

Direct Access to Finance For Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon

Elevating Indigenous-led solutions to save lands, waters, and climate

In the last 50 years, the Amazon has lost nearly 20% of its forest in Brazil alone due to widespread deforestation. In a span of five years, the Amazon may have lost up to 23.7 million hectares of forest¹. If we fail to act, this vital ecosystem will shift irreversibly from a rich and abundant home that sustains communities, plants, and wildlife, to a major carbon emitter that accelerates global climate change and threatens the very nature, people, and livelihoods we all depend on.

The Nature
Conservancy



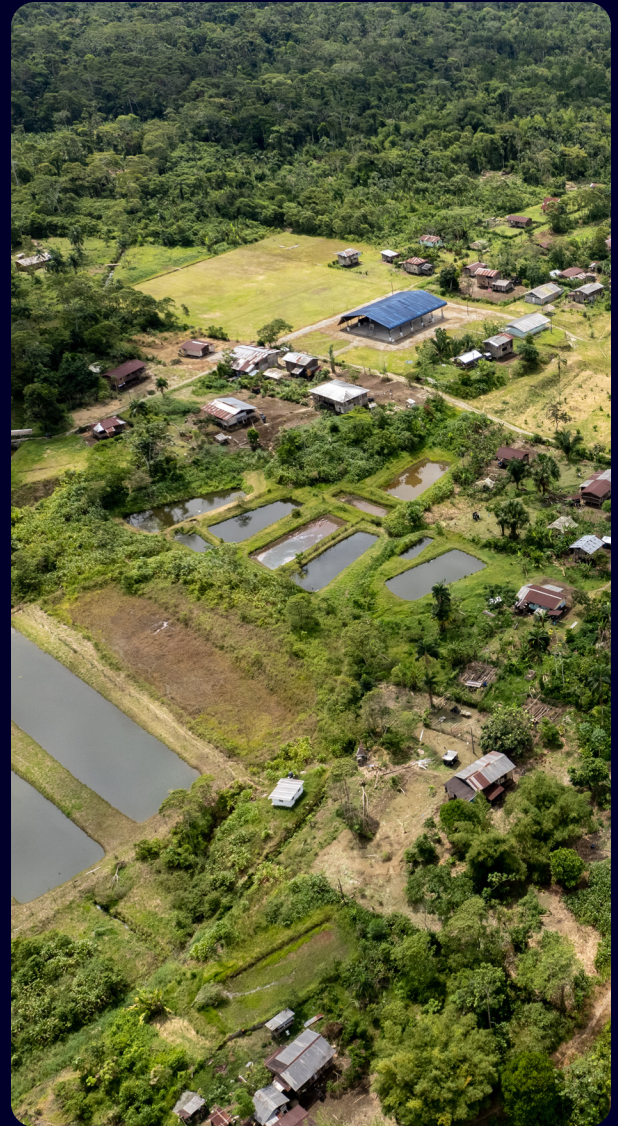
Indigenous Stewardship is Critical, but Vastly Underfunded

Indigenous Peoples manage approximately half of the world's land and 45% of the intact Amazon, but receive less than 2% of global climate and biodiversity funding². Closing this funding gap is crucial, because the carbon stored in the Amazon ensures a liveable planet for us all³. The amount of carbon stored on Indigenous-managed lands is so vast that releasing it would wipe out decades of climate action. For example, [an assessment](#) of 52 tropical and subtropical countries found that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities manage at least 22% of forest carbon and 17% of the total carbon stored in forests. Releasing this carbon would be equivalent to 33 times the global energy emissions of 2017⁴.

More direct funding enables Indigenous communities to advance successful climate solutions, exercise their rights, carry out territorial governance, and continue managing the lands, waters, and carbon stores that benefit us all. Ensuring access to finance for Indigenous Peoples across the Amazon is a vital solution for sustaining the planet.

Elevating Indigenous Partnerships for Shared Goals

For more than 20 years, Indigenous organizations across the Amazon Basin and TNC have partnered to build trust and co-develop sustainable solutions for communities and the environment. Over the last two years, we collaboratively analyzed funding barriers and transformative models to provide Indigenous communities across the Amazon Basin with direct access to finance while honoring the role of Indigenous Peoples in the fight against climate change. We have been working with Indigenous organizations across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru united to create a shared vision for direct access to finance that elevates Indigenous Peoples, build on existing initiatives, and articulate clear roles for organizations like TNC to support these processes.



The Amazon is home to more than 40 million people, including 2.2 million Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous communities protect an estimated 45% of the intact Amazon Forest, an unparalleled contribution to our planetary health.



1 RAISG, 2024

2 <https://www.iied.org/cop27-vital-risk-iplc-landscapes-urgently-need-more-climate-finance>

3 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-023-06970-0>

4 <https://www.wri.org/insights/4-ways-indigenous-and-community-lands-can-reduce-emissions>

Indigenous Leadership as the Path Forward


With guidance from Indigenous leaders, we are identifying how to build on existing initiatives to create Indigenous-led funding platforms, to ensure that funding flows directly to Indigenous communities across the Amazon. These Indigenous platforms would facilitate direct dialogues between Indigenous organizations and donors. It would create infrastructure to strengthen funding for Indigenous-led projects (such as support in the development of funding proposals), and share and consolidate lessons learned across Indigenous organizations, and with global partners.

At this stage, we are working with Indigenous organizations on collaborative design processes to determine the most effective pathways for direct funding, grounded in Indigenous communities' own visions and priorities. This approach requires thoughtful planning, consultation, and flexibility. We invite collaborators and donors to join us in supporting Indigenous Organizations and Networks in this critical design phase, enabling Indigenous Peoples and communities to define and build a path forward that reflects their unique needs and strengths.

By supporting this early stage of development, collaborators such as donors play a crucial role in elevating Indigenous Peoples and communities to take the lead in sustainable finance for environmental impact. **Together, we can create a foundation that ensures long-term, Indigenous-led solutions for the Amazon and beyond.**

Learn More About Our Work

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A photograph of three squirrel monkeys on a large, vibrant green leaf. One monkey is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. Two other monkeys are positioned slightly behind and to the right, also looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more foliage.

"We cannot meet ambitious biodiversity and climate targets without working alongside and in support of these communities and their goals."
— Jen Morris

Barriers that inhibit Indigenous Peoples from directly accessing finance:

- Limited understanding of the economic and social realities of Indigenous Peoples means that funding is not directed toward community needs (e.g. education, health, infrastructure) that would amplify climate outcomes.
- Geographic, cultural, and language divides stifle dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and donors.
- “Intermediary” partners can reduce these barriers and perceived risks, but they sometimes take a significant share of the funding.
- Project metrics often do not consider Indigenous wisdom and science or account for long-term financial autonomy of Indigenous groups.
- The kind of staff capacity (finance, legal, administrative) needed to find and access funding tends to be limited in Indigenous groups.
- There is a lack of Indigenous voices at international decision-making forums and conferences where more direct access to finance could be advanced.