



# 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)

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**Cover Photo:** A coffee farmer from the Tebat Pulau community in Sumatra, Indonesia. Located in the middle of two protected areas and long barred from cultivating produce, the Tebat Pulau recently regained government permission to plant coffee, pepper, avocado and palm water, which supports both their livelihoods and the forest surrounding them. Photo: Jacob Maentz for RRI.

# Introduction

The tenure rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples (IPs, LCs, and ADPs) are inextricably linked to the health and resilience of key ecosystems and carbon stores. Yet, efforts to strengthen them receive only a fraction of total donor funding for climate and conservation solutions.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, recognition of this fact in the international donor community has led to increased commitments and pledges to fund IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship, while organizations representing or supporting these groups have also ramped up innovation to develop new rightsholder-led funding mechanisms.

Still, more needs to be done to improve donor coordination and fill critical gaps in the funding landscape. To improve coordination and transparency, the Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) have developed the [Path to Scale Funding Dashboard](#)—an innovative tracking tool that opens access to all publicly available funding data on IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship projects since 2011.

The purpose of this dashboard is to enable donors, rightsholders, and their allies to leverage historical data on donor funding to support the more localized, context-specific analysis required to scale up IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship funding, and to ensure more resources are directly reaching rightsholder organizations on the ground.

Up to this point, publicly available data on funding flows have been complex, fragmented, and inaccessible.<sup>2</sup> The dashboard makes data available through a user-friendly online platform, allowing donors and other stakeholders to analyze, filter, and export historical data, understand current funding flows, and identify key opportunities to scale up funding for IPs, LCs, and ADPs.

This brief introduces the *Path to Scale Funding Dashboard* and uses it to analyze key funding trends from 2011 through 2023, focusing on developments since 2020. We cover the time following the COP26 IPLC Forest Tenure Joint Donor Statement<sup>3</sup> (also referred as IPLC Forest Tenure Pledge) made by the Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG) and advance the data and analysis initiated in the report, “Falling Short,”<sup>4</sup> (RFN, 2021) and expanded on in “Funding with Purpose”<sup>5</sup> (RRI and RFN, 2022).

**TABLE 1 | Intended uses of the Path to Scale Funding Dashboard**

Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify gaps and opportunities in the IP, LC, and ADP funding landscape</li> <li>Learn how peers are fulfilling pledges, localization commitments, and accelerating direct funding pathways</li> <li>Find potential collaborators funding similar projects, themes, and/or geographies</li> </ul>
Rightsholders and Allies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold donors accountable for follow-through on their public commitments</li> <li>Inform strategy and project formulation</li> <li>Find potential strategic partnerships locally and/or globally</li> </ul>

## Methodology

The *Path to Scale Funding Dashboard* builds on “[Falling Short](#)”, “[Funding with Purpose](#)”, and “[Forging Resilient Pathways](#)”, which have all attempted to quantify and describe trends in international donor funding to support IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship. The data is collected from publicly available sources including donor-reported microdata, grant databases, and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATA). We provide additional commentary where data gaps and areas for improvement in understanding exist. The full methodology, codebook, and reporting sources are available online [here](#).

Our analysis employs a detailed, multi-step process to accurately review the dataset, which comprises over a million activities reported by donors. The unit of analysis is an ‘activity,’ aligning with IATI’s definition. Reporting organizations self-define activities, which may encompass multiple projects or workstreams under a single activity.

Initially we parse activity descriptions, titles, and associated documents for relevant keywords. Activities containing approved thematic and ecosystem keywords are then analyzed by a series of large language models (LLMs), which determine the semantic meaning of keywords in context. Following this automated review, our team manually inspects a subset of activities (over fifteen thousand activity candidates)—all approved activities by the LLMs, and a sample that meets specific relevance criteria (i.e., activities by known donors or those containing significant keywords). For projects with disbursements exceeding \$5 million we review available budget documentation, mirroring the approach used in “*Falling Short*.” Information including project level notes, LLM review findings, and generated summaries are available at an activity level in the tracking tool.

## Scope

The dataset used in this analysis and reflected in the *Path to Scale Funding Dashboard* is specific to international donor funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure, rights, conservation, climate, and development in Low- and Middle-income Countries (LMICs). Although our research continues to focus on tropical forest areas, activities on topics ranging from institutional strengthening of Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) to land rights mapping outside of tropical forests are included in the dataset. While we have historically used the term “IP and LC tenure and forest management,” to describe the research scope, we are now using “IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship” in this brief given the vital role of Afro-descendant Peoples (ADPs) in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>6</sup> The dataset has expanded to encompass activities funding ADPs, and in the future, we will continue to expand data to non-forested landscapes such as drylands, rangelands, and grasslands as these are critical for conserving biodiversity and are also managed by collective rightsholders.

# Global Funding Trends

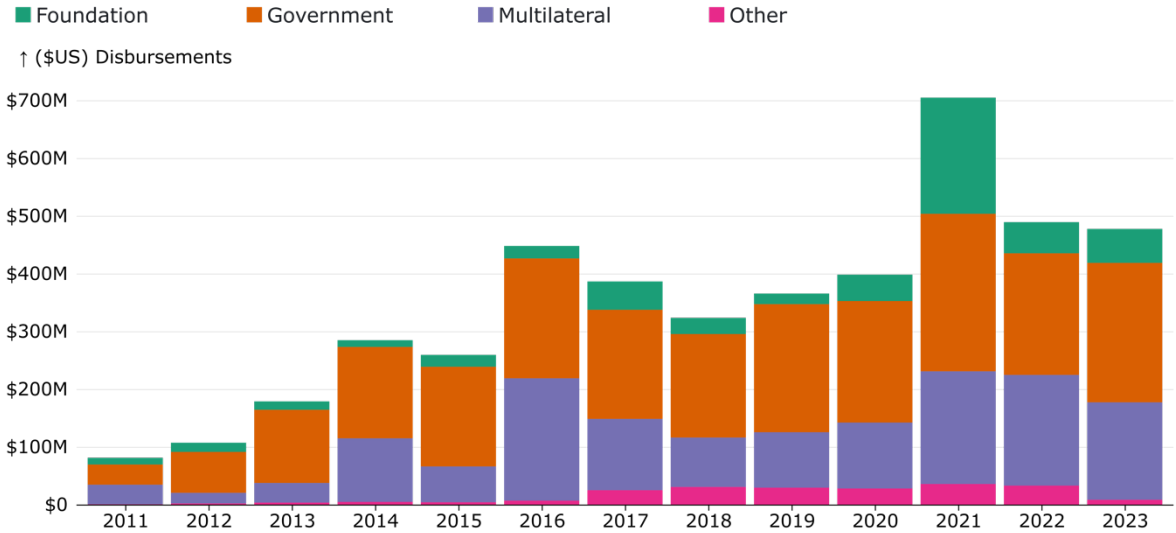
## A promising step-up driven by the FTFG

**Funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship has scaled up in recent years.** Annual disbursements globally have averaged \$517 million per year since 2020, up 36 percent from the preceding four-year average (Figure 1).<sup>7</sup> The increasing trend holds across geographies and donor types, underscoring a robust and growing commitment of funders to support IP, LC, and ADP rights and efforts to safeguard the world’s forests.

Seventy-two percent of this increase since 2020 has been driven by the FTFG,<sup>8</sup> the group of 25 donors who in 2021 issued the COP26 IPLC Forest Tenure Joint Donor Statement and pledged a combined \$1.7 billion in support between 2021 and 2025. Foundations and bilateral donors scaled up their disbursements significantly in 2021, the first year of the Pledge. In 2021, major philanthropic contributors like Bezos Earth Fund and Ford Foundation individually disbursed more than the total among private donors the year before.

Importantly, the positive trend also extends to non-FTFG donors. As shown in Figure 1, multilateral funders (who were not part of the Pledge) have also increased their funding since 2021.<sup>9</sup> This change is likely reflective of the broader recognition among the donor community of the crucial role of collective rightsholders in conserving forests and other vital ecosystems.

**FIGURE 1 | Global Annual Disbursements to IP, LC, and ADP Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship (2011–2023)**



**Note:** Some donors publish disbursements retroactively with reporting lags, 2023 estimates are preliminary.

Donors providing the largest sums of funding remain the same as from “Falling Short” in 2021, with the notable exception of Bezos Earth Fund, which was established in 2020, and made major disbursements in 2021. The Green Climate Fund has also significantly increased its funding, mainly driven by large REDD+ results-based payments that include shares of relevant funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship.

Bilateral and multilateral sources still deliver the largest share of relevant funding, with shares of 45 percent and 32 percent respectively from 2020 to 2023. However, the contributions of private foundations are growing as well. From 2020 to 2023, foundations accounted for 17 percent of the total, marking a substantial rise from their 7.5 percent share between 2016 and 2019.<sup>10</sup>

**There is no evidence indicating a systematic change in funding modalities or more direct donor funding to IP, LC, and ADP organizations.**<sup>11</sup> Over the past 13 years, the top 140 projects—which make up just three percent of all projects—account for more than half of all funding disbursed. This trend has not changed since the Pledge in 2021. The funding for IP, LC, and ADP forest guardianship still consists of a handful of very large projects comprising the bulk of total financing. These large projects disburse tens to hundreds of millions of dollars, often run for multiple years and across multiple countries, and tend to focus on large-scale titling or territorial development and/or landscape level conservation and development. These programs are typically implemented by consulting firms, governments, multilateral institutions, or international conservation organizations.

National and local NGOs, including IP, LC, and ADP organizations, are far more likely to receive direct funding through tailored small grant schemes that provide funding for thousands of small-scale projects, typically \$30 to \$50 thousand (e.g., GEF’s Small Grants Program) or indirectly through grants from international NGOs and conservation organizations. As evidenced in “Funding with Purpose,” grants that go to national NGOs have a higher likelihood of providing support to Indigenous and local community organizations.<sup>12</sup> Although donors have continued to signal that longer-term structural shifts in the localization of their funding are coming, there is little evidence of this in the reported data.<sup>13</sup>

Recent funding trends show that donors continue to rely on many of the same channels to disburse funding to support IPs, LCs, and ADPs to secure rights and conserve key ecosystems.<sup>14</sup> For example:

- Norway continues to stand out for its high share of funding directly to NGOs, with Rainforest Foundation Norway as a primary implementing organization (regranting to IP, LC, and ADP organizations). Norway also disburses many grants directly to Indigenous organizations and national NGOs in tropical forest countries. In addition, Norway has led globally in providing results-based REDD+ funding, which in turn has provided significant funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship, historically through the Amazon Fund.<sup>15</sup>

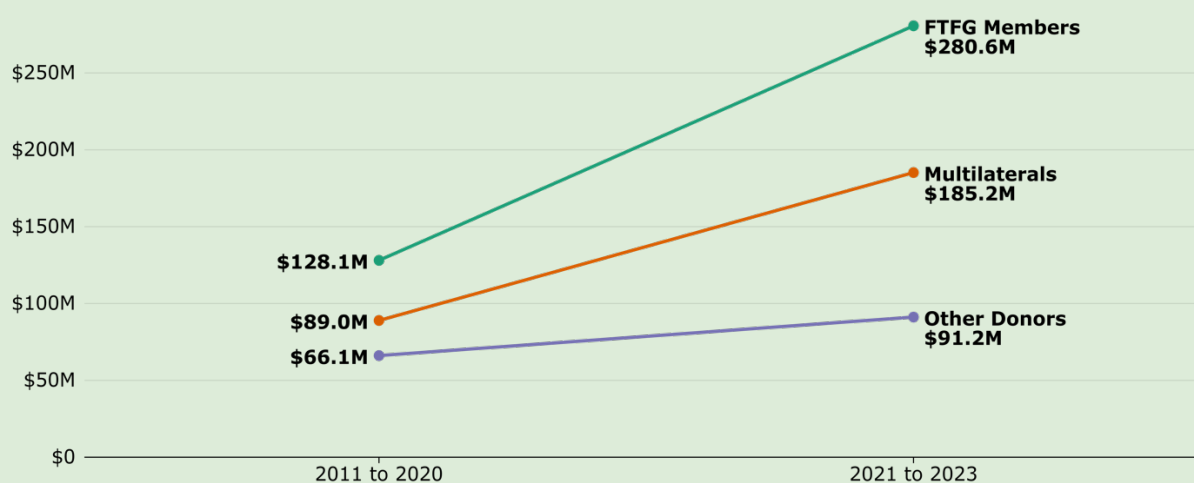
- USAID continues to use consulting firms to implement large scale tenure and participatory conservation projects (e.g., ARD Inc. implementing >\$10 million activities in Colombia, Indonesia, Peru, Cambodia, and Liberia), though the agency is seeking to advance more direct funding initiatives through its localization agenda.<sup>16</sup>
- Multilateral financing mechanisms (e.g., Global Environment Facility's Inclusive Conservation Initiative, Climate Investment Fund's Dedicated Grant Mechanism) continue to be co-implemented by international conservation organizations—along with major forest conservation projects supported by all donor types.
- The World Bank and Germany are the predominant donors to government institutions in tropical forest countries.
- There are few instances of rightsholder organizations receiving grants of more than \$1 million from donors. Exceptions include arrangements where rightsholder organizations have partnered with an allied co-implementing organization (e.g., the Bezos Earth Fund grants to RRI in partnership with the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities and the Campaign for Nature in the Congo Basin and Tropical Andes).<sup>17</sup>

## Forest Tenure Funders Group

There is clear evidence that 2021 represents a step-change for funding from donors that are part of the FTFG. Our data shows a significant increase in funding in 2021, consistent with the FTFG's first annual report.<sup>18</sup> Because some private donors report one-time disbursements for grants that could be multi-year (e.g., Bezos Earth Fund), it is more useful to examine progress over multiple years. From 2011 to 2020, we estimate that FTFG donors disbursed on annual average \$128 million per year. From 2021 to 2023, we estimate that FTFG donors disbursed an annual average of \$281 million—or an increase of 120 percent (adjusted for inflation).

**FIGURE 2 | Change in Average Annual Disbursements, FTFG, Multilaterals, and Other Donors**

↑ (\$US 2020) Average Annual Disbursements



**Note:** All data is converted and adjusted for inflation to the same period as “Falling Short” (December 2020) for comparison purposes.

However, our estimated annual totals for 2021 and 2022 are lower than the totals reported by the FTFG (\$303 and \$511 million, respectively).<sup>19</sup> This is likely due to methodological differences, described below in Table 2.

Methodological differences and lack of transparency limit comparison between the data reported by the FTFG and publicly available data. While there are important privacy considerations (e.g., not publicly reporting data that could pose risks to environmental and land defenders) that justify redactions, many private donors do not report *any* disaggregated data publicly.

More clarity between *commitments* and *disbursements* is also needed in public reporting, including from the FTFG, to give a more accurate representation of how much funding is actually being channeled towards IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship. Funding reaching IP, LC, and ADP on the ground lags behind disbursements from the donors, as it takes time to transfer from intermediaries to national and local NGOs and rightsholder organizations, or for these organizations to implement projects that advance tenure rights. Communities themselves report that they are not seeing a significant change in how much funding their organizations receive.<sup>20</sup> This shows that reporting significant funding *commitments* as “spending” can



exacerbate impressions with rightsholders that funding is being channeled elsewhere—when in fact it has simply not yet been disbursed by the donors.

**TABLE 2 | Methodological differences in tracking funding flows**

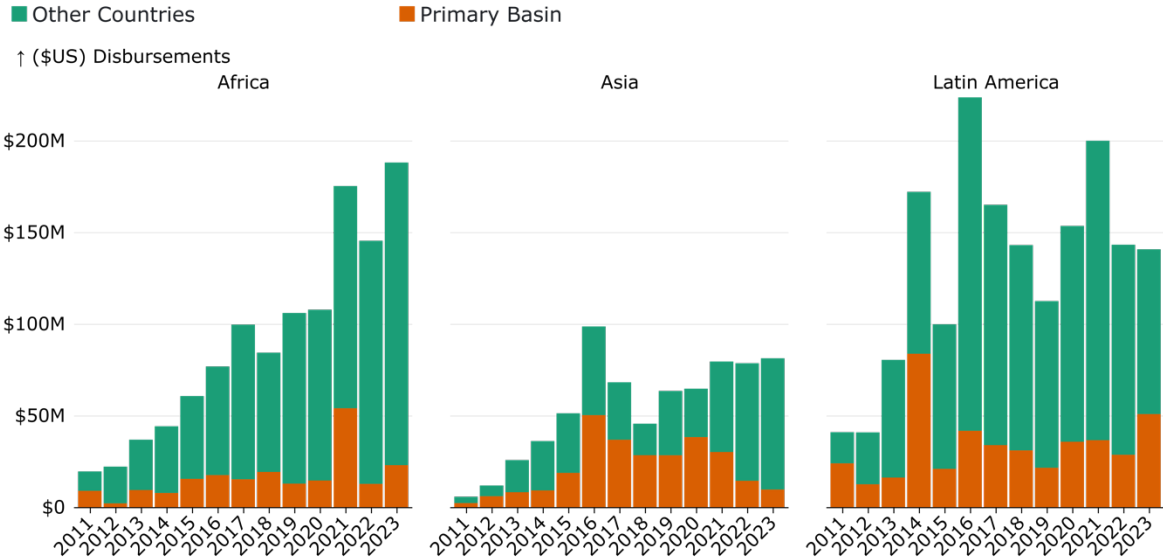
TOPIC	FTFG METHODOLOGY	OUR METHODOLOGY
Transparency	Many private funders do not report data in a disaggregated and transparent manner. Many donors report limited public data, including short or no description of activities, implementing organizations, or implementing geographies.	We do not include self-reported totals per region or donor portfolio, as these data points do not provide sufficient transparency on activities implemented. Donor data is extracted from publicly available sources.
Disbursements vs. commitments	The FTFG 2022 annual report states that their reported spending “include disbursements and, in some cases, formal allocations and commitments.”	We only include reported disbursements from donors. We assume that private donors report disbursements in their grants databases. <sup>21</sup>
Adjustments for the share of projects relevant to IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship	FTFG does adjust for activities’ ‘relevant share, but its methodology is not made public.	For activities with available budgets, we review and adjust total disbursements when possible. The average relevant share is applied to projects with no budget documentation. Detailed review notes and sources are available for each project.
Reporting to multilaterals and other institutions	There is limited insight into how, and if, FTFG donors report disbursements or commitments to multilateral mechanisms. For example, the UK reported funding to GEF, CAFI, GCF, and CIF as part of the broader Global Forest Finance Pledge, but it is unknown if these ‘imputed’ shares are included in the reported totals by the FTFG. <sup>22</sup>	As disaggregated data is not reported in a consistent and transparent manner, we do not track contributions by donor governments to multilateral mechanisms. Instead, activities are processed when they are reported by multilateral institutions. <sup>23</sup> This also avoids double counting when reviewing multilateral mechanisms funding.
Reporting Timing	Some donors that publicly report activities in bulk, or delayed from the disbursement date may use internal private disbursement or commitment data to provide more accurate annual estimates. <sup>24</sup> Some donors also publish disbursements retroactively with reporting lags.	We gather data based on publicly available reported disbursement dates. During data review we identified several donors with nonlinear trends in disbursements, with high estimates for 2021 and 2023, but low totals for 2022. We have not adjusted activity disbursement dates for activities that occur in adjacent months to 2022 (i.e., December 2021 or January 2023).

# Regional Funding Trends

## Increased diversity of funding, but still insufficient to meet needs

Since 2011, funding to IPs, LCs, and ADPs has increased across regions.<sup>25</sup> As seen in Figure 3, while Latin America has historically received the most funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship, Asia and Africa have seen clear increases in funding flows. In 2023, Africa likely received more funding than Latin America for the first time. The trend across all regions mirrors findings by the FTFG donors, who have reported increased funding flows to both Africa and Asia in 2021 and 2022.

**FIGURE 3 | IP, LC, and ADP Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship Disbursements by Continent (2011–2023)**



**Note:** Many large activities since 2021 are cross-basin and thus are not included in this figure. Because a large share of this funding includes Latin America, Latin America’s disbursements are likely undercounted in this graph. Primary basin countries are Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, and Brazil, respectively.

**Donors have increased the number of countries where they are funding IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship.** From 2011 to 2020, the three major countries in each tropical forest basin (Brazil, Indonesia, and DRC) made up an average of 30 percent of total disbursements. From 2021 to 2023, this has fallen to 23 percent, indicating donor expansion into new geographies and a more even spread across countries. From 2016 to 2019, 38 countries were receiving at least \$1 million per year on average in relevant funding; between 2021 and 2023, there were 47 countries meeting this threshold.

**The number of donors supporting IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship has increased across all regions.** In 2023, the average number of reporting donors in the dataset funding IP, LC, and ADP tenure across tropical forested countries was 10. In Colombia alone, there are at least 43 active donors. There are 31 donors active in Indonesia, and 29 in DRC. Public and private donors have identified that they share a common agenda in advancing activities to secure IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and support local forest guardianship, and have elaborated the need for more coordination with one another at the country level to take advantage of synergies between programs and strategically allocate support.<sup>26</sup> Donors seeking to implement direct funding arrangements with local communities have also highlighted the importance of engaging country governments who might historically have acted as an intermediary for funding linked to IP, LC, and ADP land tenure recognition.<sup>27</sup>

**Current funding levels, while increasing and more diverse, are insufficient to respond to sizeable opportunities to scale up the recognition of collective tenure rights.** RRI estimates that implementation of existing legal frameworks in 18 countries critical to conserving tropical forests and biodiversity could increase the area legally owned by or designated for communities by 260 million hectares.<sup>28</sup> For example, DRC, Cameroon, and Indonesia alone make up nearly 36 percent of unrecognized community territory globally – around 250 million hectares – but have received only 9 percent of total funding since 2020 (\$181.8 million).<sup>29</sup> By way of comparison, the Path to Scale estimates that at least \$10 billion is required by 2030 to support the recognition of an additional 400 million hectares of tropical forests, a minimum level of support and rights recognition for collective rightsholders to meaningfully contribute to the achievement of the climate and biodiversity targets.<sup>30</sup>

**Funding for community-led projects to secure rights and conserve forests continues to meet only a fraction of total demand.** While many new rightsholder-led and/or governed funding mechanisms have emerged since 2020 as pathways to meet the significant demand for direct community support, experience has shown that the funds available fall short of what is needed to respond to available opportunities to secure rights and conserve forests and rural landscapes. Evidence from public data shows that existing mechanisms have been able to meet at most 30 percent of proposals received. Recent data from the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund, Podaali Fund, and Nusantara Fund – all led and governed by rightsholders – demonstrate that community demand and local opportunities to secure rights eclipse available funding. The Mesoamerican Territorial Fund helped 31 organizations develop concept notes in 2023 but was only able to support 22 projects totaling just \$694,000, an average project size of \$31,000.<sup>31</sup> The Podaali Fund, relying on an open call format, was able to fund only 8 percent of the 360 proposals received. Similarly, the Nusantara Fund was only able to fund 20 percent of the 384 proposals received in their first cycle of funding. Evidence from global funding mechanisms such as the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI) and the Forest Investment Program's Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM), despite filtering for high quality applications, shows they could only meet a fraction of demand (Table 3).

**TABLE 3 | Available Funding for Community-based Projects**

MECHANISM	APPLICATIONS	ACCEPTED	SHARE FUNDED	OPEN CALL
<i>NEW RIGHTS-BASED MECHANISMS</i>				
Mesoamerican Territorial Fund	31	22	70%	X
Podaali Fund	305	32	10.5%	✓
Nusantara Fund	384	76	19.8%	*
<i>RECENTLY ACTIVE MECHANISMS</i>				
Inclusive Conservation Initiative	>400	10	2.5%	✓
Cote d'Ivoire - DGM	6,642	55	0.8%	✓
Mexico - DGM	720	90	12.5%	✓
DRC - DGM	47	14	29.8%	✓
Indonesia - DGM	210	49	23.3%	✓
Mozambique - DGM	287	17	5.9%	✓
Brazil - DGM	240	64	26.7%	✓

**Sources (in order of appearance):** Mesoamerican Territorial Fund (AMPB). 2023. FTM Call for Proposals – Data Sheet 2023-2024; Podaali Fund. 2023. [Indigenous Fund of the Brazilian Amazon presented the 32 projects selected by the call 'Amazônia Indígena Resiste', at Acampamento Terra Livre](#); Nusantara Fund. Internal Presentation – Cycle 1 Funding Administration Report; Conservation International and IUCN. 2021. [GEF Project Document – Inclusive Conservation Initiative](#); Conservation International. [DGM Program Implementation Reports, 2015-2022](#).

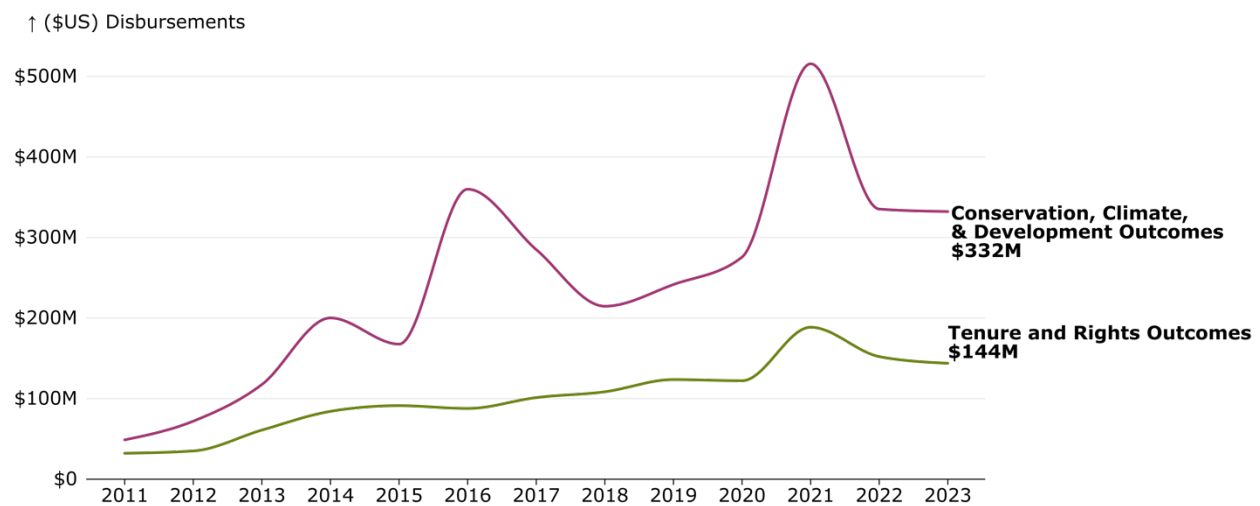
**Note:** Reported data are not derived from the Path to Scale Dashboard. \* = Open call within a select set of parent organizations.

## Thematic Funding Trends

### Increase led by conservation, climate, and development focused activities

The increase in IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship funding has mostly been driven by increased rightsholder involvement in projects focused on conservation, climate, and development outcomes (Figure 4). The substantial growth in funding for IPs, LCs, and ADPs focused on climate, conservation, and development outcomes reflects the increase in recognition that collective rightsholders are vital allies to conserve tropical forests and achieve crucial climate and biodiversity goals. Activities prioritizing tenure and rights-based outcomes create a foundation for conservation efforts. Conversely, conservation activities that recognize and support the role of IPs, LCs, and ADPs in managing their landscapes can strengthen the case for land rights by demonstrating the positive environmental outcomes of secure tenure. Better donor and grantee coordination are critical, particularly in landscapes where both types of projects are present, representing a pathway to scale up impact with limited funding.

**FIGURE 4 | Annual Disbursements by Outcome Category (2011 – 2023)**



Under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), countries have committed to conserving at least 30 percent of the world’s lands by 2030, while “recognizing Indigenous and traditional territories.”<sup>32</sup> Achieving this target in a way that respects and advances IP, LC, and ADP rights requires a strong land rights emphasis in conservation funding—particularly in countries with large tracts of unrecognized IP, LC, and ADP lands, to ensure that conservation efforts do not violate customary land rights.

However, this funding trend also demonstrates that IP, LC, and ADP rights, in and of themselves, are not yet funded to the same degree as conservation, environmental, or development outcomes with IPs, LCs, and ADPs as stakeholders/beneficiaries. There is a risk that rights and tenure outcomes, when not directly or immediately linked to conservation outcomes, will continue to be underfunded moving forward.

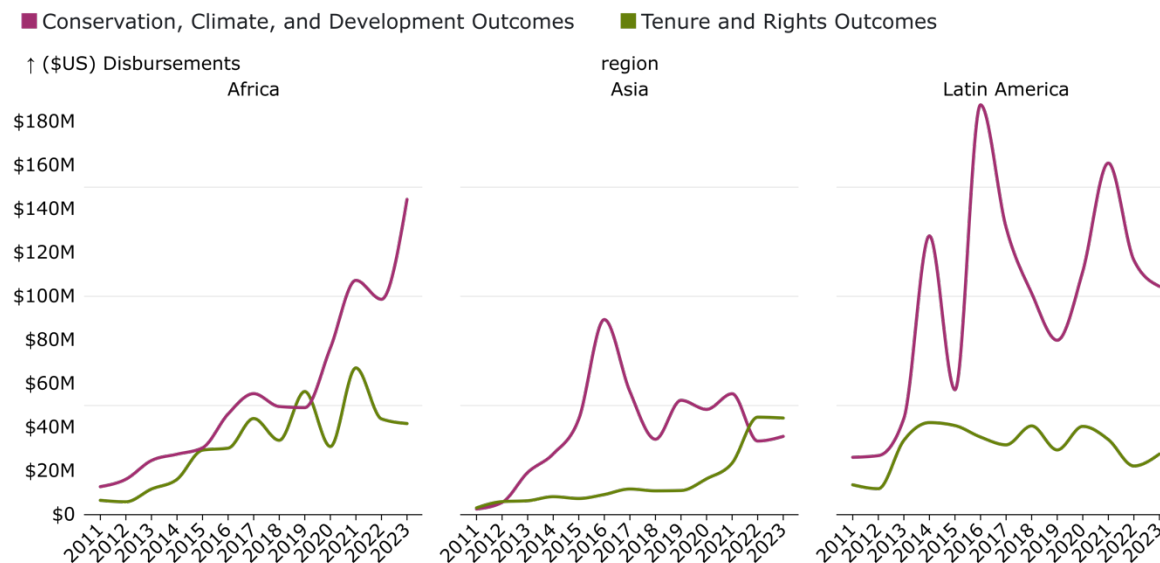
### The Path to Scale Dashboard as a tool for understanding donor priorities

Where manual analysis and categorization of activities was time-intensive in the past, emerging advances in Natural Language Processing have enabled faster and more accurate analysis of text data.<sup>33</sup> With an understanding of not just the *who* and *where*, but *what* the primary objectives of a project are, we can begin to model and tag activities by relevant themes. Our model enables us to say, for example, that an activity is more focused on “environmental conservation and biodiversity” than “sustainable agriculture and rural development.” By assessing text and documents from thousands of projects, this analysis can identify trends in the language donors and implementers use to describe their activities.

We use two primary activity categories – themselves a distillation of seven “clusters” of related language<sup>34</sup> – to group projects that used language prioritizing “conservation, climate, and development outcomes” and those prioritizing “tenure and rights outcomes.” Broadly speaking, activities prioritizing conservation, climate, and development outcomes do not include projects with the primary objective of securing IP, LC, and ADP rights to land or advancing their self-determined priorities. These activities may include a tenure and rights related component, but only as a part of a larger conservation, climate, and development agenda. Activities prioritizing tenure and rights outcomes were funded specifically with the aim to enhance tenure rights, territorial development, or to strengthen IP, LC, and ADP organizations and communities.

**Disbursements for tenure and rights outcomes have increased in Africa and Asia, while declining in Latin America.** Disaggregating by region (Figure 5) shows two different trends. In Asia and Africa, funding for tenure and rights outcomes has increased. In Latin America, however, funding for rights and tenure outcomes has remained steady or declined slightly since around 2014. There are a few possible explanations for these diverging trends. For one, rightsholder networks in Asia and Africa have been strengthened over the past decade, which opens new opportunities for funding. New political opportunities for tenure recognition also likely play a role. In addition, Latin America is also far ahead of Africa and Asia in the recognition of collective tenure rights.<sup>35</sup> However, since 2015, collective rightsholders in Latin America have faced widespread safety and security threats to land defenders and the threat of rollback of rights.<sup>36</sup> There is still an urgent need to fund rights and tenure outcomes in Latin America, making the trajectory of this category of funding a concern.

**FIGURE 5 | Annual Disbursements by Outcome Category and Continent (2011–2023)**



**Note:** As there is relatively limited funding in Asia, large projects can produce a swing as seen in 2022. The World Bank’s SPLIT project in the Philippines, implementing parcelization of lands for individual titling is responsible for this rise and continuation in 2023.

### Funding Marginalized Groups within IP, LC, and ADP

While this analysis focuses on global trends in IP, LC, and ADP tenure rights and forest guardianship funding, the dataset enables deeper examination into the funding trends of historically marginalized groups within communities. A near-term priority is to expand this analysis to support advocacy efforts for a more equitable funding landscape.

#### Women and Girls

Funding with Purpose (2022) assessed IP and LC tenure and forest management funding from 2011 to 2020 and found that, while 32 percent of project descriptions included at least one gender-related keyword (termed "root" keywords, such as "women"), just 18 percent included language suggesting gender equality or women's rights or governance may have been explicitly considered.<sup>37</sup> Given the lack of disaggregated budget data, these proportions serve as an upper bound, and likely significantly overestimate the share of gender justice programming. This data supports the well-established fact that women's rights and leadership are severely underfunded, despite the essential roles Indigenous and community women have in forest guardianship, food production, cultural preservation, and livelihoods. Women's tenure rights are also positively linked to household food security and economic well-being, yet women are often excluded from many governance structures and forest management decisions and their tenure rights are seldom recognized by national laws.<sup>38</sup>

## Afro-descendant Peoples

Afro-descendant Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have historically received a fraction of rights and conservation funding, despite their territories intersecting with crucial ecosystems for conservation and climate change<sup>39</sup> and the unique historical and structural inequalities that limit recognition of their collective and human rights. Since 2020, funding that mentions ADPs has consistently received under \$20 million per year, or just **8 to 13 percent of all LAC community tenure and forest management funding** over that period. Yet ADPs comprise more than 134 million people (21 percent of the total LAC population),<sup>40</sup> and inhabit and manage over 205 Mha of land across 16 countries. In nine of these countries,<sup>41</sup> 100 percent of Afro-descendant territories are defined as biodiversity hotspots, and across the region, they are in proximity to or overlap with 1,271 national and international protected areas. Still, only 9.4 Mha of Afro-descendant community land has been legally recognized and titled over the past four decades, and only six countries (Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Honduras) have developed legal frameworks that recognize the collective tenure rights of ADPs.<sup>42</sup>



## Conclusion and Recommendations

Analysis in this brief finds that overall funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship has increased by 36 percent since 2020, with 72 percent of the increase driven by the IPLC Forest Tenure Pledge. Funding has also increased from multilateral donors outside of the Pledge. Yet, despite donor commitments to prioritize direct funding to rightsholder organizations, funding modalities largely remain the same and little funding is reaching local organizations directly.

We also found that funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship increased in all regions and is being dispersed across more countries. From 2016 to 2019, 38 countries received an average of at least \$1 million per year in relevant funding, but this grew to 47 countries between 2021 and 2023. For the first time, Africa received more community tenure and forest guardianship funding than Latin America in 2023. However, even though support is increasing, current funding levels are still inadequate given the extent of unrecognized community claims to land and forests, existing law and policy, and the estimated costs to secure them.<sup>43</sup> For instance, implementation of existing legal frameworks recognizing community tenure rights in 18 forested and biodiverse countries could increase the extent of community lands by 260 million hectares. Indigenous and community-led funding mechanisms are responding to opportunities to support the locally led, self-determined priorities of IPs, LCs, and ADPs, but funding demands and opportunities far exceed what is available. Public data shows that existing mechanisms are only able to meet at most 30 percent of proposals received.

The number of donors supporting IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship have increased globally, including in key tropical forest countries. Donors are predominantly funding activities with conservation, climate, and development outcomes as the primary objective (\$307 million in 2023) compared to activities focused on tenure and rights-related outcomes (\$138 million in 2023). More coordination is required amongst donors, governments, implementing organizations, and rightsholders to ensure that community rights and conservation efforts are mutually supportive, as well as to advance direct, locally led funding arrangements.

To support the donor community in addressing these gaps and challenges, we recommend the following actions:

### **1. Improve data transparency on current and historical funding for IP, LC, and ADP tenure and forest guardianship.**

- Align on a common set of reporting standards to improve the transparency of funding for IPs, LCs, and ADPs, particularly for prominent commitments like the IPLC Forest Tenure Pledge. Many organizations support this objective and are working to align donor definitions and reporting structures (e.g., GATC's Shandia Platform and the Paris Roadmap for Tracking of Funds).<sup>44</sup>

- Improve transparency of funding streams to IPs, LCs, and ADPs (including non-direct funding) to measure funding reaching rightsholder organizations in ways local peoples can influence and control. This data will provide a better understanding of fit-for-purpose funding pathways and enable donors to identify, evaluate, and learn from successful efforts.
- Utilize clear, transparent, and accessible reporting to coordinate and support the strategic allocation of resources to secure rights and advance local forest guardianship, and to advance collective action on the 2030 climate and biodiversity targets.

## **2. Mobilize greater funding and advance the mechanisms needed to channel resources to rightsholders and their organizations.**

- Mobilize resources to deliver a new and more ambitious IP, LC, and ADP pledge. Given that the current IPLC Forest Tenure Pledge ends after 2025, now is the time to start designing a new pledge that adequately responds to both the scale of the challenge and the opportunity for impact.
- With new pledges and commitments, include dedicated support for ecosystems beyond tropical forests, such as drylands, grasslands, coastal landscapes, and other areas claimed and managed by IPs, LCs, and ADPs that are critical for carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and climate change.
- Enhance efforts particularly in countries where communities have customary or historic claims to large areas of land where their rights are not yet recognized, and where legal frameworks and community-based tenure regimes exist that directly correspond to communities' claims.<sup>45</sup>
- Partner with rightsholder-led funds as a pathway to scale direct support for the self-determined activities of rightsholders to secure rights and conserve key ecosystems.
- Advance fit-for-purpose reforms to donor funding systems, improving and increasing support to rightsholders. Funding should be: rightsholder-led, mutually accountable, flexible, long-term, gender inclusive, and timely and accessible.<sup>46</sup>
- Increase funding for tenure and rights outcomes in Latin America as IPs, LCs, and ADPs face considerable threats to their rights and security, which also jeopardize conservation outcomes.
- Increase dedicated support to marginalized groups within the broader category of collective rightsholders, particularly women, youth, and ADPs.<sup>47</sup>

**3. Improve coordination and collaboration amongst donors, governments, implementing organizations, and rightsholders, and explore synergistic and strategic opportunities to maximize the impact of limited funding.**

- At the global level, utilize and support existing coordination platforms, such as Shandia, the Path to Scale, the Forest Tenure Funders Group, and the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership to coordinate funding strategies and collective action.
- At the national and regional level, prioritize engagement with the stakeholders required to address context-specific funding and policy barriers, such as convening national/provincial government officials, local civil society, and community leaders to advance policy reform and implementation, direct funding arrangements, and other place-based solutions.
- At the national and regional level, ensure that activities prioritizing conservation, climate, and development outcomes and those prioritizing rights recognition and protection are coordinated to be mutually reinforcing and can achieve synergistic impact.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2021. [Falling Short: Donor funding for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to secure tenure rights and manage forests in tropical countries \(2011-2020\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> As there are legitimate reasons that some donors may obscure data (e.g., sensitive relationships and contexts, grantee reprisal by local and national governments, risks to environmental and land defenders), we have provided access to only previously publicly available data.

<sup>3</sup> UNFCCC. 2021. [COP26 IPLC Forest Tenure Joint Donor Statement](#).

<sup>4</sup> Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2021. [Falling Short: Donor funding for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to secure tenure rights and manage forests in tropical countries \(2011-2020\)](#).

<sup>5</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative & Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2022. Funding with Purpose: A Study to Inform Donor Support for Indigenous and Local Community Rights, Climate, and Conservation. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/WRFV7289](#).

<sup>6</sup> This also reflects alignment with other organizations in the space including the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC) and FTFG.

<sup>7</sup> We report all data, unless otherwise noted, in \$US 2020, matching “Falling Short.” The unadjusted activity disbursements are available in the tracking tool. A full comparison of the 2011 to 2023 data is included in the methodology. From 2011 to 2019, donors disbursed approximately \$270.4 million per year, comparable to findings in “Falling Short.” Funding from 2016 to 2019 on average was \$381 million.

<sup>8</sup> This difference-in-difference estimation is highly dependent on the years used in the comparison period. This is because the FTFG donors also increased their funding in 2020 before the pledge.

<sup>9</sup> Part of the increase in funding from multilaterals includes an improvement in reporting quality from 2020 onwards by the Global Environment Facility, among others.

<sup>10</sup> From 2020 to 2023, the remaining 6 percent of funding comprised other organization types (see Figure 1), which includes non-governmental or non-state organizations that provide independent funding.

<sup>11</sup> The most recent FTFG annual reports indicate that just 2.9 percent of funding was direct in 2021, dropping to 2.1 percent in 2022. Because of limitations in the publicly reported data, we are not able to assess whether projects meaningfully include IPs and LCs and how much non-direct funding they receive.

<sup>12</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative & Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2022. Funding with Purpose: A Study to Inform Donor Support for Indigenous and Local Community Rights, Climate, and Conservation. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/WRFV7289](#).

<sup>13</sup> For example, the humanitarian sector’s “Grand Bargain” commitment in 2016 to channel 25% of aid to local and national actors has fallen well short, only reaching 1.2% as of 2022. See ALNAP. 2022. [State of the Humanitarian System](#).

<sup>14</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative & Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2022. Funding with Purpose: A Study to Inform Donor Support for Indigenous and Local Community Rights, Climate, and Conservation. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/WRFV7289](#), Rights and Resources Initiative. 2022. [Building Bridges: Innovations and Approaches to Increase Financing to Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples and Local Communities for Climate and Conservation Goals](#). Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/YPXI4263](#).

<sup>15</sup> Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2021. [Falling Short: Donor funding for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to secure tenure rights and manage forests in tropical countries \(2011-2020\)](#).

<sup>16</sup> USAID. 2023. [Partners in Localization: Designing for Change](#).

<sup>17</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative. 2021. [RRI welcome Bezos Earth Fund grant to scale up locally led climate and conservation solutions](#).

<sup>18</sup> Forest Tenure Funders Group. 2023. [Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge – Annual Report 2021-2022](#).

<sup>19</sup> We estimate that at least \$841.9 million was disbursed between 2021 and 2023 by FTFG donors that report publicly.

<sup>20</sup> Global Alliance for Territorial Communities. 2023. [Shandia Annual Report 2023](#).

<sup>21</sup> Unlike other bilateral and multilateral donors, spend is reported in two manners by BMZ, ‘disbursements’ for projects implemented by KfW, and expenses by other non-state actors. We include these expenditures in our data.

<sup>22</sup> House of Commons Committee. 2024. [The UK’s contribution to tackling global deforestation: Government Response to the Committee’s Fourth Report](#).

For example, we compile financial information from the UN Multi-partner Trust Fund and reported project activities for CAFI and assess individual activities rather than allocating a share to bilateral organizations that commit funding.

<sup>23</sup> While IATI does include data from various multilateral institutions, disbursement data and the description of activities are typically limited or inaccurate. We compile public data from multilateral institutions where available to supplement IATI data and improve reporting quality.

<sup>24</sup> Lags in reporting data to IATI or other microdata sites are a common theme from the Aid Transparency Index produced by The Global Campaign for Aid and Development Transparency. <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2022/>.

<sup>25</sup> The quality of geographic data has improved over time but remains a weak point for all reporting organizations. To avoid double counting, we report data for country-focused activities here—this will limit total reported disbursements relative to global reported numbers.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., recommendation 3 in the Path to Scale 2023 annual workplan. Path to Scale, Rights and Resources Initiative. 2023. [Path to Scale Priorities and 2023 Workplan](#).

<sup>27</sup> At the 2023 First Forum of Indigenous and Local Community Women in Central Africa and the Congo Basin in Brazzaville, Congo, Indigenous and local women leaders, international donors, and African officials gathered to boost women’s roles in climate and biodiversity efforts. Donors also strategized on increasing support for Indigenous and local communities’ rights and conservation projects. See Rights and Resources Initiative. 2023. [Press Release: Indigenous and local community women from Central Africa and the Congo Basin call for direct access to funding to help their efforts to achieve 30x30 goals](#).

<sup>28</sup> These include: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Costa Rica, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Venezuela. Rights and Resources Initiative. 2023. [Who Owns the World’s Land? Global State of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Local Community Land Rights Recognition from 2015–2020](#).

<sup>29</sup> Based on the share of unrecognized community territory for tropical forested ODA eligible countries (i.e., excluding community territory in Canada or Australia).

<sup>30</sup> Path to Scale. [Targets Page](#).

<sup>31</sup> Mesoamerican Territorial Fund (AMPB). 2023. FTM Call for Proposals – Data Sheet 2023-2024.

<sup>32</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity. 2022. [Global Biodiversity Framework Targets](#).

<sup>33</sup> Nussbaum, Z., et al. 2024. [Nomic Embed: Training a Reproducible Long Context Text Embedder](#).

<sup>34</sup> These clusters include (1) environmental conservation and biodiversity, (2) sustainable agriculture and rural development, (3) Indigenous and human rights, (4) land tenure and rights initiatives, (5) governance, law, and policy, (6) community engagement, and (7) climate change and resilience.

<sup>35</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative. 2023. [Who Owns the World’s Land? Global State of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Local Community Land Rights Recognition from 2015–2020](#).

- <sup>36</sup> Global Witness. 2023. [Standing Firm: The Land and Environmental Defenders on the Frontlines of the Climate Crisis. Rights and Resources. 2018. \*As regimes attempt to roll back human rights, Indigenous Peoples and local communities find power in partnerships.\*](#)
- <sup>37</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative & Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2022. Funding with Purpose: A Study to Inform Donor Support for Indigenous and Local Community Rights, Climate, and Conservation. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/WRFV7289](#).
- <sup>38</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative. 2017. Power and Potential: A Comparative Analysis of National Laws and Regulations Concerning Women's Rights to Community Forests. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/PMYV6840](#).
- <sup>39</sup> Afro-descendant community lands overlap with 88.8 Mha of rainforest, 5.1 Mha of wetlands, 1.8 Mha of shrublands, 515,020 ha of dry forests, and 237,719 ha of mangrove and marine ecosystems ([RRI, PCN, CONAQ, OTEC, 2023](#)).
- <sup>40</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2021. Afrodescendants and the matrix of social inequality in Latin America: challenges for inclusion. Summary. Santiago. Project Documents (LC/TS.2021/26).
- <sup>41</sup> In Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama, 100% of the lands inhabited and managed by Afro-descendant communities are defined as hotspot of biodiversity.
- <sup>42</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative, Process of Black Communities, Pontifical Universidad Javeriana's Observatory of Ethnic and Campesino Territories, and the National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities. 2023. Afro-descendant Peoples' Territories in Biodiversity Hotspots across Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/FTMK5991](#).
- <sup>43</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative and The Tenure Facility. 2021. Scaling-Up the Recognition of Indigenous and Community Land Rights: Opportunities, Costs and Climate Implications. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/QMUD8864](#).
- <sup>44</sup> To learn more about the Paris Roadmap for Tracking of Funds, see: <https://charapa.dk/tracking-funds/>.
- <sup>45</sup> In the second edition of RRI's *Who Owns the World's Land?* (2023), existing legal frameworks were compared against the estimates of areas where communities have customary or historic claims, but where their rights are not yet recognized. RRI identified 18 countries where community-based tenure regimes exist that directly correspond to communities' claims and where implementation of existing legal frameworks could provide recognition to over 260 Mha of lands where communities already have customary rights or claims, more than double the total area recognized between 2015–2020 across 73 countries. These countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, DRC, Costa Rica, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, and Venezuela. doi: [10.53892/MHZN6595](#).
- <sup>46</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative & Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2022. Funding with Purpose: A Study to Inform Donor Support for Indigenous and Local Community Rights, Climate, and Conservation. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. doi: [10.53892/WRFV7289](#).
- <sup>47</sup> See, for example, *Our Call to Action: Climate Finance Must Not Leave Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Local Community Women and Girls Behind!* Available at: <https://doi.org/10.53892/ERHL1637>.