

JUSTICE FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT
IN THE AMERICAS
2015
ANNUAL REPORT



Thank you!

A Letter from the Executive Directors

Great progress in the past year demonstrates AIDA's effectiveness in securing justice for people, wildlife, and special places. Based in nine countries of the Americas, we foster collaboration, transfer lessons learned, and implement legal and communications strategies across national boundaries. As well as helping us realize the achievements described in the pages that follow, our supporters made possible several exciting advances in Colombia.

In a victory that came after 17 years of advocacy, the Colombian government suspended its widespread spraying of a harmful chemical in rural areas. The spraying—part of a US-financed program to destroy coca and poppy crops—has for years damaged sensitive natural areas, water sources, and wildlife. It has injured people, destroyed food crops, and forced families, including some in indigenous communities, off their lands. Meanwhile, production of the targeted crops simply shifted within Colombia and the Andean region.

Through the years we worked with organizations and communities in Colombia and the US. We contributed scientific and legal expertise to demonstrate to the governments that the spraying violated Colombian, US, and international laws in many ways. The coalition generated media coverage, built public opposition to the sprayings, and garnered support for more sustainable and effective solutions to the problem. Over time, both the US Congress and the Colombian Constitutional Court sought our expertise. This tremendous victory for justice and environmental health, in one of the world's most biodiverse nations, highlights the importance of persistence and long-term engagement.

Also in Colombia, our advocacy helped compel the government to protect a large portion of the Santurbán páramo, a unique high-altitude wetland threatened by proposed mines. The Santurbán supplies fresh water to millions, provides habitat for the Andean bear and other endangered plants and animals, and captures carbon pollution from the burning of fossil fuels. AIDA presented legal arguments and joined with local groups to build public pressure to safeguard páramos. Although parts of the Santurbán are still at risk, the government set a powerful precedent for protecting freshwater sources from the ravages of mining.

As is always the case, much work remains to be done. Again in Colombia, a massive gold mine threatens a critical agricultural region, coalmine expansions endanger impoverished indigenous communities, and the Magdalena River watershed is a global hotspot for toxic mercury pollution.

AIDA's ability to address the many challenges that will arise—not only in Colombia, but throughout the Americas—depends on our partners: the caring individual donors, foundations, volunteers, and allied organizations that contribute to and support our work. Together we are making a real difference. We treasure you for being part of AIDA, and for sharing our belief in the power of justice.

With great appreciation, **THANK YOU!**



Anna Cederstav

Anna Cederstav



Astrid Puentes R.

Astrid Puentes Riaño

How AIDA works

With communities
and partners throughout the Americas



Use the law to protect
the environment

PROBLEMS

Unsustainable
development

Detrimental
public policies

OUTCOMES

*Justice for the
environment*

Laying the
groundwork
to protect our
right to a healthy
environment
for sustainable
development
in the region

METHODS

**Hold governments
accountable through
high-profile legal actions**

Advocacy through inter-
governmental organizations
and international financial
institutions

**Bring arguments from
international law to domestic
court cases and policy debate**

Move latest developments in international
law down to the level of trial courts and
environmental agencies

**Build capacity
and share skills**

Collaboration, partnership,
and joint strategy
development



A woman with long, curly brown hair stands in a tropical environment, pointing her right arm towards a large pile of debris on the left. She is wearing a white dress with a brown and red floral pattern and a red and orange beaded necklace. The background is filled with lush green foliage, including palm trees. The ground is covered with dry leaves and branches.

HUMAN RIGHTS & ENVIRONMENT

“I’m losing my house, I’m losing the river, losing everything.”

Antonia Mello’s city, Altamira, Brazil, is being torn down, its thousands of residents forcibly relocated to shoddy housing far away. Belo Monte, the world’s third-largest dam, nears completion, and river communities in the Amazon are suffering.

Antonia leads Movimento Xingú Vivo, a grassroots group of people living along the Xingú River. She explains, “The loss is of a life that was. I had a goal, I had a dream, I had a project. I don’t feel good when I go to the river and see what’s happening, the islands unbalanced. No. My home was all that. Was. A free river. Lovely green islands. For me, everything is linked. It’s just sad.”

For more than five years, AIDA has supported a coalition of more than 30 river communities and organizations, including indigenous communities, in their fight to prevent negative social and environmental impacts of the Belo Monte project. We aim to hold the government of Brazil and the dam-building consortium accountable for ensuring that river communities at a minimum have safe and adequate housing, proper sanitation, functioning schools, and a healthcare system—none of which have been provided so far.

AIDA is defending the rights of the affected communities by presenting legal arguments and evidence of harms to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations. We have built international pressure on Brazil to recognize and remedy the environmental and social harms caused by Belo Monte and other large dams throughout the Amazon region. The Brazilian government took notice earlier this year, when President Rousseff admitted that mistakes have been made and the government required the construction consortium to analyze the impacts on river communities and make plans to address them. Just as we went to press, however, the government approved operation of the dam for now, subject to compliance with conditions. AIDA is urgently pursuing international legal actions to force compliance with these conditions and protect the indigenous and river communities affected by the operation of the dam.



An underwater photograph of a coral reef. The scene is dominated by large, branching, light-colored coral structures. A small, brown and yellow fish with a prominent white eye is swimming in the center-left. The background is a deep blue, and the foreground shows some darker, more complex coral and rock formations.

MARINE PROTECTION

Manuel Victoria

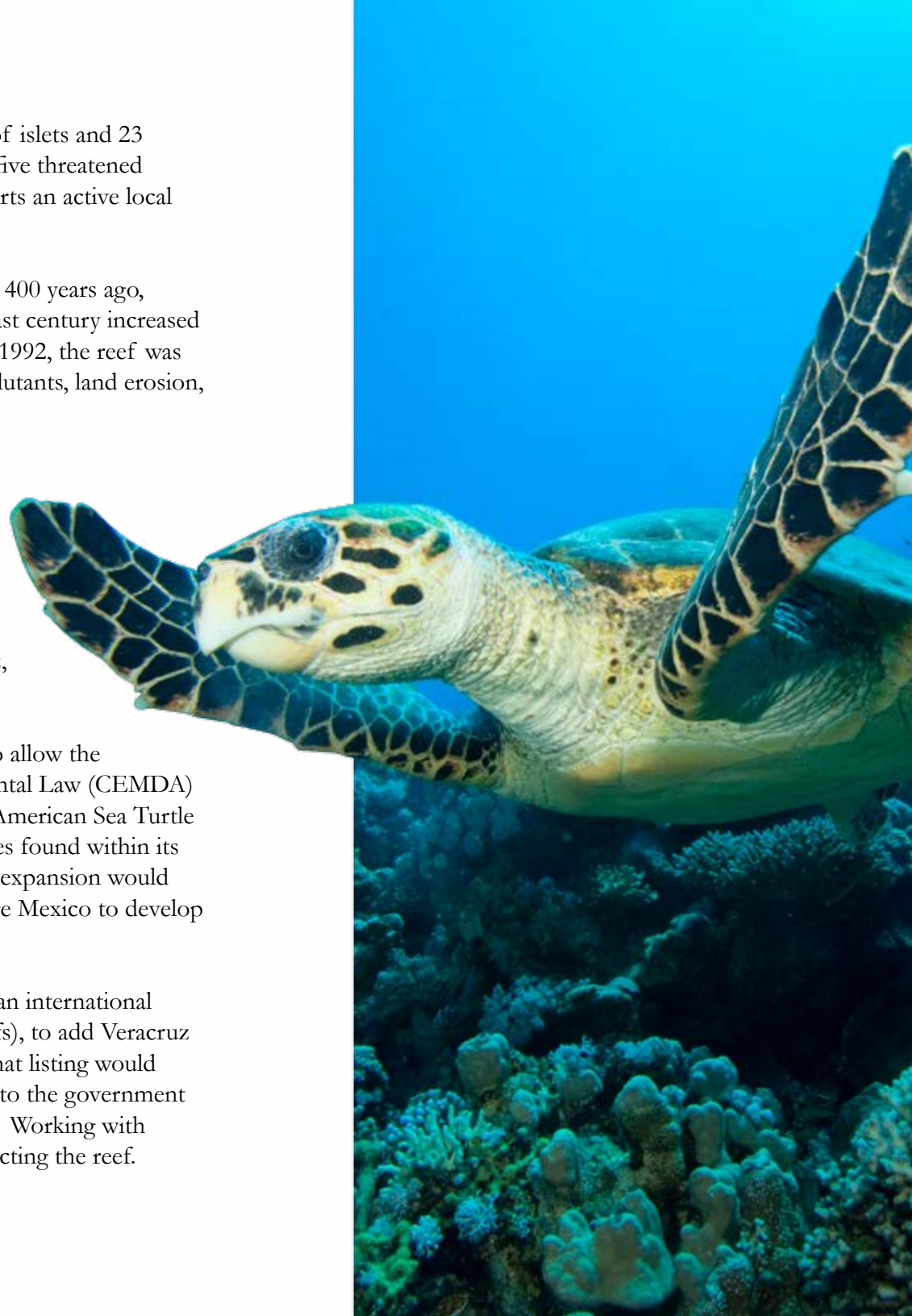
Mexico's Veracruz Reef System, an underwater mountain range of islets and 23 coral reefs, hosts an incredible diversity of marine life, including five threatened and endangered species of sea turtle. The reef system also supports an active local economy based on fishing, sport diving, and tourism.

Ever since Hernán Cortés founded the city and port of Veracruz 400 years ago, human activities have damaged the reef. Industrialization in the last century increased harms as port facilities, ship traffic, and polluted runoff grew. In 1992, the reef was declared a National Sea Park to prevent further damage from pollutants, land erosion, excessive fishing, and destruction of mangroves.

Nevertheless, the Mexican government has approved a massive port expansion that promises further damage to the delicate reef. The government's environmental assessment of the port expansion claims the project poses no harm to protected species, but Mexican and international scientists vehemently disagree. Critically endangered hawksbill and Kemp's ridley sea turtles, which breed on the beaches at Veracruz, are particularly threatened.

To prevent further destruction of the already stressed reef and to allow the turtles to recover, AIDA and the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA) requested intervention by the Scientific Committee of the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention, under which Mexico has obligations to protect turtles found within its borders. We detailed the direct and indirect impacts that the port expansion would have on turtles and their habitat, and asked the Committee to urge Mexico to develop a conservation plan for the endangered species.

AIDA also called on Member States of the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the protection of wetlands (including shallow coral reefs), to add Veracruz Reef to its list of areas in need of priority action and support. That listing would provide access to enhanced support from the Ramsar Secretariat to the government of Mexico in the development of a protective management plan. Working with CEMDA, we are also generating public support in favor of protecting the reef.





FRESHWATER PRESERVATION

Gustavo Danemann

The proposed Las Cruces dam threatens one of the last large free-flowing rivers in Mexico, the San Pedro Mezquital. The dam would also reduce freshwater flow to Mexico's Marismas Nacionales, vast protected wetlands that harbor plentiful wildlife and the nation's largest mangrove forest.

Unfortunately, in September 2014, Mexico's Environment Secretary issued a permit for the dam's construction and operation. In an effort to prevent ecological damage and to protect the indigenous peoples and traditional communities that depend on water from the river, AIDA's team swung into action.

In the past year, AIDA has urged international authorities to intervene to protect Marismas Nacionales, which is considered a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention; pressed Mexico's National Wetlands Commission to oppose the dam; and presented information about the dam's impacts on indigenous peoples to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to the United Nations. We also worked with the communities and various NGO partners, especially Grupo Ecológico Manglar and the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA), to design a broad legal strategy to protect the river and indigenous rights.

Meanwhile, we have brought widespread public and media attention to the case. We built a website devoted to the issue, generated significant press coverage and used social media to get the public engaged. We also collected nearly 50,000 signatures from people opposed to the dam and presented these to the authorities. AIDA's work is building momentum to save the river and Marismas Nacionales, along with the communities and sustainable economies that depend on these natural treasures.



Gustavo Danemann



CLIMATE CHANGE

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the world's largest fund for climate action, intended to fund ambitious activities to address climate change in developing nations. Unfortunately, despite the impact it can have in creating climate change solutions, the Fund receives little attention or oversight, particularly in Latin America.

Seeing the need for intervention, AIDA's climate change team, led by attorney Andrea Rodríguez, began to advocate before the GCF Board. Together with our partners, AIDA promotes several guiding principles for the Fund: public participation, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights, and country-ownership.

Initially, the GCF board barely involved civil society groups in discussions and did not seem to value outside input. Rodríguez and others who flew across the globe to attend meetings were not allowed to sit in the same room as the board, and received critically important draft resolutions and policies only a few days in advance, making it difficult to provide reasoned input.

Despite these challenges, our persistent efforts have created change: we now have close working relationships with GCF board members. AIDA has especially helped Latin American representatives by providing key resources and analysis, as well as a civil society perspective.

We are very pleased and proud to see that the Fund is beginning to proactively seek civil society input and is valuing differing perspectives as it makes important decisions about climate solutions. The board has started issuing official public calls for input in advance of key decisions. It has also decided to mandate stakeholder participation throughout project and program implementation.

AIDA also informs Latin American citizens and governments about the importance of the Fund. For example, we have prepared and distributed Spanish-language summaries of the GCF meetings and have organized meetings to enable dialogue between representatives of the Fund, governments, development banks, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector. We are bringing attention to the actions of the board and involving a much broader group of stakeholders in the development of this critical fund.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGE IN NET ASSETS		
	FISCAL YEAR 14	FISCAL YEAR 15
REVENUES		
Grants	622,729	839,902
Donations	19,939	68,714
Investment Income	790	550
Other Revenues	42,090	3,276
Donated Services and Facilities ¹	134,691	396,123
TOTAL REVENUES	820,238	1,308,565
EXPENSES		
Program	656,768	764,874
Fundraising	70,317	123,689
Administrative Expenses	38,914	53,140
Donated Services and Facilities ²	134,691	396,123
TOTAL EXPENSES	900,690	1,284,686
NET ORDINARY REVENUES	-80,452	23,879
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS³	-80,452	23,879

NOTES:

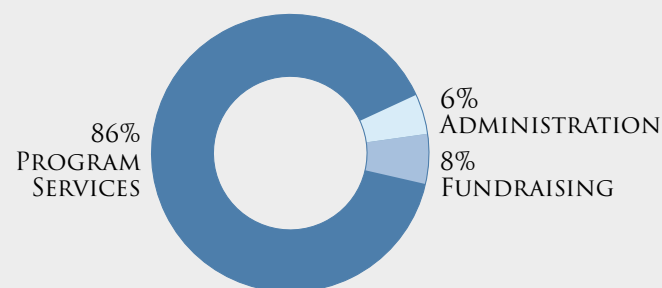
1) AIDA receives significant in-kind donations of professional time as well as office costs, materials, and equipment from AIDA participating organizations, particularly Earthjustice. Numerous professional volunteers and interns also contribute time and resources to AIDA. These contributions are valued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

2) Because of substantial donated services, AIDA is able to use more than 85% of funds raised for programmatic efforts.

3) Because AIDA receives multi-year grants, a change in net assets often results from receipt of funds restricted for use in future years.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
	31-JUL-14	31-JUL-15
ASSETS		
Cash and investments	777,579	672,269
Accounts receivable	282,407	390,145
Property and equipment	10,514	14,373
Other assets		
TOTAL ASSETS	1,070,500	1,076,787
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	89,516	69,513
Credit cards payable	967	3378
Other current liabilities		
TOTAL LIABILITIES	90,483	72,891
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	545,252	376,855
Temporarily restricted	434,764	627,041
TOTAL NET ASSETS	980,017	1,003,896
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	1,070,500	1,076,787

HOW AIDA SPENDS DONATIONS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Manolo Morales, *Executive Director*, ECOLEX

Vice-President: Pedro Solano, *Executive Director*, SPDA

Secretary: Margot Venton, *Staff Lawyer*, Ecojustice

Chief Financial Officer: Martin Wagner, *Managing Attorney*, International Program, Earthjustice

Gustavo Alanís, *President*, CEMDA

Santiago Cantón, *Executive Director*, RFK Partners for Human Rights, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

Rafael Gonzalez, *President*, JPN

Jerónimo Rodriguez, *Environment Program Coordinator in Colombia*, German Cooperation Agency

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Argentina- CEDHA

Canada- Ecojustice

Chile- FIMA

Costa Rica- CEDARENA

Costa Rica- JPN

Ecuador- ECOLEX

Mexico-CEMDA

Panama- CIAM

Peru- SPDA

United States- Earthjustice

AIDA TEAM

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Anna Cederstav

Astrid Puentes Riaño

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