the greatest challenge facing our planet.

On its own, the decision does not guarantee structural transformation. But it lays a legal foundation that communities, advocates, and policymakers can use to demand—and achieve—real, lasting climate action.

At AIDA, we are taking on that challenge. Climate justice is no longer just an aspiration—it is a legal obligation, and the path to fulfillment is now clearly defined. We are committed to ensuring that this ruling becomes a catalyst for real, lasting change.



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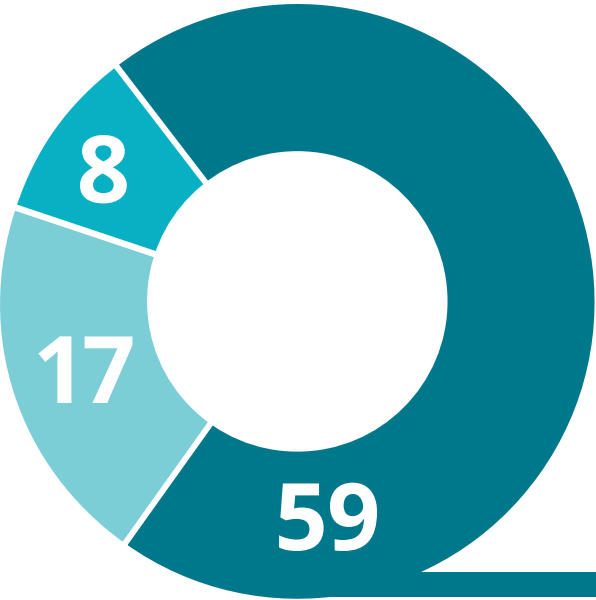


# Our Team

MEMBERS  
OF THE BOARD

INTERNS

MEMBERS OF  
THE AIDA STAFF



Administration and  
Human Resources

6

Science

11

Legal

29

Communications

6

Fundraising

4

Executive Team

3

# Finances

How does AIDA spend donations?



Program expenses



Fundraising expenses



Administrative expenses



Subgrants

## Statement of Activities

	FY 2024	FY 2025*
REVENUES		
Grants	4,495,677	1,973,349
Donations from Individuals	209,709	475,142
Investment Income	218,537	213,020
Program Service Revenue	65,311	4,911
Donated Services and Facilities	494,160	0
TOTAL REVENUES	5,483,394	2,666,422
EXPENSES		
Program Expenses	2,805,603	3,849,286
Fundraising Expenses	117,786	156,461
Administrative Expenses	251,555	287,291
Donated Services and Facilities	494,160	0
Regranting to Partner Orgs in the Region	672,487	783,208
TOTAL EXPENSES	4,341,590	5,076,246

\* UNAUDITED financials that will be updated post-audit.

## Statement of Financial Position

	FY 2024	FY 2025
ASSETS		
Banks	7,629,081	6,349,719
Accounts Receivable	3,849,671	1,693,680
Prepaid Expenses	14,115	0
Fixed Assets	6,428	3,857
Other Assets	0	643,420
TOTAL ASSETS	11,499,295	8,690,676
LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	798,441	254,001
Other Payables	149,993	201,486
Credit Cards Payable	50,072	47,265
TOTAL LIABILITIES	998,505	502,753
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted Net Assets	1,987,637	5,367,635
Temporarily Restricted	8,513,153	2,820,288
TOTAL NET ASSETS	10,500,790	8,187,924
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	11,499,295	8,690,676



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