ANNUAL REPORT 2018

20 YEARS
AIDA
For a healthy environment
A small group of dedicated people can create such major change. By that we mean our donors.
In 1995, some very smart people from environmental law groups in several countries got together to strategize.

They realized that working in national legal systems in many countries throughout the wide region of Latin America was effective – and that expertise in international law would make them even more successful.

For one thing, Latin America’s national legal systems are willing to incorporate international law. For another, applying international law in one country can create regional impact.

And so, in 1998, AIDA was born.

Starting with a single employee, AIDA didn’t take long to start improving the environment and people’s lives. Over the years we grew steadily. Now we have a team of 26 attorneys, scientists, media specialists, fundraisers, and administrators who are both from and working in eight countries spanning from Chile to the United States.

With passion and skill, AIDA’s attorneys have spurred international authorities to scrutinize industrial activities, government policies, and the policies of multilateral institutions. Our analyses have led national and international courts to create important legal precedents.


It’s pretty amazing to think that a small group of dedicated people can create such major change. By that we mean our wonderful donors. Every donated dollar supports not only AIDA, but all our partners throughout Latin America and beyond. We’re so grateful for every individual and foundation supporter.

We have a plan to keep growing, to expand our influence geographically and legally. And with your continued support, we’re sure to go far in the next 20 years.
20 MAJOR VICTORIES

In collaboration with local, national, regional, and international partners, AIDA played a key role in these and many other victories for people, places, and the planet.

1998 – present

Peru strengthens national air-quality regulations and begins specialized health monitoring for children in the city of La Oroya, site of an industrial complex that spewed tons of lead, arsenic, and other toxic pollutants.

2002

AIDA pioneers citizen enforcement of the Ramsar Convention, an international agreement for the protection of wetlands, leading Costa Rica to ban oil drilling in its Caribbean waters.

2006

Chile’s government stops plans to build a massive aluminum smelter and a hydropower project that threaten pristine waters in Patagonia, thanks to efforts by an international coalition.

2007-present

Mexico’s government denies permits for a series of massive tourism projects near Cabo Pulmo, site of a 20 million-year-old coral reef that supports more than 800 marine species at the tip of Baja California, Mexico.

2008

Costa Rica’s Supreme Court protects leatherback sea turtles and orders the government to limit development within the National Leatherback Marine Park.

2011-17

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights recognizes the right to a healthy environment as fundamental to human existence and recognizes the link between climate change and human rights.

2017

Costa Rica adopts a National Wetlands Policy, informed by AIDA’s participation on the National Wetlands Committee; it protects roughly seven percent of the nation’s territory.

2017

Colombia adds its largest coastal mangrove forest, the Ciénaga Grande, to the Montreux Record of the world’s most endangered wetlands, committing to use international technical and financial support to bring the area back to health.

2017

AIDA provides legal and scientific expertise to citizens of Cajamarca, Colombia, who held a public referendum on whether to ban mining in their biodiverse territory; 98% reject mining in favor of environmental protection.

2018

AIDA helps shape the Green Climate Fund, a United Nations-based fund for climate projects in the developing world; the Fund’s board adopts policies informed by AIDA’s input.
To prevent environmental, health, and climate damages, AIDA creates and coordinates a Regional Alliance on Fracking, composed of more than 30 groups from Central and South America.

Panama’s Supreme Court nullifies a Ministry of Environment resolution that would have allowed up to 90% of the water in rivers, lakes, and other waterbodies to be used for large infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric dams.

AIDA establishes and coordinates the Environmental Justice Network of Bolivia to strengthen local capacities in the use of law and litigation for environmental protection.

Sustained advocacy leads Colombia to curtail indiscriminate aerial spraying of glyphosate, a toxic herbicide, on forests, fields, the Ecuador border region, and national parks.

Mexico amends its Constitution to strengthen human rights protections and to improve the right to a healthy environment, including the human right to water.

Mexico’s government recognizes violations of environmental and human rights laws and halts construction of La Parota Dam, preventing displacement of 25,000 people.

Panama’s Supreme Court rules against resort developers and affirms protected status for Panama Bay, a wildlife refuge that shelters endangered jaguars, sea turtles, and other endangered wildlife.

AIDA establishes and coordinates the Environmental Justice Network of Colombia, through which hundreds of professionals and environmental organizations build their capacity for advocacy and collaboration.

Colombia’s Constitutional Court bans mining in páramos, high-altitude wetlands that supply fresh water and act as carbon sinks. It’s the first time that a court in the region recognizes the importance of climate change to protect an ecosystem.

For the first time in Costa Rica, an appellate court cancels a large gold-mining concession because it poses environmental risks, including across the border in Nicaragua—preserving a river that supports great biodiversity.

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AIDA BY THE NUMBERS, 2018

- Board Members: 9
- Executive Directors: 2
- Attorneys: 10
- Scientists: 2
- Communications Specialists: 6
- Assistants, administrators and fundraisers: 6
- Interns: 25
- Technical Reports on Law and Science: 8
- Legal Briefs: 8
- Petitions to the Inter-American Development Bank: 2
- Networks Coordinated: 4

11 Countries Where AIDA Provided Legal Services to Dozens of Communities

185 Individual Donors

11 Foundation Donors
2,285 Participants in 17 Webinars
795 People Trained in 13 Seminars, Workshops, and Roundtables
14 International Treaty Organizations and Development Banks Engaged
1 Documentary, *The Battle for the Reefs of Veracruz*, Screened in 40 Cities
8 Government Institutions Engaged
The Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a broadly applicable opinion establishing the right to a healthy environment as fundamental to human existence. This opinion, which clarifies State obligations on human rights as related to the environment, sets mandatory standards and can be used to argue for expanded environmental protections in many American nations. It also establishes obligations for States to prevent environmental harm in other countries.

For the first time, multinational efforts are being coordinated to protect fish that keep reefs healthy in Latin America. AIDA created coalitions of academics, governments, and non-governmental organizations in Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico.

The Green Climate Fund strengthened its Indigenous Peoples Policy and Environmental and Social Management System. Accountability and public participation in the Fund’s processes are now improved, and the Fund has committed to improve environmental and social outcomes.

The Brazilian government signaled it would no longer promote new mega-dams in the Amazon basin. Paulo Pedrosa, the Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, said the government didn’t want to take on more battles against indigenous and traditional communities.

Authorities halted further mining development in Colombia's biodiverse Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region. The decision saves the territories of the Kogui, Arhuaco, Wiwa, and Kankuamo indigenous peoples from further mining damage.

AIDA’s legal and communications advocacy in support of local, national, and regional partners helped to bring about these major achievements:
Indigenous and black communities in Colombia now participate in Atrato River basin water management. Community members sit on a new government commission created in response to a Constitutional Court ruling granting them biocultural rights.

The Controller General of Colombia opened an investigation into HidroItuango Dam. Due to violations of environmental regulations caused by the dam’s construction, the National License Agency imposed a heavy fine on the corporation building it.

The government of Colombia created a national mechanism for receiving complaints about bee deaths. Beekeepers have estimated that 10,500 bee colonies are disappearing each year, an alarming fact that could have a major impact on the biodiversity and food supply of the Andean nation.

Mexico’s National Wetlands Committee creates a work group to deal with threats to wetlands of international importance. Through multisectoral work, the group seeks to be a source of consultation and coordination on threats to these wetlands, recognized internationally under the Ramsar Convention.

Mexico limits tourism and development in favor of the protection of Yum Balam Biosphere Reserve. The government is creating a new management plan to better protect the diverse plants and animals of the coastal wetland of international importance.

Mexico began the process of creating a protected reserve on Los Tuxtlas Reef. The biodiverse marine environment in the Southeast of the Gulf of Mexico is threatened by increased marine traffic and infrastructure expansion.
NEW INITIATIVES

**Bringing women’s rights into environmental advocacy**

Large dams threaten indigenous and traditional communities, with unequal effects on women. Applying a gender analysis to cases in Guatemala, AIDA:

- Documented the impacts of the dams on women and the environment,
- Helped affected Mayan villagers devise a legal strategy, and
- Filed a complaint on behalf of the communities to the Inter-American Development Bank Group, which financed the dam. We aim to hold the bank accountable to its own gender and environmental policies by bringing multiple similar complaints to the bank.

**Coordinating multinational action to reduce reliance on coal**

Latin American nations are expanding investment in coal mines and coal-fired power at just the time humanity needs to switch to clean energy. To address the threat of climate change, AIDA:

- Convened organizations and communities from the region and began developing a coordinated legal strategy to end Latin America’s reliance on coal,
- Helped launch a coalition of organizations using the law to stop expansion of coal mining in Colombia (the world’s fourth-largest exporter), compel the government to face the climate impacts of coal, and create a just transition for mine workers, and
-Began to develop a national legal strategy to shut down coal-fired power plants in Chile.
Strengthening legal protections to save reefs in Latin America

Coral reefs would suffocate if algae-eating fish disappeared, yet people are over-harvesting those fish. AIDA is working with multinational treaty organizations, nonprofits, and governments in six nations to:

• Create legal protections for these essential fish, and
• Require authorities to create fishing rules that consider the needs of the entire ecosystem.

Improving security for environmental defenders

Latin America is the most dangerous region in the world for environmental advocates. This year we began:

• Improving digital security through a comprehensive risk assessment, training, and protocols, and
• Collaborating in regional efforts to devise a common framework for ensuring personal safety, incorporating effective measures used by communities and organizations we work with.
THE OPINION IS A TURNING POINT IN OUR 20 YEARS OF WORK DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
A HISTORIC ADVANCE

In an advisory opinion made public in February 2018, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights expressly said, for the first time, that States must respect the human rights to life and personal integrity in relation to environmental protection.

There were many firsts in this opinion. The Court:
- Recognized the impact of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights;
- Expanded State responsibility to guarantee human rights in areas outside a State’s territory; and
- Affirmed that States must guarantee public participation, access to information, and access to justice.

Several AIDA attorneys worked long hours to prepare a legal assessment for the Court, which we presented in a hearing last year. The Court incorporated many of our ideas.

Previously, we organized many important hearings on environmental matters before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. We initiated cases and presented arguments to establish State responsibility to protect citizens from extreme levels of toxic pollution in La Oroya, Peru; to protect indigenous communities from the impacts of Brazil’s Belo Monte Dam; and to protect Mayan communities in Mexico from deforestation and destruction of their territory. We hosted regional workshops and prepared publications about these issues.

The opinion is a turning point in our 20 years of work defending human rights and the environment before the Inter-American System; the Court’s interpretation greatly expands government obligations and accountability. Going forward, AIDA will publicize and cite this opinion to implement it through our national and international casework.
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

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<th>FISCAL YEAR 17</th>
<th>FISCAL YEAR 18</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REVENUES</strong></td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Investment Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Revenues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donated Services and Facilities(^1)</td>
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<td>189,209</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>EXPENSES</strong></td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Administrative Expenses</td>
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<td>Donated Services and Facilities(^1)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NET ORDINARY REVENUES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS(^2)</strong></td>
<td>281,737</td>
<td>45,544</td>
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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

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<th>31-jul-17</th>
<th>31-jul-18</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td>Cash and investments</td>
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<td>Accounts receivable</td>
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<td>Property and equipment</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>61,223</td>
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<td>Credit cards payable</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>1,316,154</td>
<td>1,358,424</td>
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NOTES:

1) AIDA receives significant in-kind donations of professional time as well as office costs, materials, and equipment from AIDA participating organizations, particularly Earthjustice. Numerous professional volunteers and interns also contribute time and resources to AIDA. These contributions are valued at fair market value and shown in the Financial Statements as “Donated Services and Facilities.”

2) Because AIDA receives multi-year grants, a positive change in net assets results from receipt of funds that are designated for use in future years.

HOW AIDA SPENDS DONATIONS

- 83.39% Program Services
- 6.56% Administration
- 10.05% Fundraising
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Manolo Morales, Executive Director, Management and Environmental Law Corporation (ECOLEX), Ecuador
Vice-President: Jerónimo Rodríguez, Deputy Chief of Party, Natural Wealth Program, Chemonics International, Colombia
Secretary: Margot Venton, Staff Lawyer, Ecojustice, Canada
Chief Financial Officer: Martin Wagner, International Program Director, Earthjustice, USA

Rafael González, President, Justice for Nature (JPN), Costa Rica
Xavier Martínez Esponda, Technical Operating Director, Mexican Environmental Law Center (CEMDA), Mexico
Monica Roa, Independent Human Rights Activist, Colombia
Pedro Solano, Executive Director, Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA), Peru

LEGAL AND SCIENTIFIC TEAM

Andrés Ángel Huertas
Liliana Ávila
María José González-Bernat
Juana Hofman Quintero
Daniel Iglesias Márquez
Carlos Lozano Acosta
Gladys Martínez de Lemos
Florence Ortiz Greene
Marcella Ribeiro d’Avila Lins Torres
Magie Rodríguez Esquivel
Camilo Thompson Poo
Claudia Velarde Ponce de León

COMMUNICATIONS, FUNDRAISING, AND ADMINISTRATION

Janet Ávila
Emilia Carrara Castilleja
Dena DeBry
Anna Miller
Aida Navarro Barnetche
Fernanda Nuñez Espinosa
Victor Quintanilla
Anayantzín Robles Méndez y Hernández
Wayne Salazar
Ivette Sánchez
Kim Winters
Laura Yaniz Estrada

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Argentina - CEDHA
Canada - Ecojustice
Chile - FIMA
Costa Rica - CEDARENA and JPN
Ecuador - ECOLEX
Mexico - CEMDA
Panama - CIAM
Peru - SPDA
United States - Earthjustice

Many thanks to these former AIDA Team Members who contributed to the success of 2017-18:
Gustavo Alanís, Board Member
Flavia do Amaral Viera, Attorney
Rodrigo da Costa Sales, Attorney
Hector Herrera, Network Social Media
Verónica Muriel Carrioni, Attorney
Tania Noguera, Communications Coordinator
Andrés Pirazzoli, Attorney
Tom Skeele, Fundraiser

AIDA TEAM

CO-DIRECTORS

Anna Cederstav
Astrid Puentes Riaño
Graphic design: Tangente Studio
Cover: A school of Rainbow Parrotfish swim through a reef. Their preservation is the focus of our newest marine initiative.