

Guardians of Pacatuba

Final report for EA Foundation prepared by Guardians Worldwide, December 2025



Introduction

Objective: to establish a long-term reforestation and water conservancy programme for Fulkaxó Indigenous Reserve in Pacatuba that supports indigenous land sovereignty and regeneration of restinga Atlantic Rainforest.

Context: Fulkaxó are an Indigenous community made up of three ethnic groups (Fulnio, Kariri and Xoco) who have been given legal tenure over a 550-hectare ancestral territory in Alagoas State, Northeastern Brazil. Roughly ninety families are relocating from a nearby settlement to populate a new village to be created on the reserve.

Environmental characteristics of reserve: the land is characterised by transitional forest. The areas on higher ground are typified by mixed savannah (Cerrado) and the creeks are characterised by tropical rainforest (Mata Atlantica). The geology is characterised by highly erodible sand and carboniferous rock. This makes this land highly unique: sand-based rainforests or *restinga*, as they are known in Brazil, are highly endangered. Pacatuba is the only Indigenous reserve conserving restinga rainforest in the world. There are 9 streams and water springs on the reserve, 5 of which are currently flowing.

Biodiversity: the area is home to a vast variety of plants, trees and animals, including several wild cats (*gato maracaju*), many endangered species of birds (spinetail), deer and large snakes (*jiboia* or *boa constrictor*)

Main outcomes over this 12-month project cycle

1. Building of a greenhouse and tree rescue hub: this building now houses trees, seedlings, saplings and seeds, and it serves as a focal point for training, reforestation work and social events at Fulkaxó Indigenous Reserve in Pacatuba.
2. Creation of a Work Implementation Team led by Tawana who is dedicated to construction, reforestation and documentation work.
3. Over 15 planting sessions organised demographically for youth, women, elders and all-community planting / 300+ people engaged in Indigenous led reforestation.
4. Over 1,000 trees planted + 1,000 seeds sown, 70 trees donated + 5,000 seeds collected + soil/sand/mulch banks for new trees.
5. Capacity building and training for 15 members of the community in reforestation, plus support for self-documentation for one member of the community (Rodrigo) and new AV equipment, which has allowed the community to produce their own documentation.
6. Pruning and mulching of over 1,000 trees in the reserve, especially aricuri palm (*Attalea phalerata*) sacred to the Fulkaxó people.
7. Leveraging support from local commercial tree nurseries, who donated 70 trees + government officials, who have given support to Reserva Indigena Fulkaxó for the building of housing in the allocated development area.
8. Baseline risk assessment by Nic Salazar Sutil shows urgency of a follow-on project to fund a fence (to combat grazing on the reserve by cattle from nearby ranches) and the need for a diversified long-term water management plan.
9. Educational course “Extinction and Recovery”, presented by Wakay Fulnio, member of the council of Reserva Indigena Fulkaxó was delivered to 105 international, registered participants, which generated added revenue for GWW and Wakay.
10. Monitoring of the reserve by youth groups have prevented encroachment by hunters, loggers and especially, animals from nearby ranches.

Photo evidence

The Tree Rescue Hub and new nursery built with EAF funded captured in three phases: commencement of work (March) building (April), completion (April)



Project Implementation team pose before the recently completed Tree Rescue Hub nursery in April 2025



Local commercial tree nursery donates trees to the new EA Foundation funded Tree Rescue Hub, May 2025.



Soil and seed banks, May 2025



Community planting and reforestation, May-September 2025







Seedlings and saplings at our rescue hub (new trees grown from seed), October 2025



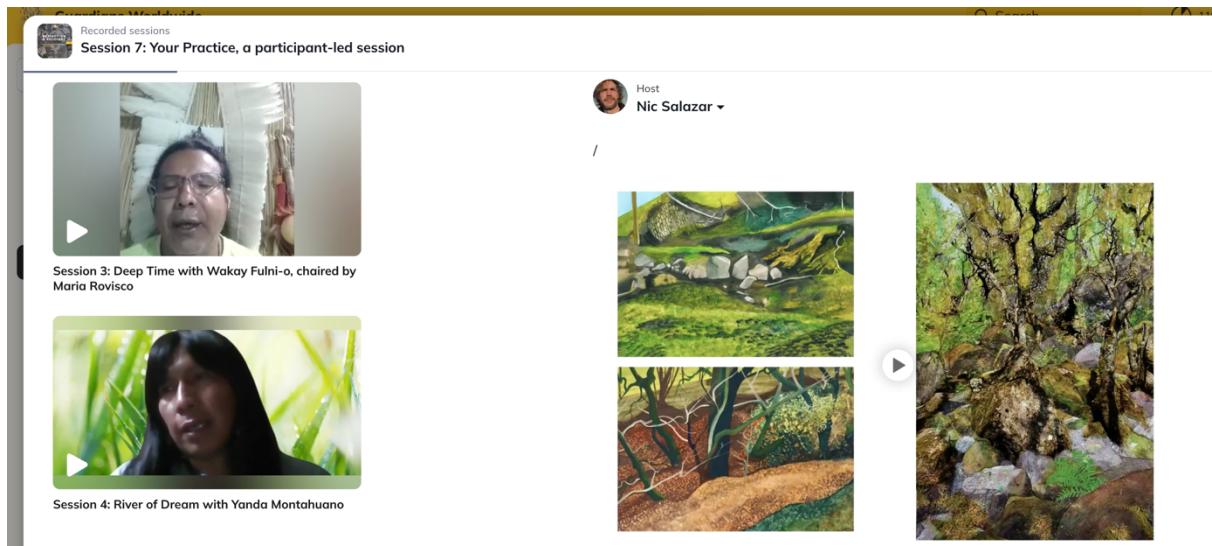
Aricurizeira pruning: this palm is the most sacred plant among the Fulkaxo- 1,000 of them have been pruned and soiled to stimulate growth



Leveraging support from the government- Federal governor visit to Pacatuba in January 2025



Education: Wakay teaches about regeneration work conducted as part of Guardians of Pacatuba EAF funded project at “Extinction and Recovery” online course, November 2025 (105 registered participants)



Recorded sessions

Session 7: Your Practice, a participant-led session

Host Nic Salazar

Session 3: Deep Time with Wakay Fulni-o, chaired by Maria Rovisco

Session 4: River of Dream with Yanda Montahuan

Risk assessment: Soiree, the spiritual leader of the community shows me an area that will be used for housing, but which is suffering water shortage, and a wildfire stopped by the community before it reaches the reserve.



Main Threats

1. *Encroachment and grazing*: Non-indigenous people are using the reserve, especially hunters who seek game, people who come in to explore and animals from nearby cattle ranches. The grazing from these animals has been highly detrimental and has destroyed some of the trees planted as part of our effort. **It is imperative to fence off.**
2. *Water security* : It is imperative to secure water in Pacatuba. Because the area is sandy and rocky, water runs off and is not retained (there is no sedimentary soil). Community relies on a single water source. The reservoir is prone to eutrophication, which means algae is growing on the lake due to faeces from grazing animals. There is a danger of water borne disease. **It is imperative to create a sustainable water conservancy and diversification plan.**
3. *Wildfires*: A nearby wildfire started in December last year, which required the intervention of local fire brigade and local community members **It is imperative to create fire breakers.**

For details of the need for follow-on support to cover the above risks, especially 1, which is urgent, see separate appendix.

Conclusion

This project has been a resounding success for Indigenous led reforestation. A unique project, and the first of its kind, Guardians of Pacatuba shows that when funders support communities directly, Indigenous sovereignty can be effectively strengthened. In this case, to ensure the protection of one of the world's most endangered forest ecosystems (restinga) and the living knowledge systems that depend on this forest- i.e. the culture and society of the Fulkaxó people.

With your ongoing support, we can fence off the reserve to prevent the destruction of the reforestation area we established in the last months due to invading cattle from nearby ranches (see Appendix).

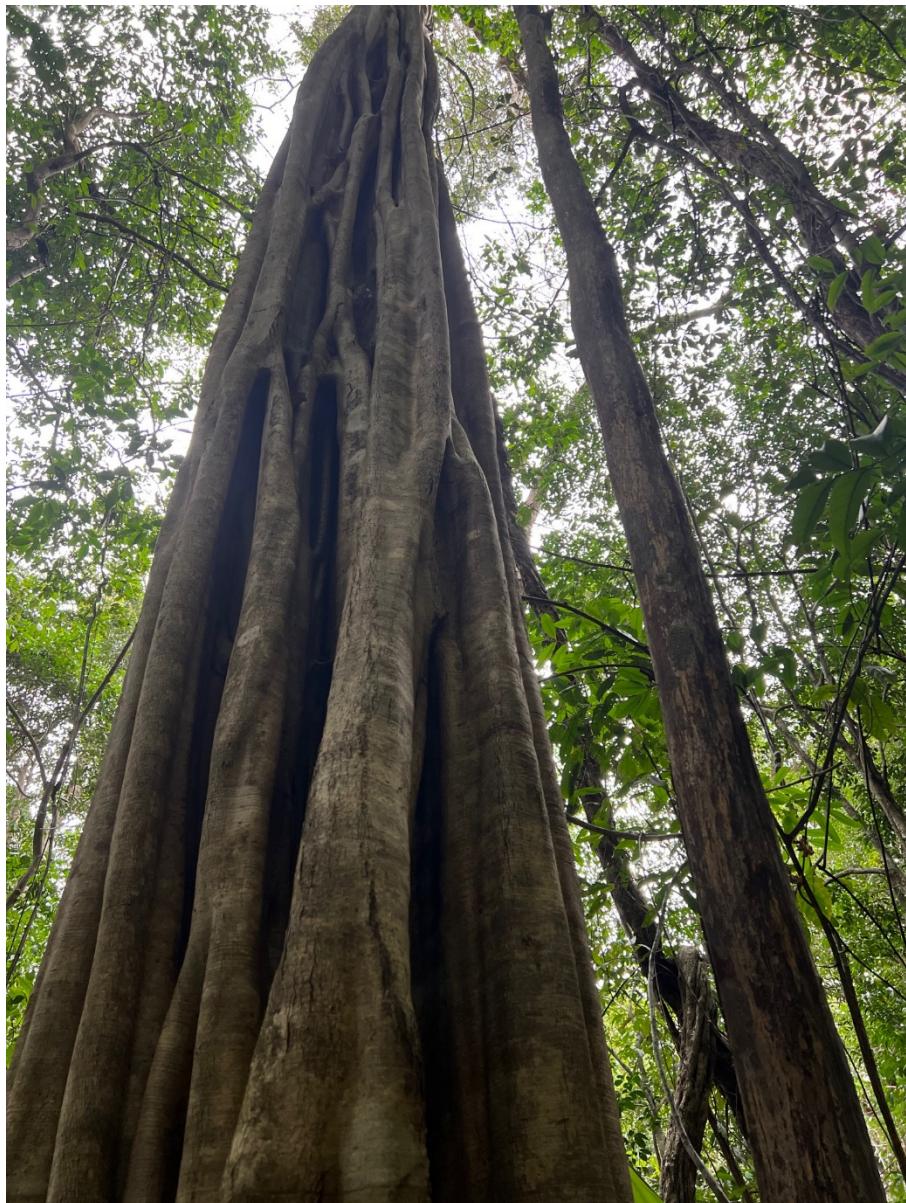
Thank you, EA Foundation!



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Executive Director/ Founder



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Ceiba tree growing in the rainforest section of Fulkaxó Indigenous Reserve, Pacatuba