Fundación Sobrevivencia Cofán Wins MacArthur Foundation Award

$500,000 Award Recognizes Fundación Sobrevivencia Cofán for Extraordinary Creativity and Effectiveness

Quito, Ecuador (PRWEB) March 05, 2013 -- The Fundación Sobrevivencia Cofán (FSC, Cofan Survival Fund in English) is one of only 13 nonprofit organizations around the world to win this year’s MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions. The award, which was announced on February 28, recognizes exceptional grantees who have demonstrated creativity and impact, and invests in their long-term sustainability with sizable one-time grants.

FSC was founded as a vehicle to reclaim and protect Cofan territory, which contains some of the most biodiverse forest in the world, and primarily driven by the need to respond to oil exploitation in the region and the colonists who followed in the oil companies’ wake. Born from this very concrete “fight for our rights or disappear” mindset, FSC focuses on finding practical, on-the-ground solutions that contribute to the survival of the Cofán Nation and their forest home on which they depend, and managing the natural resources in Cofan ancestral territory in northeastern Ecuador for the long term.

Its strategy combines government alliances, extensive fieldwork, on-the-ground management and control, and community-based conservation projects to mobilize resources and expertise in support of Cofan territorial management and eco-friendly employment. Over the years it has developed innovative solutions to problems threatening indigenous communities, which include oil exploitation, mining, new road construction, and the advancing agricultural frontier.

FSC has created and executed successful conservation programs that include an indigenous ranger force, a community-level Amazon river turtle repopulation project, and collaborations with national and international scientists. FSC also works within government circles when it concerns management of indigenous lands. It works closely with key government agencies and engages in coordinating action to conserve indigenous lands, like helping to create new nature reserves. With one eye on immediate conservation challenges and one eye on the future, FSC continues an education program for Cofan youth. Education is an important component of long-term conservation and without decent educations, the Cofan people will never be able to actively protect and manage their forests.

“We are so honored and grateful for this recognition from MacArthur,” said FSC founder and director Randy Borman. “The place where this grant is really going to make a difference is in our ability to strengthen FSC to be able to do the job of going out in the field and keeping 1 million acres of rain forest intact. The Cofans are the front line, but we’re all in this together. If Cofan lands and the incredible biodiversity and environmental services that come with them are destroyed, the globe is at risk.”

“From New York to New Delhi, these extraordinary organizations are making a real difference in the lives of people and communities,” said MacArthur President Robert Gallucci. “MacArthur recognizes their importance and impact, and we hope our investment will help ensure that they continue to thrive and to increase their reach in the future.”

Fundación Sobrevivencia Cofán will use its $500,000 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions during a critical moment in its development when much of what its team has accomplished the past 12 years is
facing new threats both on the ground and in the financial realm. This grant will help FSC cross a bridge from activities related to immediate goals—control over Cofan territories, building of the Cofan Ranger Program, creation of education/training opportunities and rescue of endangered species—to a long-term goal of continuing these innovative programs as well as the protection of reserve areas FSC has created. This grant will help create a stable organizational unit with the necessary capabilities to continue not only protecting the rain forest territory FSC has already gained but also to develop similar initiatives within the region. FSC is also going to create long-term financial stability strategies so that its important conservation work will serve many Cofan generations to come.

According to MacArthur, the Award is not only recognition for past leadership and success but also an investment in the future. Organizations will use this support to build cash reserves and endowments, develop strategic plans, and upgrade technology and physical infrastructure.

For these Awards, the Foundation does not seek or accept nominations. To qualify, organizations must demonstrate exceptional creativity and effectiveness; have reached a critical or strategic point in their development; show strong leadership and stable financial management; have previously received MacArthur support; and engage in work central to one of MacArthur’s core programs.

Additional information about why MacArthur selected Fundación Sobrevivencia Cofán for the Award and an overview video are at [http://www.macfound.org/maceirecipients/73/](http://www.macfound.org/maceirecipients/73/).

The Fundacion para la Sobrevivencia del Pueblo Cofán (FSC), founded in 1999, is committed to biodiversity conservation and research, protecting Cofán ancestral territory and its natural resources, developing environmentally sound income alternatives, and educating the youngest Cofán generation.

Cofan Survival Fund (CSF) is the US branch of the FSC and an incorporated 501(c)3 non-profit organization set up to receive donations from abroad. The administrative costs for both the FSC and the CSF are extremely low, and every effort is made to channel all funding received directly into projects, whether that be tuition fees for a young Cofan studying in Quito or the buying food for the Cofan Ranger Program.

The founder and executive director of the FSC is Randy Borman. Randy was born in the Cofan village of Dureno and grew up with an education mix of ancient Cofan knowledge of the forest with a western academic education. Randy is considered one of the Cofan Nation’s most important and respected leaders by the Cofan themselves. He is also a recognized leader of Ecuadorian environmental and conservation related issues, and continues to work closely with various national and international non-governmental organizations.
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