

Financing Self-Determined Climate Solutions

Indigenous-Led Funds

Why Direct Funding to Indigenous Peoples Matters

Indigenous Peoples are the most effective stewards of the planet's ecosystems, safeguarding forests, wetlands, and grasslands that store vast amounts of carbon and sustain global biodiversity.

Yet, Indigenous Peoples receive less than 1% of global climate aid — and most of that is channelled through intermediaries using complex, top-down mechanisms that rarely reach communities on the ground. Most Indigenous Peoples live in poverty and struggle to access funding to defend their territories. If our communities are empowered, they stand stronger to resist pressures from deforestation, mining and industrial agriculture.

Ensuring direct, flexible and sustained funding to Indigenous Peoples is not an act of charity. It is a strategic investment in proven climate and biodiversity outcomes, rooted in justice and self-determination.

What are Indigenous-Led Funds

Indigenous-Led Funds (ILFs) are financing mechanisms created and governed by Indigenous Peoples. We channel resources directly to communities, in ways that are transparent, efficient and aligned with community priorities.

ILFs exist in Africa, Asia, Latin America and beyond, with diverse structures and scopes — some territorial or national, others regional or global. Some are focused on women; some have joined efforts with local communities. Our differences in scope and focus constitute a strength, as we can complement each other.

ILFs partner with philanthropies, bilateral donors, and multilateral agencies. Collectively, we have supported more than 2,000 Indigenous-led initiatives across 80 countries, disbursing over USD 30 million.

Together, ILFs form a growing movement that is transforming the global funding landscape, ensuring resources reach those who safeguard the Earth's critical ecosystems. With donor partnerships, our movement is poised to scale rapidly, projecting USD 50 million in annual direct disbursements by 2026.

Indigenous Led Funds



Guiding Principles of Indigenous-Led Funds

ILFs are rooted in Indigenous values of reciprocity, solidarity and self-determination and guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Core principles include:

- Direct access:** Removing barriers between funders and communities.
- Indigenous governance:** Decisions made by and for Indigenous Peoples.
- Flexibility and trust:** Adapted to local contexts and respecting cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Participatory accountability:** Using storytelling, traditional knowledge and community-defined indicators.
- Equity and inclusion:** Centering Indigenous women and youth as leaders.
- Alignment with local processes:** Reinforcing, not replacing, community initiatives.

Our approach ensures funding is effective, culturally grounded and sustainable.

What Indigenous-led Funds Support

ILFs provide holistic support in response to communities' rights, needs and priorities. Key elements are:

- Self-determined development and governance
- Land and territorial rights
- Climate resilience and biodiversity protection
- Cultural revitalization and traditional knowledge
- Women's and youth leadership
- Advocacy, capacity building, and movement strengthening
- Crisis and humanitarian response for displaced communities

Key Challenges

Despite our legitimacy and proven record of delivering impact on the ground, ILFs face systemic barriers:

- Limited resources:** Demand far exceeds available funding.
- Restrictive donor systems:** Complex eligibility and compliance processes exclude many Indigenous organizations.
- Insufficient flexible and emergency funding:** Few mechanisms support rapid responses to crises.
- Limited recognition:** Donors often overlook ILFs' proven track record in favor of external intermediaries.
- Legal and political obstacles:** Shrinking civic space and restrictive regulations hinder Indigenous access to finance.

A Call to Action for COP30

To align global climate finance with the realities and rights of Indigenous Peoples, we call on donors, governments, and multilateral institutions to:

- Commit to direct access:** Allocate at least 20% of Pledges and other climate finance initiatives as directly funding to Indigenous Peoples.
- Simplify and support:** Harmonize reporting and pair it with capacity strengthening.
- Ensure transparency:** Track and disclose climate finance flows to Indigenous Peoples.
- Adopt rights-based partnerships:** Develop clear protocols for partners and intermediaries to overcome power imbalances and reinforce Indigenous governance
- Provide long-term, flexible funding:** Move beyond short project cycles to sustained and unrestricted support.
- Empower women and youth:** Guarantee their leadership in decision-making.
- Build trust:** Foster open, respectful, and accountable relationships between donors and Indigenous Peoples.

At COP30, we invite donors and partners to **join us in scaling this model** of direct funding — so that climate finance reaches where it matters most: the hands of those protecting our collective future.

Contact the **Indigenous-Led Funds' Learning Group**
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