



Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge

**ANNUAL REPORT
2023–2024**

Forest Tenure
Fundors Group

Acknowledgements

Forest Tenure Funders Group members thank Ford Foundation, NICFI, The Christensen Fund, and Indufor North America for their assistance in producing this report. Data collection, analysis, and coordination of report production was led by Claire Taylor (Ford Foundation).

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Suggested Citation

Forest Tenure Funders Group (2024). Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge: Annual Report 2023–2024.

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Opening Statement



Foreword from Sigrun Gjerløw Aasland, State Secretary to the Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment

Three years ago, at COP26 in Glasgow, 25 public and philanthropic donors signed the IP and LC Forest Tenure Pledge to advance support to Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' tenure rights and their forest guardianship. They committed \$1.7 billion to support this cause from 2021 to 2025. Today, we can confidently state that we are on track to meet and even exceed our commitments, with nearly \$521 million delivered in 2023 alone.

The Pledge brought attention to the vital role these communities play in mitigating climate change, protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, and preventing deforestation. In the past few years, we have seen remarkable results made possible by Indigenous and local community organizations' advocacy, and by strong political will from tropical forest country governments. Brazil has acknowledged 10 new Indigenous Territories since President Lula took office in 2023. Peru has titled 1.9 million hectares for Indigenous Peoples, including for peoples who live in voluntary isolation.

New legal frameworks are being developed to advance and secure tenure rights. The Democratic Republic of the Congo passed a bill on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Colombia is in the process of implementing a decree for Indigenous Territorial Entities, which will span as much as 16 million hectares in the Eastern Amazon region. Indonesia is making important advances in its social forestry program, and customary communities are being given the right to manage their traditional forest territories.

There are still big opportunities to strengthen land rights across the world, allowing communities to protect the forests they have managed sustainably for generations. Our long-term investment in forest tenure empowers communities, supporting their work to protect vital ecosystems and upholding their crucial role in the fight against climate change.

Many Indigenous Peoples and local communities risk their own lives to protect forests. In 2023, 196 environmental human rights defenders were killed, according to Global Witness.¹ Many of these were Indigenous Peoples or belonged to local communities. Securing tenure rights is one of the most effective measures we can support to stop this alarming trend.

Donors are recognizing the call from Indigenous Peoples and local communities for more direct funding. Still, most of today's funding is managed by intermediary organizations, spanning from multilateral institutions to civil society organizations.

While the IP and LC Forest Tenure Pledge did not make a specific commitment to direct funding, we expect that this funding will grow over time. Since the Pledge was launched, direct funding has been a key focus in discussions about its implementation and potential improvement. This crucial conversation reflects the increasing strength and visibility of Indigenous Peoples and their civil society allies.

Donors are working to improve their funding practices. We are happy to note that in 2023, the share of Pledge funding going directly to Indigenous Peoples and local communities increased significantly. The portion of Pledge funding that supports women and youth within these communities is still low. The Forest Tenure Funders Group initiated a gender and tenure working group in 2023 to track and improve funding going to women and girls within Indigenous Peoples and local communities managing forests.

¹ Global Witness (2024). *Missing Voices*. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/missing-voices/#memory>

We believe that donors should prioritize effectiveness and making sure that support reaches partners and facilitates their goals. Intermediaries serve an important role and allow donors to reach more communities than they would if they participated in numerous small agreements. But the capacity to receive funding directly has improved. Indigenous Peoples and territorially based communities are responding to donor requirements by setting up funds to facilitate increased direct funding. Norway has announced that in the next phase of our Indigenous Peoples Program in Brazil, 90% of the funding will go directly to Indigenous funds and organizations.

Through the Forest and Climate Leaders Partnership, Norway and Peru lead action to support Indigenous Peoples and local communities. At COP28, we established a collaborative platform between countries, funders, and Indigenous organizations to advance support to Indigenous Peoples and local communities in forest climate action. The platform is another important tool to strengthen Indigenous Peoples and local community land rights and forest guardianship through national and global action.

Norway has been privileged to chair the Forest Tenure Funders Group in 2024. We would like to thank our vice chair, the Christensen Fund, as well as the Ford Foundation, which played key roles in helping write this 2023 funding report. We also thank the other public and philanthropic funders in the Forest Tenure Funders Group, as well as our Indigenous Peoples and forest community partners. Together we will build a more just and targeted funding system.

The Norwegian Government has recently decided to continue our International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) until 2035. We will continue to prioritize effective funding to Indigenous Peoples and other forest guardians as part of this initiative.



Sigrun Gjerløw Aasland

Executive Summary

The FTFG continues to drive progress on its \$1.7 billion, five-year commitment to secure land tenure and support forest guardianship for Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs) in tropical forest regions. As of 2023, the FTFG has disbursed nearly **\$1.34 billion—79% of the total Pledge—** indicating strong momentum toward achieving the full commitment by the end of 2025. In 2023 alone, FTFG members reported nearly **\$521 million in Pledge-aligned funding.**

Around \$55 million—representing 10.6% of total Pledge funds—reached IP and LC organizations directly in 2023, a significant increase from 2.1% in 2022 and 2.9% in 2021. Direct funding to date has not been scaled as quickly as our expectations, but this dramatic increase shows encouraging progress, especially in the context of a historically low baseline. However, the proportion of direct funding is still below our goals. This report explores barriers to direct funding and offers strategies for FTFG members and IP and LC organizations to work collaboratively to address these challenges.

Promising signs from 2023 include:

- › Private foundations are leading the way in disbursing funds directly to IP and LC organizations. In 2023, **over 27% of philanthropic Pledge funding was direct.**
- › **IP- and LC-led funds are becoming critical pathways for directing resources to Indigenous communities**, with seven such funds receiving direct support in 2023.
- › **The number of reported IP and LC organizations receiving direct funding grew significantly, from 39 in 2022 to 100 in 2023**, indicating that FTFG donors are expanding their networks and understanding of the IP and LC funding landscape.
- › Donors' risk aversion and administrative requirements and grantees' limited legal and financial infrastructure continue to prevent many IP and LC organizations from accessing funds directly. These barriers are being addressed by **identifying intermediaries that are more accountable to IPs and LCs and growing investments to help IP and LC organizations build their capacity to receive and manage funds.**



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

Other key highlights from the report:

- › **Support for tenure reform:** Some donor activities prioritize national land and forest tenure reform processes that recognize and enforce IP and LC tenure rights. Efforts include work with partner governments to support systemic changes to land and forest tenure laws, policies, and systems.
- › **Regional funding focus:** In 2023, Latin America received the largest share of regional funding at 58%, followed by Africa at 33%, and the Asia Pacific region at 9%. While the amount of funding for Latin America and Africa saw notable increases, the allocation for Asia Pacific remained constant, reflecting continued under-investment in the region.
- › **Consistent thematic focus:** As in prior years, the majority of funding—67%—supported territorial governance, tenure security, and sustainable resource management, underscoring the ongoing priority of securing land and rights for IPs and LCs.
- › **Growing emphasis on gender and youth inclusion:** This is the first time we have collected detailed information on projects that target gender and youth. These initiatives account for a smaller percentage of overall funding, with 11% of funds directed toward projects with a primary focus on gender, and 2% primarily focused on youth. However, funders are increasing their attention to this work.

As we approach the Pledge’s final years, the FTFG remains focused on meeting the \$1.7 billion goal, while also ensuring that funds are reaching IP and LC communities in ways that strengthen their control over land and resources. Key priorities for the final two years of the Pledge include scaling direct funding, fostering more accountable funding mechanisms, and increasing support for underrepresented groups, particularly women, youth, and environmental defenders.

The second half of the report presents statements and case studies from Pledge signatories. This year’s case studies highlight how funding has been directed to Indigenous and local community organizations to protect critical ecosystems, defend land rights, and empower communities through sustainable economic development, territorial governance, and gender and youth inclusion.

A young boy with dark hair and a serious expression stands waist-deep in a stream. He is shirtless and holds a small green plant with both hands in front of his chest. The background is a blurred forest with sunlight filtering through the trees, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is contemplative and natural.

SECTION 1

Introduction

Context and Overview of the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge

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BOX 1

Recap of the Pledge announcement and historical significance

At COP26 in November 2021, government and philanthropic donors committed \$1.7 billion to help Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs)² secure their land and forest tenure rights. Known as the Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' Forest Tenure Pledge,³ this initiative spotlighted the critical importance of IP and LC rights and tenure security for biodiversity conservation and climate mitigation and adaptation. As the first explicit leader-level global public recognition of the importance of tenure rights for IPs and LCs, the Pledge sent strong political, strategic, and financial signals. It aligns with broader commitments, such as the [Global Forest Finance Pledge \(GFFP\)](#) and the [Congo Basin Pledge \(CBP\)](#), to support forest conservation and climate change mitigation.⁴



Photo by Edgar Kanaykō Xakriabá / If Not Us Then Who

- 2 We use the terms "Indigenous Peoples and local communities" and "IPs and LCs" to refer to self-identified Indigenous Peoples, as well as other self-identified territorial communities living in and managing forest ecosystems. Since both categories of people fall under the scope of the FTFG Pledge, we often refer to these groups together in our reporting. However, we recognize that Indigenous Peoples have histories, challenges, and sets of rights that are distinct from other territorial communities. This language is consistent with the Pledge text; however, many donors also support Afrodescendants, *quilombolas*, *ribeirinhos*, and other traditional peoples living in and around forests.
- 3 Throughout the report, we refer to the IP and LC Forest Tenure Pledge as the "COP26 Pledge," "FTFG Pledge," "Forest Tenure Pledge," and "IP and LC Pledge" interchangeably.
- 4 The Forest Tenure Pledge, GFFP, and CBP are linked pledges. All three recognize IPs and LCs as important forest guardians. When donor funding pledged under the GFFP or the CBP also contributes to the IP and LC Pledge objectives, it may be reported under multiple pledges. See [Appendix 1](#) for further information.

2023-2025 Annual Report

Purpose and Scope

BOX 2

About the Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG)

The Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG) convenes the 25 bilateral and philanthropic donors who are part of the COP26 Pledge. Together, we aim to provide \$1.7 billion by December 2025 to help advance IP and LC land tenure rights, and their role in sustainable forest management, and IP- and LC-led conservation efforts in ODA-eligible tropical forest countries. The Forest Tenure Pledge is not an independent fund and does not have a central allocation mechanism. Each donor operates independently, funding activities according to their individual mandates and priorities. The Pledge includes both allocated and unallocated funding, which means that not all of the \$1.7 billion will support new initiatives. However, all funds counted towards the Pledge were unspent prior to 2021.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

- › The FTFG has designated spaces to track Pledge progress and learnings and reflect on how best to support IP and LC rights. Members have diverse perspectives, mandates, and funding strategies and engage in important discussions and coordination with bilaterals and philanthropies to create shared definitions and discuss reporting and funding practices that improve transparency and accountability.
- › The FTFG also engages in dialogue with a wider group of stakeholders, including IP and LC organizations and networks and tropical forest country governments.
- › The Pledge has also helped advance internal advocacy efforts within our donor organizations, encouraging sustained or increased funding for IP and LC forest guardianship and facilitating conversations on how to further align work on IP and LC forest tenure within a broader range of programs and regions. Others report that the Pledge has influenced their intermediary selection approach.

The FTFG meets quarterly to advance its priorities and holds at least one in-person meeting per year. Norway chaired the FTFG in 2024, with The Christensen Fund serving as vice chair. Over the past year, we have had reflective discussions on our collective views regarding the value of the Pledge and the FTFG’s role in advancing IP and LC forest tenure and guardianship goals.

While we recognize that the Pledge represents progress, we also acknowledge that much work remains to be done to make meaningful impact for people and the planet.

Transparency, Accountability, and Tracking Progress

We publish an annual report to remain transparent, track progress, and highlight both achievements and challenges. We hope this exercise supports stakeholders, keeping them informed of and aligned in their efforts to meet the \$1.7 billion goal and strengthen support for IPs and LCs.

The 2023-2024 Annual Report reflects on 2023 progress, highlighting financial disbursements, programmatic achievements, and operational challenges. It also outlines the strategic priorities for the Pledge’s upcoming year and includes case studies to highlight implementing partners’ work.

BOX 3



Pledge signatories and Forest Tenure Funders Group members

Federal Republic of Germany
Kingdom of Norway
Kingdom of the Netherlands
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America

Children’s Investment Fund Foundation
The Christensen Fund
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Ford Foundation
Good Energies Foundation
Oak Foundation
Sobrato Philanthropies
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Protecting Our Planet Challenge⁵
Arcadia
Bezos Earth Fund
Bloomberg Philanthropies
Bobolink Foundation
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
International Conservation Fund of Canada
Nia Tero
Rainforest Trust
Re:wild
Rob Walton Foundation
Wyss Foundation

⁵ The Protecting Our Planet Challenge (POP) members signed the Pledge as a group.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

Global Context for Forest Tenure and Indigenous Rights

State of Funding for Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship

The IP and LC Forest Tenure Pledge was created in response to findings demonstrating that less than 1% of climate development aid went to projects supporting IP and LC tenure and forest management between 2011 and 2020, with a much smaller portion going directly to IP and LC organizations.⁶ Encouragingly, new research shows that funding for IP and LC forest tenure rights and guardianship is increasing. Forest Tenure Pledge signatories are committed to advancing IP and LC forest tenure rights and guardianship and increasing direct support channeled to IP and LC-led organizations. Pledge donors aim to better align the work of IP and LC organizations and broader efforts to support IP and LC forest tenure, including national-level tenure reform. The global context for forest tenure and Indigenous rights and funding trends are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

⁶ Rainforest Foundation Norway (2021). *Falling Short*. https://dv719tqmsuwvb.cloudfront.net/documents/Publikasjoner/Andre-rapporter/RFN_Falling_short_2021.pdf

There has been a significant shift in the global landscape of forest conservation, climate finance, and Indigenous Peoples and local community rights since COP26.

Global conferences such as COP28 and CBD COP16 emphasized the role of IPs and LCs in achieving climate and biodiversity targets. Since 2020, global funding for IP and LC tenure rights and forest guardianship has grown by 36% from the previous four-year period—up to \$517 million per year. Much of this growth is driven by the FTFG donors (72%), but the increased funding trend extends beyond our group.^{7,8}

Despite the promising funding rise, there is no evidence to indicate a substantive change in how funds are disbursed to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afrodescendant peoples (IP, LC and ADP) organizations.

Large-scale projects implemented by consulting firms, governments, multilateral institutions, and international conservation organizations receive most of the financing; IP, LC, and ADP organizations and national and local NGOs receive much smaller grants, often indirectly.⁹ The good news is that many donors have committed to more localized funding. These changes have yet to appear in overall funding trends, but the FTFG's substantial increase in direct funding in 2023 may indicate that a broader change is happening.

IP- and LC-led funds have recently demonstrated that they are strong pathways for direct investment in Indigenous communities, but they require more financial support to scale effectively.

There is an urgent need to increase support to IPs and LCs in defending lands, lives, and rights, as these communities continue to endure land grabs, deforestation pressures, and climate change effects. In many regions, land tenure remains insecure, and legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' and community lands remains incomplete. Rising tropical region deforestation rates continue to hinder global climate change mitigation efforts. Decreasing deforestation, protecting biodiversity, and combating climate change is directly tied to IPs and LCs possessing secure tenure and legally recognized rights.¹⁰

Unfortunately, other interest groups often resist efforts to expand the rights and forest guardianship of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This opposition often leads to violence against these communities and their leaders. **Each year, hundreds of environmental human rights defenders are killed, and countless more are threatened and attacked.** Indigenous Peoples comprise a disproportionate share of murders around the globe.¹¹ See [box 4](#) for more information on threats to environmental defenders and efforts to address this issue.

7 Rights and Resources Initiative and Rainforest Foundation Norway (2024). *State of Funding for Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship: Donor Funding for Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-Descendant Peoples in Tropical Forested Countries (2011–2023)*. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative.

8 Path to Scale (2024). *Path to Scale Funding Dashboard*. <https://dashboard.pathtoscale.org/>

9 Rights and Resources Initiative and Rainforest Foundation Norway (2024). *State of Funding for Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship: Donor Funding for Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-Descendant Peoples in Tropical Forested Countries (2011–2023)*. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative.

10 Hoorn (2023). *Indigenous Land Rights Key to Curbing Deforestation and Restoring Lands: Study*. Mongabay. <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/06/indigenous-land-rights-key-to-curbing-deforestation-and-restoring-lands-study/>

11 Global Witness. *Land and Environmental Defenders*. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/>

Reflections on 2023–2024 Achievements and Lessons Learned

Milestones and Key Achievements

During the 2023 reporting period, **total Forest Tenure Pledge-aligned funding approached \$521 million**, bringing the FTFG’s cumulative total from 2021–2023 to nearly \$1.34 billion. **Direct funding to IP- and LC-led organizations rose to over 10.6% in 2023**, a substantial increase from just 2.1% in the previous reporting period.

- › **While progress in scaling up direct finance to IPs and LCs has been slow, this year’s significant shift is a promising sign that the Pledge has laid critical foundations and fostered collaboration between donors and IP and LC organizations.**

Additionally, **27% of private donor funding was disbursed directly to IP and LC organizations**, and the number of organizations receiving direct funding grew from 39 in 2022 to 100 in 2023, underscoring the expanding network and recognition of IP and LC organizations as critical partners. Moreover, IP- and LC-led funds are playing a pivotal role in advancing direct investments in Indigenous communities, with seven such funds receiving direct support in 2023.

Thematic highlights show that the majority of 2023 Pledge-aligned funding continued to focus on **territorial governance** and **tenure security** (32%) and **sustainable resource management** (35%). Notably, 11% of 2023 funds were directed toward projects with a primary focus on gender equality and IP and LC women’s tenure rights, and 2% supported youth-focused initiatives. These figures represent steps forward in tackling social equity challenges, yet they underscore the need for further efforts to ensure women and youth within IP and LC communities receive a more substantial portion of the funding.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

Other notable achievements from 2023–2024 include:

- › The **incubation, growth, and increased support** for IP- and LC-led funding mechanisms and organizing networks
- › **Leadership capacity-building** and network development for IP and LC women and youth, empowering these groups to take active roles in their communities and conservation efforts
- › **Policy wins** for IP and LC territorial and natural resource rights, notably in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** and **Brazil**, where progress was made in securing formal recognition of IP and LC territories
- › Increased efforts to **capitalize on new policy opportunities**, including those that protect IP and LC territories and enhance their autonomous governance in response to external threats

These achievements, reflected in both quantitative data and case studies, highlight the Pledge’s growing impact and the work ahead to ensure continued success in the final two years.

It is also worth noting important context; despite overall rising deforestation rates in the tropics, key countries such as Brazil and Colombia have significantly reduced deforestation during the last year, while deforestation remains low in Indonesia.¹² It is too early to draw any conclusions about the relationship between this progress, tenure reforms, and improved tenure security for Indigenous Peoples and other territorial communities, but encouraging developments do illustrate that political will matters. Many of the FTFG funders are active in these countries.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

¹² Weisse, Goldman, and Carter (2024). *Forest Pulse: The Latest on the World's Forests*. World Resources Institute. <https://research.wri.org/gfr/latest-analysis-deforestation-trends>



Photo by Priscila Tapajowara / If Not Us Then Who

2025 Strategic Direction

As we enter the fifth year of Pledge spending, our focus will remain on achieving the \$1.7 billion financial target and ensuring that support more effectively reaches IPs and LCs, enabling them to secure, strengthen, and protect their land and resource rights.

- › **In 2025, we aim to enhance direct funding mechanisms, increase capacity-building support for IP and LC organizations, encourage intermediaries to be more accountable to Indigenous Peoples and forest communities, and further promote IPs' and LCs' evolving leadership roles in global conservation efforts.**

In addition to increasing direct support for forest communities, donor activities also prioritize national land and forest tenure reform processes that recognize and enforce IP and LC tenure rights. Efforts include work with partner governments and regional organizations to support systemic changes to land and forest tenure laws, policies, and systems. National and regional level projects work to ensure that land and forest rights are recognized in new laws and that new reforms have meaningful and inclusive consultation processes for communities. Even where IP and LC tenure is legally recognized, ongoing work with regional and national governments is critical to ensuring that these rights are implemented and respected. Donor collaboration helps ensure that local level activities complement national level work.

Next year also presents an opportunity to reflect on the Pledge's broader impact and begin dialogue on future collaborations to build on what has already been achieved.

Call to Action and Conclusion

Collective Action and Future Collaboration

The COP26 Forest Tenure Pledge demonstrates the power of collective action. Moving forward, governments, donors, and civil society must continue to collaborate with IPs and LCs to build on the gains made over the past three years and improve intermediary accountability to IPs and LCs. New donors and partners are needed to ensure that IP- and LC-led initiatives continue receiving the support needed to protect their lands and forests.

Invitation to Explore the Full Report

This report offers a comprehensive overview of progress under the COP26 Pledge, including case studies, funding updates, and future strategies. We encourage readers to explore it for more insights into the remarkable work IPs, LCs, and their allies are doing to protect the world's forests and combat climate change.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

SECTION 2

Pledge Spending Progress

This report covers donor progress made between January and December 2023 towards the Pledge’s overall \$1.7 billion commitment.

Methodology

Each Pledge signatory provided a list of 2023 calendar year Pledge-aligned spending, compiled and coded in a common format. The data was analyzed in the aggregate to produce this report’s findings. By initial agreement, the FTFG does not publish information about individual members’ Pledge commitments nor does it report on specific allocations and grant recipients. Some members have released separate and more detailed information about how they are meeting their Pledge commitments.

In the spirit of improving our data collection and analysis, this year we sought feedback from partners and examined other reporting frameworks to inform and refine our own reporting template. For more details on this process, see [Appendix 1](#).

We developed a set of key definitions to guide donor data collection and make the analysis more coherent. Appendix 1 includes definitions that were added to our reporting template such as “% of Pledge-aligned funding,” “direct support,” and “% reaching IPs and LCs in ways they can influence and control.” Despite different direct funding approaches, these definitions provide a common ground for data reporting and help us analyze the aggregated information.

We understand that many aspects of funding cannot be captured solely through quantitative information. This is why we include case studies ([Section 3](#)) to document promising work supported by the Pledge. We also address potential overlapping of funds and explain how we manage this in Appendix 1.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

Progress overview

In 2023, Pledge donors provided¹³ almost **\$521 million**¹⁴ to support IP and LC forest tenure rights. This brings **total funding over the Pledge’s first three years to nearly \$1.34 billion. With almost 79% of the \$1.7 billion commitment funded** three years into the five-year period, **we are well on track to meet or exceed our commitment** before the Pledge concludes in December 2025 (see figure 1). Over the course of the Pledge, the composition of each year’s spending has also evolved, with public funding accounting for an increasingly large share of each year’s spending (see table 1). Private donor funding decreased slightly in 2023, which may be due to the multi-year grantmaking cycles of certain philanthropies.

Figure 1: Progress towards the \$1.7 billion target

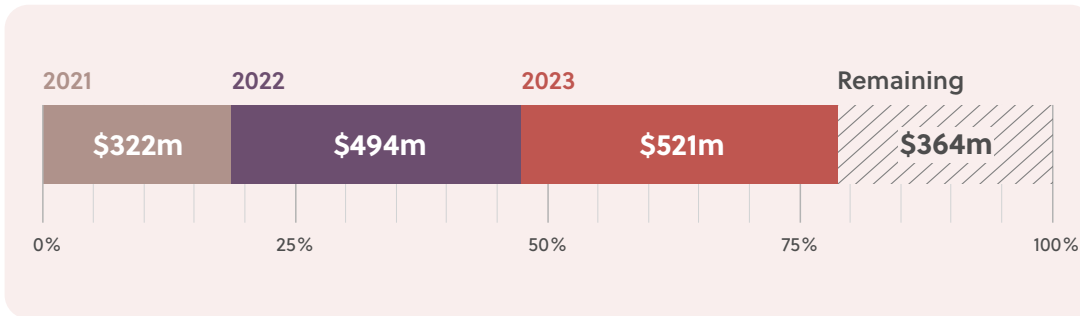


Table 1: 2021–2023 Pledge spending

	2021	2022	2023	Cumulative
Total bilateral donor funding	\$179,288,205	\$332,492,199	\$369,897,669	\$881,678,073
Total private donor funding	\$142,341,542	\$161,465,741	\$150,954,869	\$454,762,152
Annual total	\$321,629,748	\$493,957,939	\$520,852,538	\$1,336,440,225
Percentage of pledge total	19%	29%	31%	79%

¹³ Totals provided include disbursements and, in some cases, formal allocations and commitments. For philanthropies, multi-year grants are considered disbursed once a grant agreement has been signed. In this report and in other discussions of the Pledge, we use “disbursement,” “spending,” “funding,” and related terms to refer both to allocated and disbursed funds.

¹⁴ Some bilateral donors report funds that are formally allocated but not yet disbursed; \$58.8 million of 2023 Pledge funding was reported as “committed” or “commissioned” funds, while the remainder is disbursements. The 2023 total figure also includes approximately \$25 million in funds disbursed earlier in the Pledge period, but which were not previously counted. These funds are also included in the disaggregated figures below.

Funding for IP and LC forest tenure and guardianship remains insufficient, but there is progress, and funding is increasing outside of the Forest Tenure Funders Group. This year, The Rights and Resources Initiative and Rainforest Foundation Norway released [new research on funding trends](#) for IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship. Their report finds that funding has scaled up in recent years, with disbursements since 2020 increasing 36% over the prior four-year average. **Seventy-two percent of this increase is due to funding from the FTFG.** Multilateral funding is also increasing.¹⁵ We hope that this trend will continue and recognize that it is also important to ensure funding quality.



Photo by Kynan Tegar / If Not Us Then Who

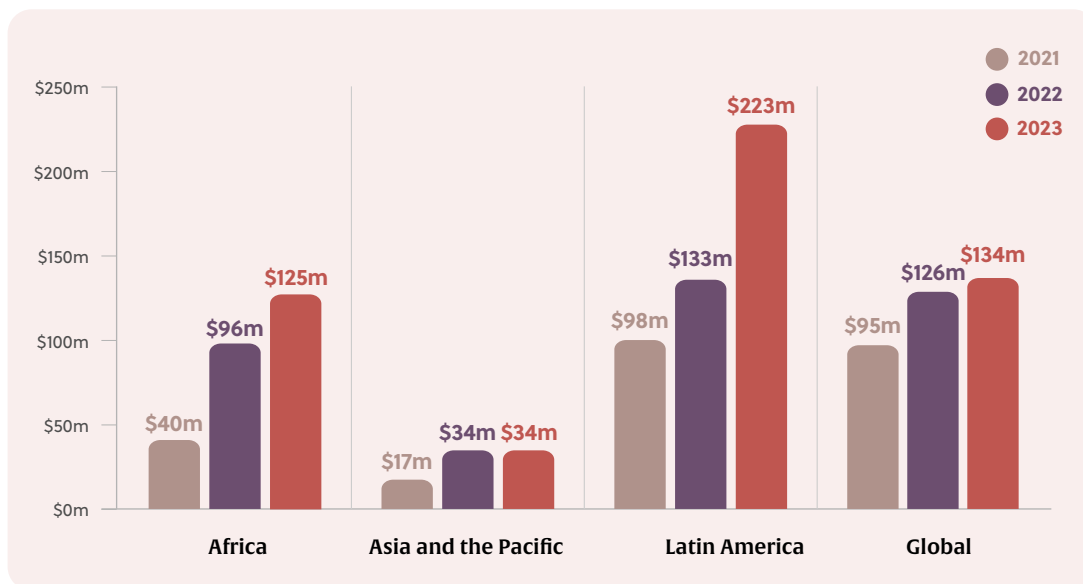
¹⁵ Rights and Resources Initiative and Rainforest Foundation Norway (2024). *State of Funding for Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship*. https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-State-of-Funding_Brief-EN.pdf

Pledge funding by geography¹⁶

In 2023, 26% of funding supported global work, with the remainder supporting projects carried out at the local, national, or regional level (see figure 2).¹⁷ Global work received a smaller proportion of spending than in 2022, and more funds were allocated to specific regions. Of the funding designated by region (i.e. “non-global” funding), the largest share went to Latin America (58%), followed by Africa (33%) and the Asia Pacific region (9%).¹⁸ Compared to 2022, the Asia Pacific funding share declined though the volume of funding for Asia Pacific remained constant between 2022 and 2023. The volume of funding increased for both Latin America and Africa.

When examining the number of grants—rather than the amount of funding—going to specific regions, Asia received a somewhat larger share: 15% of non-global grants, compared to 9% of funding. This suggests that the average grant size to Asia is smaller than in other regions and that donors continue to underinvest in the continent. We hope that the recent establishment of several direct funding mechanisms in Asia, including the Nusantara Fund¹⁹ and the Indigenous Peoples of Asia Solidarity Fund (IPAS), will help facilitate increased direct and overall funding in the region.

Figure 2: Pledge Spending by Geography, 2021–2023²⁰



¹⁶ All disaggregated figures in this and the following subsections are calculated using a standardized format to code grants and other funding collected from Pledge signatories. Some funders did not code their grants; we obtained coding for \$516.3 million in 2023 disbursements and based percentage figures on this total.

¹⁷ When available data allowed, spending for multi-country or multi-region projects was divided into the regional categories according to a percentage breakdown of funds. When this breakdown was not available, multi-region projects were included under the “global” category.

¹⁸ Regional percentages here are calculated based on the total sum of non-global funding.

¹⁹ See the case study on the [Nusantara Fund](#) in Section 3.

²⁰ As with 2023 data, 2021 and 2022 figures are based on the grants for which we received coding. Thus, total funding shown in the figures in this section will not sum to the total spending reported for that year.

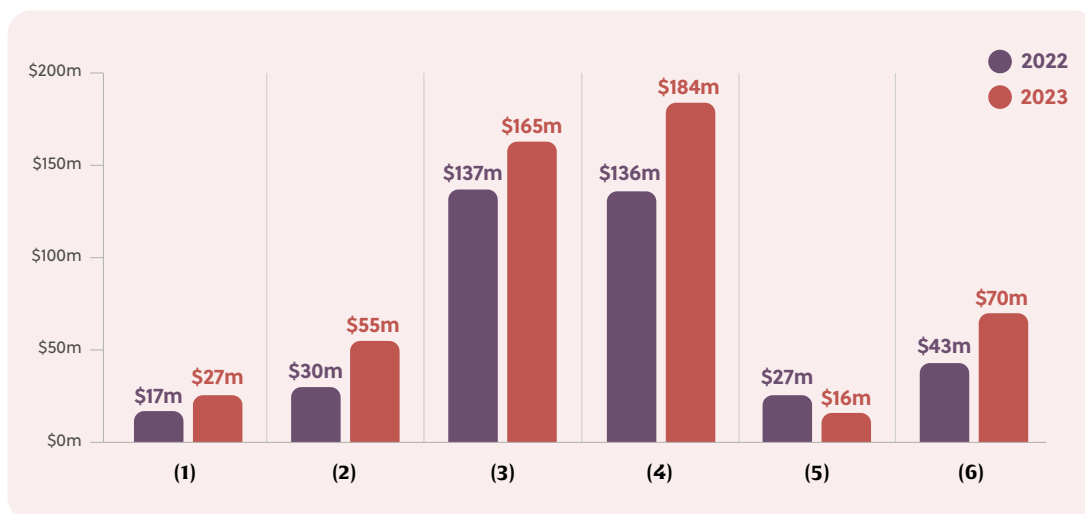
Funding by theme

Donors categorized each grant or project into one of five thematic categories or an “other” category.²¹

1. Support to national land and forest tenure reform processes that help secure IP and LC rights
2. Support to map, document, register, or otherwise assert or claim legal rights to land (formal rights recognition)
3. Support to improve territorial management, conservation, and/or governance or to strengthen tenure security
4. Support for sustainable forest management or other forest- or nature-based livelihood strategies
5. Support for international advocacy and communications on tenure security, biodiversity, and climate change
6. Other

As in past years, around two-thirds of Pledge-aligned funding supports either territorial governance and tenure security efforts (theme 3, 32%) or sustainable management and natural resources use (theme 4, 35%). Rights recognition processes (theme 2, 11%) and promoting IP and LC rights in the context of national land and forest tenure reform agendas (theme 1, 5%) continue to receive a smaller portion of the funding—although these shares have increased slightly compared to 2022. Figure 3, below, shows the funding breakdown by primary thematic area.

Figure 3: Primary Thematic Area, 2022–2023²²



1. Support to national land and forest tenure reform processes that help secure IP and LC rights
2. Support to map, document, register, or otherwise assert or claim legal rights to land (formal rights recognition)
3. Support to improve territorial management, conservation, and/or governance or to strengthen tenure security
4. Support for sustainable forest management or other forest- or nature-based livelihood strategies
5. Support for international advocacy and communications on tenure security, biodiversity, and climate change
6. Other

²¹ Some funders used the “other” category for work that other funders placed into specified themes. These include capacity building and strengthening of Indigenous organizations (which other funders coded as theme 3), support for the rights and political participation of Indigenous women, support for environmental defenders and communities facing violence, and benefit sharing programs. One very large sum (~\$39 million) was counted as “other” because it was entered as a single data line that represents a collection of smaller grants with different thematic focuses.

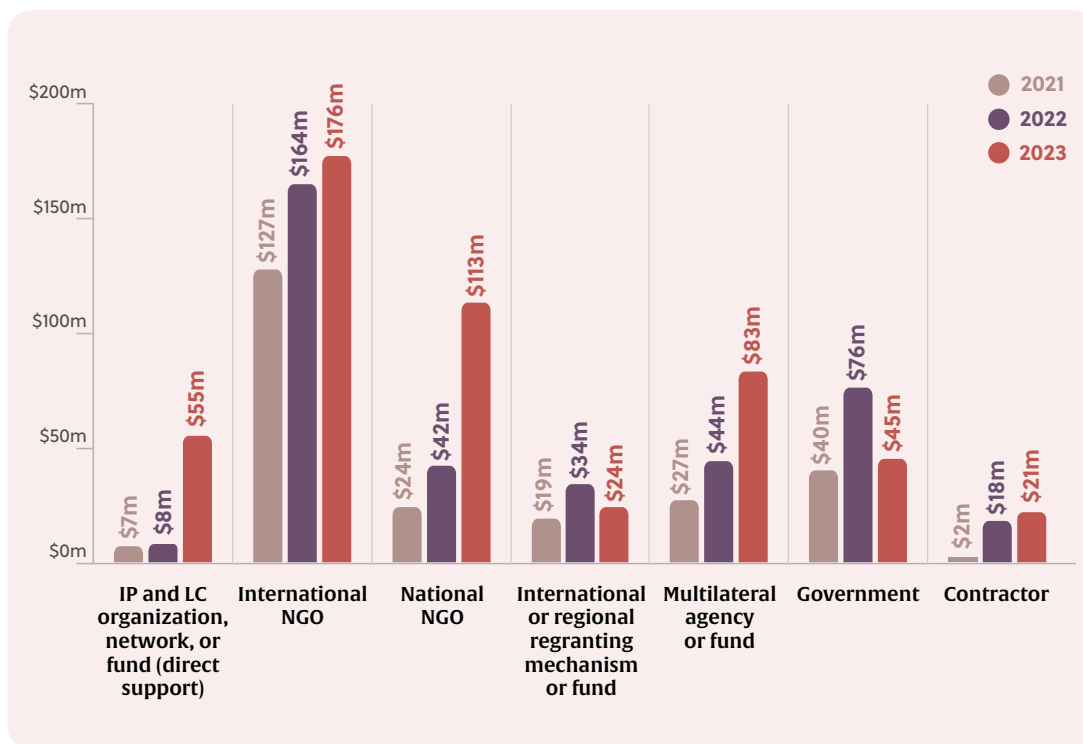
²² A 2021 comparison is not available because thematic categories were modified in 2022 in an attempt to reduce funding labeled “other.”

Funding by delivery partner

To explain how Pledge-aligned funding was allocated, donors provided a spending breakdown by delivery partner (see figure 4).

Over half of all categorized funding went to international and national NGOs. Compared to 2022, **the proportion of this funding going to national NGOs nearly doubled**, while the proportion going to international NGOs decreased. **This may indicate that funders are moving to provide support to more local organizations with strong connections to the work and communities they support.** The share of funding for international and regional funds and regrating mechanisms decreased slightly; the share of funding to government agencies decreased; and the share of funding for multilateral agencies increased.²³

Figure 4: Primary delivery partner, 2021–2023



- › **The share of Pledge funding channeled directly to Indigenous Peoples and local communities increased very substantially this year. In 2023, over 10.6% of categorized funds—almost \$55 million—directly reached IP and LC organizations.**

²³ Multilateral funding includes disbursements to UN agencies and special rapporteurs and multilateral funds such as CAFI, the LEAF Coalition, and EnABLE.

While still smaller than many Pledge signatories would like, this is a sizable increase over 2.9% in 2021 and 2.1% in 2022. To be clear, these figures are not entirely comparable, as a larger number of Pledge signatories reported disaggregated data this year.²⁴ Some of these signatories—for whom data were not available in previous years—provided significant direct funding. Still, when looking only at the subset of donors for whom we had data on delivery partners last year, the share of direct funding still quadrupled to 8.4%.

Thus, we have substantially increased our direct funding in 2023. Of course, funding fluctuates year-to-year, due in part to natural variation and to multi-year grantmaking cycles. Still, in 2023, **FTFG members reported support to 100 distinct IP and LC organizations, compared to just 39 and 27 distinct organizations in the prior two years** (see table 2).²⁵ Not only are donors increasing direct support, they are also extending this support to a greater number of organizations. This indicates that donors have a greater understanding of the funding landscape, which should help to increase funding volumes. Furthermore, a broad variety of organizations receive support—from regional and global Indigenous and local community networks to Indigenous-led funds to organizations working in a single community.

Table 2: Direct support, 2021–2023

	2021	2022	2023 subset*	2023
Percent direct funding	2.9%	2.1%	8.4%	10.6%
# of IP and LC organizations supported	27	39	58	100

**only includes donors who reported disaggregated data in 2022*

²⁴ The Protecting Our Planet (POP) Challenge reports a single aggregated disbursement figure each year. However, we have also encouraged POP members to individually report disaggregated data; many chose to do so this year for the first time.

²⁵ This figure is an undercount. Donors reported 100 unique organizations as “direct support”; however, some of these represent projects in which support was directly channeled to multiple IP and LC organizations under a single project.



Photo by Kynan Tegar / If Not Us Then Who

Despite progress, obstacles to increased direct funding remain.

These include:

- › Donor perceptions of and overall aversion to risk can dissuade direct funding, especially for those managing public funds
- › IP and LC organizations may not be able to meet the significant administrative requirements mandated by direct funding
- › Limited donor administrative capacity constrains the total number of grants that can be developed and managed; intermediaries or regrantees help expand this capacity
- › IP and LC organizations have limited, albeit growing, capacity to apply for and manage international funding
- › Some IP and LC organizations cannot receive direct funding because they lack legal identities or bank accounts; others may prefer to receive funding via trusted partners

While scaling up direct funding and responding to these challenges takes time, we are seeing some progress, especially among private funders. In 2023, **over 27% of private donor funding was channeled directly to IP and LC organizations**, compared to around 4% of bilateral funding. In the 2022 report, these figures were 8.5% and 1%, respectively. **Donors are also increasingly supporting emerging IP- and LC-led funds, which help to facilitate direct funding.** In 2023 alone, FTFG members supported at least seven IP- and LC-led funds. We expect this figure will be even greater in 2024. Yet, direct funding is not reaching communities equally: around 72% of direct funding goes to Latin America, while only around 4% goes to Africa, 11% goes to Asia, and 13% goes to global work.

While we continue to strive to improve direct funding, we also recognize the importance of intermediary organizations, which can facilitate transfers of funds and meet donor requirements.

- › **Given the severity of the climate and biodiversity crises—and the urgency to address them—funders also leverage intermediaries to reach more communities while reducing transaction costs and scaling overall funding more rapidly.**

Intermediaries may also help IPs and LCs access national funds tied to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and access national mechanisms for redistribution of funds earned from emissions reductions. Several intermediary organizations have modeled regranting mechanisms that are fit for purpose and allow IPs and LCs to have more influence and control over funding. The FTFG will continue to foster conversations about regranting; encourage intermediaries to be accountable to IPs and LCs and incorporate them in their governance; and model practices that move funding in ways most aligned with IP and LC partners.

Just as we did in 2022, the FTFG attempted to conceptualize and calculate the diverse ways funding reaches IP and LC organizations. We recognize that many funding recipients have close, trusted partnerships with IP and LC organizations, co-designing projects and proposals and providing subgrants. The “direct funding” framing is limited in failing to capture this regranting support—as well as the technical expertise and in-kind support that often flows to IP and LC organizations through partners. To quantify such funding, we asked donors to approximate the portion of each grant that reaches IPs and LCs in ways they can influence or control. We received estimates that account for approximately \$239.5 million of the 2023 Pledge disbursements. Responses indicate that about 49% (\$117 million) of this funding reached IP and LC organizations in ways they can influence and control.²⁶

The case studies in [Section 3](#) help illustrate changes that facilitate more accountable funding and increased direct funding. The examples highlight support for IP and LC capacity building, funding channeled through an intermediary that is accountable to IP and LC partners, and direct support to IP and LC organizations and funds. The FTFG is committed to continuing conversations with our IP and LC partners around ways to scale up direct funding during and after the remaining Pledge period.

²⁶ This represents funding that reaches IP and LC organizations both indirectly and directly. These figures rely on estimates and should be considered as approximations.

Funding for IP and LC women and youth

- › **The Pledge acknowledges the importance of providing support to IP and LC women and girls, youth, and others often excluded from decision-making.**

Last year, we wrote about the data gap around gender-inclusive and gender-transformative work in FTFG reporting. We know that only 2% of climate finance has a primary focus on supporting gender equality,²⁷ but we have not previously had information about the FTFG’s own spending. We also highlighted some of the norms, legal systems, and practices that often prevent women from enjoying secure tenure rights and participating in decision-making on land governance and climate-related financing. These include patriarchal views and legal obstacles that make it difficult for women to own or inherit land; the invisibility of and ownership claims to women’s labor; and policies around land registration and distribution, land use, and consultation and consent, which fail to account for gender.

In 2023 we added indicators to track support for IP and LC women and youth. For each project/grant, funders were asked to indicate whether gender was a “principal” (primary) objective of the grant, a “significant” (secondary) objective, or whether gender was not targeted.²⁸ Funders were also asked to code to these same targets for youth.

The results show that gender was a primary focus for just 11% of funding.

Furthermore, an even smaller portion of funding specifically targets IP and LC women’s organizations—fewer than 10 organizations that received funds had a “principal” gender targeting and are also women’s organizations. This percentage increases moderately when considering gender targeting only for direct funding to IP and LC organizations: 15% of direct funding is for projects with a “principal” gender target.



Photo by Hugo Metz / If Not Us Then Who

27 Patel et al. (2023). *Gender, climate finance and inclusive low-carbon transitions*. IIED Issue Paper. <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2023-09/21601IIED.pdf>

28 This method of tracking gender aligns with the OECD reporting framework: “An activity can either target gender equality as its ‘principal objective’ or as a ‘significant objective’. A ‘principal’ score (2) is assigned if gender equality was an explicit objective of the activity and fundamental to its design - i.e. the activity would not have been undertaken without this objective. A ‘significant’ score (1) is assigned if gender equality was an important, but secondary, objective of the activity - i.e. it was not the principal reason for undertaking the activity. A ‘not targeted’ score (0) is assigned if, after being screened against the gender equality policy marker, an activity is not found to target gender equality.”

Our estimation of youth funding is even lower:²⁹ **Only 2% of overall funding, and 5% of direct funding, was for projects with youth as a “principal” target.** Youth voices are critical to advancing IP and LC rights, addressing questions around the climate and biodiversity crises, and building future generations of leadership. FTFG members must recognize the urgent need to increase this funding.

The FTFG will continue to track this information and work on ways to increase funding to IP and LC women and girls, youth, people with disabilities, and other groups that have been historically excluded. The new FTFG working group on women and tenure has already begun to further assess how best to scale up and improve funding for IP and LC women.

BOX 4

Threats to land and environmental defenders

The Pledge text acknowledges the life-threatening work of land and environmental defenders and the increasing threats they face. We know through qualitative data—including project descriptions, case studies, and grants that describe a thematic focus falling into the “other” category—that FTFG members support work around defenders. Yet, we lack comprehensive data on our support for this critical issue.

There is also a broader lack of State-led reporting on violence against defenders. Between 2015 and 2023, only three (out of 162) countries who submitted a Voluntary National Review reported a killing or attack against a human rights defender.³⁰ As noted in the opening statement,

Global Witness reports that 196 environmental and human rights defenders were murdered in 2023. More than half of those killed were Indigenous or Afrodescendant (43% Indigenous; 6% Afrodescendant).³¹

Fortunately, there are efforts to address this grave issue. For example, the Leaders Network for Environmental Activists and Defenders (LEAD) is a collaboration between land and environmental defenders, grassroots movements, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and more. Launched at New York Climate Week in 2024, it provides a platform to foster dialogue between governments, defenders, and other institutions, protect defenders, and center them in decision-making processes.³²

²⁹ As mentioned previously, there is no international marker on gender; this targeting is based on individual estimations.

³⁰ International Land Coalition (2023). *A Crucial Gap: The Limits to Official Data on Attacks Against Defenders and Why It's Concerning*. <https://www.landcoalition.org/en/resources/a-crucial-gap-2023/>

³¹ Global Witness (2024). *Missing Voices*. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/missing-voices/#memory>

³² Global Witness (2024). *Bridging the gap between climate change and human rights: Introducing the Leaders Network for Environmental Activists and Defenders*. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/bridging-gap-between-climate-change-and-human-rights-introducing-leaders-network-environmental-activists-and-defenders/>

Conclusion

The FTFG is committed to **transparency and accountability**; we will continue to publish annual reports detailing commitments made and to be fulfilled until the Pledge period ends. While progress has been made, we recognize the **urgent need to continue to improve our funding practices**, including by increasing direct support, providing more fit-for-purpose funding, encouraging intermediaries to be more accountable to IPs and LCs, and enhancing support to historically excluded groups including IP and LC women and girls, youth, and people with disabilities.

While we work to track and improve current Pledge spending, we are already having conversations on a **potential renewed pledge in 2025**. FTFG members are discussing options for this possible renewal, including an expanded focus on impact; clear outcomes and targets that emphasize quality and not just quantity of funding; and improved reporting mechanisms to track our progress and assess the impact of our funding. We will continue to engage in collaborative dialogues to ensure that a potential renewed pledge considers the interests of our IP and LC partners.



Photo by Joel Redman / If Not Us Then Who

SECTION 3

Case Studies from Pledge Signatories



CASE STUDIES: Successes and Innovations Supported by Pledge Funding³³

Supporting Brazil's Indigenous Movement

Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), and Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast, Minas Gerais, and Espírito Santo (APOINME)

Supported by Ford Foundation

In 2023, Ford Foundation supported four major Indigenous organizations that are central to Brazil's Indigenous movement: Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), and Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast, Minas Gerais, and Espírito Santo (APOINME). Grants responded to harsh attacks against Indigenous Peoples, including several attempts to remove constitutional rights, which would jeopardize any effort to secure long-term collective land tenure through demarcation.

Despite positive federal level changes, Indigenous Peoples' rights are advancing slowly, and few titlings have been issued. This is a period of enormous regression, and Indigenous Peoples are in constant battle to ensure that their land rights receive constitutional protection. By mobilizing at the local, national, and international levels, they are playing a very active role in spotlighting these issues at the country's Supreme Court, defending their constitutional rights and fighting for democracy.

The Brazilian Indigenous movement is growing its global partnerships and alliances to raise visibility, increase recognition, and garner respect for Indigenous Peoples, their land rights, and natural resources. At the national level, APIB convenes regional Indigenous organizations and counters the fragmentation of social groups and civil society organizations. The movement's strength is directly tied to its ability to maintain legitimacy at the territorial level and also exert political pressure at the national, regional, and international levels.

Ford grants have directly supported Indigenous Peoples, *quilombolas*, and traditional communities working toward meaningful changes in advance of COP30. Ford has also funded efforts to foster collaboration, bolster inclusivity, and advance trust-based relationships.

³³ Submissions were edited for length and clarity.

Saving a Sacred Species: Community Forest Concessions and Rights-Based Conservation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

GRACE (Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center)

Supported by Rainforest Trust

Rainforest Trust partnered with GRACE (Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center) to protect critically endangered Grauer's gorillas in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This rights-based conservation project centers local communities in efforts to safeguard gorillas and their habitats. Habitat destruction, hunting, and civil unrest have significantly decreased the Grauer's gorilla population, threatening the species and local livelihoods.

In eastern DRC, Usala's Indigenous Peoples and local communities rely on the forest for subsistence farming, hunting, and small-scale mining. Community-led conservation efforts are part of daily life, and IPs and LCs are stewards of the land that is both integral to their culture and in grave danger. The Usala community has long been active in gorilla conservation efforts, collecting important data on gorilla presence in one of the species' key habitats. More recently, local Usala communities have advanced their conservation efforts with the creation of Local Community Forest Concessions (CFCLs).

Prior to his death earlier this year, traditional leader Mwami Eric Mwaka Eliba has been a notable leader in the fight to protect the gorillas. He approached the Union of Associations for Conservation of Gorillas and for Development (UGADEC), seeking support to secure Usala communities' forest rights and protect gorilla habitats.

UGADEC partnered with GRACE, combining traditional knowledge with scientific data to protect a 312,250 acre forest corridor critical to the gorillas' survival.

Four CFCLs are being created, and the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process is nearly complete after 15 months. Once allocated to local communities, these CFCLs will legally recognize community land rights and formally empower LCs to lead conservation efforts.

There have also been challenges. Security in the North Kivu and nearby regions has deteriorated in the last 12 months, requiring the GRACE and UGADEC teams to change plans on short notice. During FPIC meetings earlier this year, community engagement teams learned that the village of Bukucha, where community assembly meetings were planned to take place, was not where leadership was based. The meetings needed to be held in the village of Rama, which was only reachable by a week-long trek through dense rainforest. A Rainforest Trust-funded satellite-powered internet (VSAT) system was installed to improve travel time, decrease associated risks, and facilitate communication. The approach, which allowed Rama's chiefs to connect directly with GRACE teams from hundreds of miles away, enabled FPIC activities to continue safely.

Today, trained community members can communicate critical information, such as the waypoint data for the CFCL boundary map creation, back to partners, promoting the physical safety of staff and the community. The VSAT has also provided Indigenous and local communities with unprecedented connectivity; this enables consultation with community members outside Rama and enhances the transparency and impact of the FPIC process.

The project's success is dependent on sustained community involvement. There is evidence that this is happening and that innovative methods and local leadership are creating a sustainable future for Grauer's gorillas and the communities that share their forest home. Community members are also open to alternative livelihoods, including sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry, which reduces reliance on hunting and resource extraction and alleviates pressure on wildlife. And, GRACE's orphaned gorilla sanctuary rehabilitates animals rescued from poaching. Once forests are legally designated, these animals can be reintroduced into the wild.

Promoting Indigenous Rights and Territorial Management in the Brazilian Amazon

Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR)

Supported by Nia Tero

Nia Tero has partnered with Brazil's Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) since 2019. In 2022, CIR developed a five-year strategic plan (2023–2027) to address challenges facing Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon and grouped activities under five priority areas. These include economic sustainability of Indigenous territories; political action, communication, and Indigenous rights; security, protection, and territorial governance; empowerment of youth and women leaders; and strengthening CIR as an organization. In 2023, CIR implemented initiatives to implement the plan, including:

Territorial and Environmental Management Plans:

CIR led the design of Indigenous Lands management plans to address the priorities of Roraima's Indigenous Peoples. The plans enumerate actions that foster autonomy, environmental governance, and sustainability of productive activities. These include actions to ensure Indigenous Peoples' food security and identification of income generating opportunities around food surpluses.

Climate Change:

CIR is documenting the impact of climate change on Indigenous communities using innovative methodology and a geoprocessing laboratory. It also produced case studies documenting findings and related response plans.

Territorial Monitoring:

More than 360 Indigenous guards work for the Group for the Protection and Surveillance of Indigenous Territories (GPVIT), which monitors and reports infractions on Indigenous lands, organizes fire brigades, and helps protect Indigenous lands (3.6 million hectares) through territorial monitoring and other activities. In partnership with IBAMA, CIR has trained many of the fire brigades that are now responding to fires in Indigenous lands in Roraima.

Protect Indigenous Rights:

CIR's legal department defends individual cases. It is also part of the Amazonia network of Indigenous lawyers who collaborate on legal matters and were successful in resisting a policy proposal that would allow mining on Indigenous lands (Bill PL 191/2020) and the *marco temporal* law (Time Frame Law 14701/23 in English).

Indigenous Fund:

Since its April 2024 approval, CIR has been developing the Rutî Fund, which will implement Life Plans for the State's 33 Indigenous lands.

Recognizing Rights, Building Capacity, and Ensuring Effective Participation of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples' Alliance for Rights and Development (IPARD)

Supported by United States Agency for International Development

The Indigenous Peoples' Alliance for Rights and Development (IPARD) is a six-year, public-private partnership to secure rights, enhance capabilities, and create self-determined economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples worldwide. The partnership aims to harness the strengths and experiences of a multi-sector network focused on empowering Indigenous Peoples' organizations so they can manage, develop, and govern their territories based on the principles of self-determined development, traditional practices, natural resource management, and respect for customary rights. Based in Panama, the FSC-Indigenous Foundation implements the IPARD program, which runs from 2020–2026.

IPARD is guided by three key objectives:

1. To organize and convene a Capacity Development Program for Indigenous Peoples' organizations and stakeholders
2. To foster an enabling environment for Indigenous Peoples recognition, effective participation, and joint decision-making in matters affecting them
3. To promote Indigenous Peoples' sustainable development based on self-determined economic models

In Africa, IPARD collaborates with and provides support to the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC), which is based in South Africa. IPARD and IPACC are conducting joint analysis on the implementation of the articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Morocco, Kenya, Namibia, and Niger.

Scaling Up Fit-For-Purpose Funding: Lessons from the Tenure Facility

The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility

Supported by Bezos Earth Fund, Christensen Fund, Ford Foundation, Norway, Oak Foundation, Sobrato Philanthropies, and the United Kingdom

Pledge signatories are committed to scaling up financing to Indigenous Peoples and other communities managing critical ecosystems amidst climate and nature crises. IP and LC organizations have called for more direct funding from the FTFG and other donors. Fiduciary regulations can make it difficult to do this at scale, but donors are being creative, exploring ways to immediately increase funding to IP organizations and territorial funds and build organizational capacity to control funding deployment.

One such approach is through the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility, which provides direct, fit for purpose funding to Indigenous, Afro-descendent, and community organizations in forest areas. Partners develop project proposals and also receive technical support to strengthen their financial management systems. Tenure Facility's grants are between \$500,000 to \$1.5 million per year for one to five year periods and are provided to organizations that have never received this kind of funding. Funding is provided to partners upfront so they can develop project proposals and strengthen financial management systems; they also develop their organizational capacity during project implementation. Five of the Tenure Facility's 11 board members are Indigenous, which helps keep the organization accountable to the communities it serves.

In 2023, seven partners—the governments of Norway and the United Kingdom, Bezos Earth Fund, Christensen Fund, Ford Foundation, Oak Foundation, and Sobrato Philanthropies—channeled \$13.2 million to 23 Indigenous, Afro-descendent, and community organizations through the Tenure Facility. Results were impressive: Indigenous Peoples' land rights and community forest guardianship were formalized on more than 2 million hectares, and progress on improving tenure security and governance was made on close to another 22 million hectares. Nearly 14,000 communities were impacted, and there were measurable results in strengthening women's rights and gender equality for the majority of projects.

The Tenure Facility aims to help IP, LC, and AD organizations access and absorb greater funding. For example, the Facility supported Indigenous- and Afro-descendent-led territorial funds, strengthening their processes, building budget management experience, and positioning them to apply for funding from national and international climate funds.

In addition to their own funding and technical support, the Tenure Facility also promotes global efforts to scale funding for Indigenous Peoples and community forest and land tenure; these include Path to Scale and the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities' (GATC) Shandia initiative.

Providing Financial and Technical Support to Colombia's Civil Society

Mujeres Hiladoras de Vida, Ecoserranía, and Amar es Más via the Norwegian Human Rights Fund

Supported by Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI)

In Colombia, the **Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF)** supports local peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities and CSOs as they strengthen rights, promote community-led strategies for biodiversity conservation, and reduce deforestation. In addition to direct grants, the NHRF supports financial and administrative capacity building; value chains and livelihoods; fundraising; protection and self-protection mechanisms for environmental human rights defenders; and environmental protection models. NHRF also serves as a convener, connecting grantees to relevant national and international human rights actors and networks.

Mujeres Hiladoras de Vida is an organization of Indigenous Pasto, Yanacona, and Embera Chamí women from the Colombian Amazon's Putumayo region. When they applied to NHRF, Hiladoras had no experience with project or grant management. The first grant was received through a fiscal sponsor. Since 2022, the NHRF has worked with the organization to strengthen administrative and internal control procedures, legal registration, and financial, administrative, and legal compliance. NHRF has also helped Hiladores connect with other organizations working on similar issues.

Today Hiladores has the capacity to receive and manage minor grants directly. Communities are regarded as forest guardians, and a gender lens ensures that women participate in decision-making and play a role in managing territories, helping to curb deforestation, forest degradation, and the impact of extractive projects.

The NHRF has also helped strengthen Hiladoras' advocacy efforts, highlighting these efforts on the national stage. As a result, Hiladoras is currently participating in the UNESCO Chair of CBR-SR's DECODE project, sharing practices of community and Indigenous participatory research and facilitating peer learning. Hiladoras has also received training in protection mechanisms and knowledge of environmental land-use planning and management policies. A woman forest guardian was elected Governor of the Indigenous territory Piedra Sagrada La Gran Familia Los Pastos in Villagarzón, Putumayo.

Ecoserranía is a small peasant organization in Segovia, Antioquia, an area of tropical rainforest that is highly impacted by deforestation, mining, and armed conflict. Many of its members once survived by engaging in logging and deforestation. Ecoserranía works in conservation, community forestry, and creating alternatives for local economies that are not dependent on unsustainable forest exploitation.

Ecoserranía had little experience managing project grants when it applied to the NHRF. The current grant is received through a fiscal sponsor, while NHRF provides support in finance management, legal and administrative procedures, and an initial audit exercise. The organization also manages small funds and has gained more national and international allies to improve its capacities, impact, and sustainability. It has also received training in territorial rights, beekeeping and community crops, and sustainable forestry.

Amar es Más is a small environmental organization in Colombia's Quindío and Risaralda departments. With their NHRF grant, Amar worked with the Indigenous Parcialidad Embera Karambá to strengthen legal opposition to a project of a large-scale transnational mining company. Legal actions, advocacy and network efforts have resulted in a reopening of the prior consultation process. In addition, Amar has positioned itself as a key leader fighting for Colombia's environmental and territorial rights through increased network participation, visibility, and credibility. As a result, the organization was chosen to represent the National Environmental Movement during the just energy transition roadmap hearing, which called for structural transformations in environmental and mining planning.

Examining Indonesia’s First Direct Funding Mechanism: Initial Results from the Nusantara Fund

Nusantara Fund

Supported by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Ford Foundation

In May 2023, three of Indonesia’s largest Indigenous and civil society organizations launched a \$3 million initiative to channel funds to frontline rural communities fighting to protect food security and stop environmental damage threatening people and the planet. The Nusantara Fund (NF) was born from partnership between Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), an organization representing 20 million Indonesians and 2,449 communities, Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), Indonesia’s largest agrarian reform movement, and The Indonesian Forum for the Environment/FoE Indonesia (WALHI), the country’s largest environmental group.

Nusantara is Indonesia’s first direct funding mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs). It is part of an unprecedented global effort to correct the fact that Indigenous Peoples and local communities receive less than 1% of foreign aid to address climate change. This is a huge mistake: IPs and LCs are among the world’s best protectors of vulnerable ecosystems, and there are significant sustainable development benefits when they manage tropical forests.

In December 2023, Nusantara launched the first call for proposals and received nearly 400 applications from communities in 36 Indonesian provinces. The following month, 76 proposals were selected for funding, and NF learned an important lesson: Open calls for proposals create unhealthy competition among communities. For the second cycle in May 2024, the founding partner organizations invited proposals from specific organizations and made 81 grants. The Fund also provided support to additional strategic networks beyond the three organizations.

So far, nearly \$1 million has been disbursed to 157 IP and LC initiatives across 32 provinces. Since its launch, \$8,550,000 has been committed to the Nusantara Fund for regranting, core support, and towards the establishment of an endowment.

In its first year, the Fund impacted three million Indigenous and local people. There have been other impressive results as well. These include:

- › 279,909 hectares of Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ land have been successfully mapped
- › 57,376 hectares of IP and LC lands have been proposed for ownership and community management recognition
- › 32,261 hectares of degraded land have been restored and rehabilitated
- › 115 collective economic units have been established
- › 58 sites for people- and nature-focused education have been established

Advancing Rights and Conservation Networks: REPALEAC's Success in Central Africa

Réseau des Populations Autochtones et Locales pour la Gestion Durable des Ecosystèmes Forestiers d'Afrique Centrale / Network of Indigenous and Local Populations for the Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa (REPALEAC)

Supported by The Christensen Fund and The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Established in 2003, REPALEAC (Réseau des Populations Autochtones et Locales pour la Gestion Durable des Ecosystèmes Forestiers d'Afrique Centrale) is a regional network that defends the rights of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs) and protects the ecosystems on which their survival depends. Comprised of more than 100 Indigenous organizations across eight Central African countries—Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Rwanda—the organization has the trust of local and national organizations and plays a prominent role in the sustainable management of the Congo Basin, the world's second largest rainforest and largest carbon sink area. It produces key assets—advocacy tools, papers, and agreements—that allow IP and LC representatives to engage in national and international forums on forests, climate, and rights.

In May 2023, REPALEAC achieved a key milestone, co-hosting the first forum for Central African and Congo Basin Indigenous and local community women. Designed to elevate women's roles in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience, the forum resulted in a plan to establish a direct funding mechanism for IP and LC initiatives that uses a gender lens and reinforce REPALEAC's commitment to increasing historically overlooked groups' participation in natural resource management decision-making.

More recently, REPALEAC leadership recently completed a learning exchange in Indonesia with the Nusantara Fund, AMAN, KPA, and WALHI.

Challenges remain. The organization's visibility and programmatic growth have outpaced its financial support. It is also contending with restricted project funding and sustainability issues because its network is largely comprised of volunteers.

Flexible, unrestricted funding from The Christensen Fund and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (2023–2025) allows REPALEAC to focus on essential organizational improvements, including capacity building in governance, financial management, and advocacy. For example, this funding enabled REPALEAC to earn an Equivalency Determination certification, which is a crucial step in both ensuring compliance with U.S. charity standards and enabling access to unrestricted funding. It underscores the need for a broader, flexible, purpose-aligned, and community-centric approach to funding.

Sustaining Indigenous Women’s Artistry and Traditional Knowledge in Brazil’s Mato Grosso state

Rikbaktsa Indigenous Women's Association (AIMURIK) via the Mato Grosso REDD Early Movers (REM) program

Supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

International agreements like the Global Biodiversity Framework acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples are key to forest conservation. As such, the REM program runs 100 projects in three countries—Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador—which exclusively benefit Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Project participants include smallholder farmers, small and medium-sized producers engaged in sustainable agriculture, and traditional peoples and communities. Projects compensate communities that decrease deforestation, create carbon sinks, and use forests in a sustainable way.

In 2022, the Mato Grosso REDD Early Movers (REM) program launched a project with the Indigenous women's organization Rikbaktsa (AIMURIK) to support women artisans. The Rikbaktsa are a small group of Indigenous Peoples who live in the northeastern Amazon in Brazil's Mato Grosso state. They are known for their intimate knowledge of the forest and medicinal plants and their craftsmanship. The women make decorative feather jewelry, employing traditional techniques to generate additional income.

REM organized workshops so women could share their experiences about traditional processing and marketing methods. Women collected herbs and the raw materials for their handicrafts during expeditions. Trainings emphasized the value of social networks, which can be leveraged to sell products and boost livelihoods. In total, approximately 600 women from 39 villages in the Erikbaktsa, Japuira and Escondido territories benefited from the project.

KfW finances the program on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The Mato Grosso government coordinates REM through the State Secretariat for the Environment (SEMA). The funds are managed by the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (FUNBIO).

CASE STUDIES: Support to Women, Youth, and Other Historically Excluded Groups

Examples of Pledge support that promotes the effective participation and inclusion of women and girls, youth, and others in decision-making processes

While many of the previous case studies mention support to women, youth, and others who are often excluded from decision-making, we invited donors to submit additional case studies that spotlight this kind of support.

We acknowledge that support for such initiatives constitutes too little a portion of overall Pledge funding. The FTFG will continue to track, report, and work to improve funding that supports IP and LC women and youth.

Including Women, Youth, and People With Disabilities in Results-Based Climate Finance Programs

EnABLE (Enhancing Access to Benefits while Lowering Emissions)

Supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Launched in 2020 as a program of the World Bank, the trust fund EnABLE (Enhancing Access to Benefits while Lowering Emissions) was created to promote and strengthen the social inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups—women, youth, and people with disabilities—in results-based climate finance programs.

Now operational in 13 countries as part of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, the goal is to maximize constituencies' carbon and non-carbon benefits, which in turn will contribute to a range of broader outcomes, including improved livelihood resilience, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation. In partnership with local civil society organizations, EnABLE is also building the capacity of constituent communities and groups to engage in results-based climate finance (RBCF).

In Nepal, EnABLE supports awareness about climate change and sustainable forest management. The organization also produced a [comic book](#) about climate change and Nepal's RBCF program and a [series of videos](#) highlighting the role of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the success of community-driven forest management. Moving forward, the grant will be extended to the local civil society organizations working to build capacity among disadvantaged communities—Dalit, Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth—developing sustainable livelihood and conservation plans using traditional knowledge. Plans can be used to access RBCF and carbon market payments.

Providing Mental Health Support to Indigenous Youth

Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR)

Supported by Nia Tero

In the post-COVID period, many Indigenous young people are contending with serious mental health issues. In Roraima, Brazil's northernmost state, there has even been a wave of youth suicides. The Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) is leading an emergency response. Its youth department is coordinating mental health support led by an Indigenous psychologist and social worker.

In April 2024, the youth department convened a three-day seminar for more than 500 of the state's young people and Indigenous health agents. Together they discussed the crisis and formulated joint response plans.

Bolstering Resilience and the Capacity of Afro-Colombian Communities and Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian Empowerment Activity (IPACE)

Supported by USAID

The Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian Empowerment Activity (IPACE) continues the collaborative work between USAID and Colombia's Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. More specifically, IPACE works with ethnic organizations and traditional authorities, helping develop their lobbying, leadership, self-governance, and natural resource management capacities. The program collaborates with national, regional, and local public institutions to address two priority needs areas—institutional adaptation and public policies and organizational strengthening.

In the post COVID-19 period, IPACE is supporting ethnic communities' food sovereignty and economic recovery. The organization partners with community, public, and private sector actors to promote income generation and inclusive business development in environmentally beneficial sectors. There are three main action areas: employability and entrepreneurship, productive initiatives and food sovereignty, and biodiversity conservation and environmental projects.

IPACE helps preserve, safeguard, and recognize ethnic cultural heritage and the contributions of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples to nation-building. The program supports cultural enterprises and increases awareness about Indigenous and Afro-Colombian culture.

The program also helps build the capacity of diverse public and private actors, including Indigenous and Cimarron (Afro-Colombian descendants of communities of formerly enslaved people) guards, so they can prevent, mitigate, and respond to natural and health emergencies. The work falls into two categories—rapid response and risk prevention and mitigation—and bolsters community resilience.

Including Women and Youth in Decision Making and Territorial Management

Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB)

Supported by Rainforest Trust

Rainforest Trust's partnership with Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB) works to protect 1.28 million acres of the Brazilian Amazon. By recognizing the rights of Traditional Peoples through contracts and demarcation, common-use territories (TUCs) are established. Local organizations like the Associação de Produtores Agroextrativistas da Flona de Tefé e Entorno (APAFE) are strengthened to lead on territory management.

The project works in several ways. It builds capacity among women and youth, ensuring they can actively participate in decision-making processes. It also promotes community leadership and environmental stewardship by women and young people. APAFE is engaging with state agencies and addressing community needs and aspirations. As governance becomes more equitable, sustainable economic activities will improve the quality of life for TUC beneficiaries and facilitate access to credit and the services critical to social, environmental, and economic progress.

Gender and youth-focused meetings and workshops have significantly increased access to information, learning exchanges, and organizational support for the Protagonist Women's and Youth Groups, enabling them to advocate for their rights and assume leadership roles. For example, the protagonist women's group members participated in Brazil's March of the Daisies, advocating against violence and exploitation in rural areas.

Ensuring Indigenous Women’s Tenure Rights and Participation in Governance

Samburu Women Trust

Supported by Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Established in 2006, Samburu Women Trust (SWT) is an Indigenous women-led organization that advances the collective rights of Kenya’s Indigenous women and girls, including those living with disabilities. SWT is the Secretariat of the Indigenous Women Council, which has over 80 Indigenous and minority community members and amplifies the collective voices of women at the national, regional, and international level.

Wellspring supports SWT’s efforts to ensure that Indigenous women have equal opportunity to own, manage, control, and make decisions over community lands and natural resources. Funding also supports Indigenous women’s participation in climate change efforts and access to information on climate finance processes and mechanisms.

Kenya has a constitutional mandate on gender quotas in land governance bodies, including Community Land Management Committees (CLMC). In 2023, SWT strengthened women’s leadership and knowledge of their rights and shifted community perceptions around inclusion of Indigenous women and girls in decision making processes and land, forest, and natural resources governance. Activities routinely involved minority groups like women with disabilities, widows, single mothers, and adolescent girls.

They included trainings on existing norms and bylaws, promoting closer alignment and implementation of both statutory and traditional norms systems; enumerating gaps in normative systems; and educating women on ways to improve participation in formal mechanisms, community assemblies, and by-law development processes. SWT also convenes county officials and community representatives, organizing forums so stakeholders can share progress on land registration processes.

In 2023, SWT used a learning forum and exchange visits to promote cross-border solidarity and alliances with Northern Tanzanian women. Indigenous women leaders and women human rights defenders from both countries discussed challenges, gaps, lessons learned, and best practices in the movement to legally acquire community lands.

SWT’s work demonstrates an effective model of aligning the Pledge goals with transformative gender equality and shows how women’s leadership advances objectives that benefit the whole community.

SWT’s work demonstrates how alignment with the Pledge commitment inclusive of transformative gender equality can be implemented and how women’s leadership advances objectives that benefit the whole community.

APPENDIX 1

Methodology

Each Pledge signatory was asked to provide a list of 2023 calendar year Pledge-aligned spending, compiled and coded in a common format. Donors calculated grant funding according to their own reporting systems and, where possible, submitted data on total funding, breaking it down by geography, primary and secondary thematic areas, and funding mechanisms.³⁴

Where only a portion of funding for a given project or grant was Pledge-aligned, donors estimated the relevant percentage. Donors reported contributions towards the Pledge in their own currencies and converted these to U.S. dollars (USD), using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) annual average conversion rate. All report amounts are in USD unless otherwise stated.

We work to improve our ability to measure funding specifics beyond the total annual spending figure. This year, we shared our common reporting template with a number of partners—Indigenous and local community grantees, intermediaries, and those who lead work on other related financial reporting mechanisms—and solicited feedback. We also reviewed other reporting frameworks such as those used by the OECD and IATI. We then revised our reporting template to respond to partner feedback and to streamline reporting by aligning with other frameworks. While preserving existing categories to maintain comparability across years, we added project descriptions to encourage more detailed information on Pledge spending, trackers that measure each project's gender and youth targeting,³⁵ and grant IDs to track multi-year funding and improve monitoring of duplicate activities.

Direct funding and intermediary accountability remain focal points of conversations and reporting. We know that direct funding is limited, but there is no clear agreement on the boundary between “direct” and “indirect”; quantifying direct funding requires some subjective interpretation by both donors and IPs and LCs. In addition to a direct funding indicator, we use additional indicators to track how Pledge funding is used. These include the number of IP and LC organizations receiving Pledge-aligned funding and how much Pledge-aligned funding ultimately reaches IP and LC organizations—including via trusted partners and intermediaries—in ways they can influence and control. Together these figures provide a clearer picture of the funding landscape.

³⁴ Not all signatories are able to report their spending progress with this level of detail. For example, Protecting Our Planet Challenge (POP) members—who signed the Pledge as a group—reported a single aggregated disbursement figure. Some POP members also chose to submit a detailed return.

³⁵ While there is an OECD marker for gender, which allows donors to formally track their gender targeting, no such marker exists for youth. Targeting for the latter is based on individual estimations.

BOX 5

Key definitions

The below definitions accompany the annual FTFG data reporting template.

% Pledge-aligned:

Proportion of the total grant or project amount that aligns with the criteria of the Pledge (enter your best approximation; e.g., 60% means that around that proportion of the funding is for work on IP and LC forest tenure rights, whereas the remainder is for something else)

Direct support:

Drawing from the Paris framework for tracking funds—funding that is transferred directly from donors to:

- › representative institutions of Indigenous Peoples
- › institutions or funding mechanisms established by Indigenous People to advance the realization of IP rights
- › fiscal sponsors or institutions selected by Indigenous Peoples to receive funds on their behalf

Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions:

Paris framework—"institutions with a mandate to represent one or several Indigenous communities or peoples through a process carried out by themselves" (see UNDRIP, article 18)

% reaching IPs and LCs in ways they can influence and control:

The percentage of funding that is Pledge-aligned and reaches IPs and LCs, indirectly or directly, in ways they can influence and have ownership over. This includes both direct funding to an IP or LC organization, and indirectly, such as through regranting and close partnerships in which IPs and LCs have a significant role in the design of a project.

Primary delivery partner type:

This is the organization with which the donor holds the funding agreement. The categories are:

1. IP and LC organization, network, or fund (direct support)
2. International NGO
3. National NGO
4. International or regional regranting mechanism or fund
5. Multilateral agency or fund
6. Government
7. Contractor

Fiscal sponsor note: fiscal sponsors that have been selected by Indigenous Peoples to receive funds on their behalf are considered direct support. The organization type of the intended recipient (i.e. the organization being sponsored) should be selected.

Two specific parts of the Pledge create a potential for overlapping funds. The first overlap comes from connections between the IP and LC Forest Tenure Pledge and the other Glasgow Pledges, the Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP), and the Congo Basin Pledge (CBP). These pledges have shared signatories and all recognize the essential role of IPs and LCs in protecting and managing forests. Where donor funding pledged under the GFFP or the CBP also contributes to the objectives of the IP and LC Pledge, this funding may be reported under multiple pledges. In 2023, we calculate that \$186,025,389 of funds counted under the IP and LC Pledge were also reported under the GFFP and \$18,285,662 of funds were reported under both the IP and LC Pledge and the CBP. A second risk of “double-counting” may occur because several Pledge signatories are intermediaries who receive funds from other Pledge signatories.³⁶ We verified that each donor who received funds from another FTFG member has excluded that funding from their 2023 reporting.

³⁶ Pledge signatories are primary donors; the exceptions are a few members of the Protecting Our Planet Challenge, which signed the Pledge as a group.