

Request for Proposals

Rights-based conservation in territories of Indigenous Peoples (IP), Afro-descendant Peoples (ADP), and Local Communities (LC) in Latin America

The Rights and Resources Initiative is requesting proposals for consulting services beginning on October 15, 2025

If you are interested in providing services to our organization, please review this request and submit a proposal by September 30, 2025

About RRI:

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) is a global coalition of more than 200 organizations dedicated to promoting the forest, land, and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples, local communities, and women from these groups. RRI leverages the power of its global coalition to amplify the voices of local peoples and proactively engage governments, multilateral institutions, and private sector actors to adopt institutional and market reforms that support the realization of rights. Its members draw on each other's strengths, expertise, and geographic reach to achieve solutions more effectively and efficiently. By promoting a strategic understanding of the global threats and opportunities arising from land and resource rights insecurity, RRI develops and promotes rights-based business and development approaches and catalyzes effective solutions to scale up rural tenure reform and improve sustainable resource governance.

Background

According to a study conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC)¹, territories collectively managed by Indigenous and tribal peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean are essential for environmental conservation due to their extensive forest cover, biodiversity, carbon

¹ FAO and FILAC. 2021. Indigenous and tribal peoples and forest governance. An opportunity for climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean. Santiago. FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2953es https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e43e77eb-45e6-41b3-b8f3-ee3d6d8f2d16/content

sequestration capacity, and cultural value. According to this study, more than 80% of these territories are covered by forests, including a large proportion of intact forests in the Amazon, and have shown significantly higher conservation rates than other areas, with lower rates of deforestation, fragmentation, and carbon emissions: Between 2000 and 2016, the loss of intact forests was only 4.9% in indigenous territories, compared to 11.2% in non-indigenous areas, and it is evident that these territories, especially if they are titled, are as effective as or more effective than conventional protected areas.

A meta-analysis of 73 studies supports these conclusions, highlighting the role of traditional knowledge, secure land tenure, and low economic pressure²: Indigenous-led conservation not only protects biodiversity but also promotes family well-being, self-government, and cultural continuity. Therefore, it is proposed that these communities be fully integrated into conservation and ecological restoration policies, adopting an inclusive approach based on the recognition of their rights and knowledge.

Resolution A/HRC/48/L.23/Rev.1 of the UN Human Rights Council (2021) recognizes that protecting the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities improves ecosystem and biodiversity conservation, while excluding them from protected areas often fails. It maintains that respect for human rights and environmental protection is complementary. The resolution urges States to guarantee the rights of populations most vulnerable to biodiversity loss, support their conservation efforts based on traditional knowledge, and place them at the forefront of the identification, management, and co-management of new protected areas, including sacred and community territories, with the necessary resources for their effective participation.

Studies from 2022³ show that community governance of community-managed Protected Areas was more effective than other unprotected lands and at least as effective as Strict Protected Areas in preserving carbon stocks and avoiding emissions, as evidenced by cases in Petén (Guatemala) and Acre (Brazil), where significant carbon emissions have been avoided thanks to local management. In Guatemala, local communities have successfully managed forest concessions since the 1990s, although they face challenges to their renewal⁴. These cases highlight the need to strengthen decentralized governance to advance conservation and REDD+goals in the region.

The <u>post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework</u> (also known as the Kunming-Montreal Framework) introduced for the first time a commitment to ensure the equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in decisions on biodiversity, respecting their territorial rights⁵. This commitment is reflected in target 21 of the framework, which emphasizes the importance of involving these groups in decision-making and protecting their rights to lands, territories, and resources. It recognizes that rights-based approaches to conservation are essential to achieving these objectives and stresses the importance of integrating these

² Community managed forests and forest protected areas: An assessment of their conservation effectiveness across the tropics. 2012. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378112711003215

³ Community Managed Protected Areas Conserve Aboveground Carbon Stocks: Implications for REDD+.

https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/forests-and-global-change/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2022.787978/full

⁴ Who owns the world's land? Global status and recognition of land rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants and local communities from 2015 to 2020. Second Edition. December 2023 https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/Spanish_WhoOwnstheWorldsLand_Final-ES.pdf

⁵ https://www.filac.org/marco-global-para-la-biodiversidad-post-2020-debe-reflejar-los-derechos-de-los-pueblos-indigenas/

commitments into national and local targets, applying a human rights approach that respects cultural diversity and diversity of values and knowledge about nature. Their implementation should follow a human rights-based approach that respects, protects, and fulfills these rights, and considers diverse worldviews, values, and knowledge systems, including different conceptualizations of nature and people's relationship with it. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework includes the 30x30 target, which seeks to protect at least 30% of the world's land, inland water, and marine areas by 2030. This target, also known as Target 3, seeks to ensure that these areas are effectively and equitably managed and adequately represent ecological diversity.

The IUCN's Nature 2030 Program establishes a strategy for 2021-2030⁶ that recognizes the key role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in conservation, as their territories cover nearly 40% of the world's protected areas. The IUCN is committed to respecting their governance, knowledge, and rights, promoting legal recognition of their lands, and protecting environmental defenders. It also highlights the importance of women, girls, and young people in conservation, promoting gender equality and full intergenerational participation in decision-making. The program seeks equitable and sustainable governance of natural resources, based on environmental justice and fair access to land, using tools such as the Green List and the Governance Framework.

In order to highlight opportunities for articulating a rights-based approach in conservation regimes and policies, RRI published a study in 2022 on the <u>status and opportunities for a rights-based approach to conservation in the Amazon basin: Colombia and Peru</u>. The study identified possible indicative pathways towards the integration of a rights-based approach into the legal conservation regimes in Colombia and Peru, considering the tenure rights of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Afro-descendant Peoples (ADPs) as an effective strategy for the protection of Amazonian biodiversity. The report proposes adopting a Rights-Based Conservation Approach in the Colombian and Peruvian Amazon, integrating collective rights into formal conservation systems. Through a legal analysis, it suggests measures such as regulatory harmonization, recognition of Indigenous and Afro-descendant authorities, incorporation of community-conserved areas into SINAP (including OMEC), and respect for collective tenure. Judgment T-622 of 2016 supports this perspective by recognizing the biocultural value of the Atrato River and reinforces the need to articulate environmental and ethnic legislation to legitimize community conservation, even without legal formalization.

In 2024, the IUCN held the <u>Regional Dialogue on OECMs</u> in Lima, with the participation of more than 70 representatives from 16 countries, including indigenous organizations, civil society, and conservation experts. This event on OECMs highlighted the crucial role of indigenous and traditional territories in conservation, promoting their complementarity with protected areas and rights-based approaches, and emphasized the urgency of protecting their territories and ensuring fair and informed participation.

The 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2024 recognized the role of Afro-descendants with traditional lifestyles in implementing the Convention and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and called on States to recognize their contributions, knowledge, and links to the land without undermining the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It also encouraged that these contributions be included and disseminated in the national reports submitted to the Executive Secretary of the CBD⁷.

⁶ https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/WCC-7th-001-Es.pdf

⁷ https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2024/cop-16/documents.

<u>Collective rights-based conservation</u> is a culturally grounded approach that secures communities' inalienable land rights, supports self-determination, and promotes inclusive decision-making, benefit sharing, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to strengthen stewardship of their territories of life. Several challenges have been identified in recognizing the community areas of IP, ADPs, and LC as part of Target 3 (30x30) of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

RRI is preparing the "Enabling Pathways for Rights-based Conservation Study", to be published in September 2025. The study analyzes the enabling conditions for advancing community rights-based conservation by reviewing legal frameworks and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) in 30 countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, using RRI's rights dataset compiled since 2015. This report includes 13 countries in Latin America: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Suriname. The analysis applies a broad framework of 40 indicators across five categories—community tenure rights, legal pathways for recognizing community-led conservation, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), women's rights in community governance, and alignment of NBSAPs with the Global Biodiversity Framework's human rights-based approach. While the study maps the extent of legal recognition and protections in national laws and policies, it does not assess enforcement, underscoring persistent gaps between commitments and practice.

To complement the legal analysis with grounded perspectives, the study includes 10 case studies of community-led initiatives that illustrate challenges, strategies, and successes, offering lessons for both communities and policymakers⁸. Four of these case studies are from Latin America: (i) Guyana: Protecting Wapichan community-led conservation in the South Rupununi, focusing on the Wapichan Conserved Headwaters Area and the role of local governance with support from the Forest Peoples Programme; (ii) Panama: Conservation of Mu Billi, a step towards collective territorial rights; (iii) Chile: Opportunities and challenges for securing the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the implementation of the new Global Biodiversity Framework; and (iv) Mexico: The Mayan people of Dziuché and the defense of the Chichankanab Lagoon.

Strategies for collective rights-based conservation consider the historical context, both in terms of the recognition of rights and the alienation of assets in the country where they are implemented, and vigorously counter existing frameworks that hinder the recognition of rights by enacting reforms through inclusive processes. By recognizing the inalienable rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to the territories and areas they conserve (ICCA), or "territories of life," collective rights-based conservation integrates decision-making and the equitable and inclusive distribution of benefits by considering the power of action of communities and obtaining their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) before implementing any initiative.

In 2024, during the annual planning meeting of the RRI Coalition, it was agreed that in 2025 progress would be made in generating new data on the current status of recognition of territorial rights in relation to the biodiversity conservation experiences of IPs, ADPs, and LCs, given the importance of analyzing how national

⁸ The methodology of the case studies is from Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) and ICCA (Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas and Territories).

biodiversity conservation policy and legal frameworks are aligned with the guidelines of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the latest CBD decisions.

To this end, RRI is seeking a consultancy to continue the previous study it carried out on the status and opportunities for a rights-based approach to conservation. The study will also analyze how National Biodiversity Conservation Plans and global conservation goals, such as the 30x30 goal, are recognizing the territorial rights of IPs, ADPs, and LCs in the region.

Terms of Reference

General objective

Identify opportunities for conservation and the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples (IP), Afrodescendant Peoples (ADP), and Local Communities (LC) through 10 case studies⁹ (one per country: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Suriname), and 13 country analyses (the 10 case study countries listed above, and additionally Guyana, Mexico, and Panama) about how these initiatives integrate, support, and strengthen their own marine and terrestrial biodiversity conservation strategies, and how they are included in Target 3 (30x30 Goal) of each country.

Given the ambiguity regarding the recognition of IP, ADP, and LC territories within the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)—as they are often considered either a "third pathway" alongside protected areas and OECMs, or merely a subset of them—RRI aims to develop advocacy strategies at both international and national levels, grounded in an in-depth analysis of community-led, rights-based conservation case studies.

Activities

1. Review and analysis of the regulatory and institutional framework

- Analyze and develop ten new case studies of community-led initiatives—one per country —that
 showcase challenges, strategies, and successes, providing lessons for both communities and
 policymakers. Each case should highlight either the difficulties in gaining recognition as protected
 areas of their own, or the successes in securing continued support as protected areas including
 marine areas, led by IPs, ADPs, or LCs.
- Review constraints on the inclusion of Indigenous marine and terrestrial areas in the World
 Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) in the 13 country analyses, including barriers to becoming
 OMEC and to being counted toward national 30x30 target goals. The analysis must include what
 changes are needed to solve those problems in the 13 countries: recategorization or legal
 reforms.
- Building on RRI's Enabling Pathways for Rights-based Conservation Study, analyze the
 opportunities in both marine and terrestrial conservation areas to: (i) improve legal frameworks
 and enabling conditions, both national and international, in the 13 countries (ii) enhance the
 inclusion of IPs, ADPs, and LC in the governance of protected areas or their own governance
 depending of the case; (iii) strengthen recognition of traditional conservation practices in NBSAPs
 at the national level; and (iv) improve tracking systems for the 30x30 target and the World

⁹ The cases must be different from those included in the RRI's "Enabling Pathways for Rights-based Conservation Study".

- Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) at the international level for areas conserved by IP, ADP, and LC.
- Analyze the legal and governance barriers to accessing financing for IPs, ADPs, and LC in both marine and terrestrial conservation areas in the 13 countries.

2. Map conservation opportunities and gaps in IP, ADP, and LC territories

- Identify and map, based on existing information (RAISG, REWILD, WDPA, and other sources), the niches, opportunities, and gaps in conservation, connectivity, and protection—especially for intact forest landscapes, IPACIs, HVCFs, KBAs, and marine areas—that include significant populations of IPs, ADPs, and LC in the 13 countries.
 - Map risks such as fires (TROPENBOS DATABASE), deforestation (Global Forest Watch), floods, infrastructure projects (hydroelectric, roads, and others), and mining in areas where gaps and opportunities are found.
 - Map frontier opportunities, including the presence of PIACI and other IP, ADP, and LC populations, especially with multi-country opportunities for conservation. Example: Mangroves and coastal forests from Panama to Ecuador are traditionally conserved by the Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities
 - Map water basins and micro basins conservation opportunities, including the presence of IP, ADP, and LC populations.
 - Map opportunities with mangroves, coasts, and other marine ecosystems, especially multi-country opportunities traditionally managed by IPs, ADPs, and LCs.
 - Map buffer zones traditionally managed by IPs, ADPs, and LCs, which are crucial to protect national parks.

3. Collection of primary information and participatory validation

- Hold virtual dialogue meetings and interviews with experts from the 13 countries representing
 civil society, organizations, Indigenous authorities, Afro-descendant communities, local
 communities, and government entities to assess local enabling conditions, main challenges, and
 opportunities for promoting a rights-based approach to conservation.
- Validate preliminary findings virtually with RRI Coalition organizations in virtual meetings.

4. Preparation of the final report

- Draft an analytical report that includes individual assessments of each of the 13 countries, a comparative regional analysis, recommendations for strengthening rights-based conservation, and a map of political and legal opportunities.
- Prepare maps and visualizations of the conservation opportunities, detailing what IP, LC, and ADP populations inhabit there, rivers, and other environmental attributes.
- Prepare an executive summary for decision-makers, strategic allies, and community organizations.

Deliverables

Activity	Description	Main deliverable
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	Ten Case Studies – Document community-led initiatives (one per country), showcasing challenges, strategies, and successes of IP, ADP, and LC in terrestrial and marine conservation.	Ten Case Studies: Case study reports (one per country). Comparative synthesis document highlighting key findings.
Activity 1 Review and	WDPA Inclusion Review – Identify barriers and propose solutions for including Indigenous and community-conserved areas in WDPA and 30x30 reporting across 13 countries.	WDPA Inclusion Review: Analytical report on constraints and opportunities. Country-level assessments with recommendations (recategorization/legal reforms).
analysis of the regulatory and institutional framework Activity 2 Mapping conservation opportunities and	Opportunities Analysis – Recommend actions to strengthen legal frameworks, governance, recognition of traditional practices, and tracking systems for rights-based conservation.	Opportunities Analysis: Policy brief and technical report summarizing legal, governance, and tracking opportunities. Documentation of recommendations integrated into RRI's Enabling Pathways framework.
	Financing Barriers Assessment – Analyze legal and governance obstacles to IP, ADP, and LC access to conservation finance in marine and terrestrial areas.	Financing Barriers Assessment: Analytical report identifying legal and governance barriers. Case-based evidence of financial access challenges
	Conservation Gaps & Opportunities – Map niches and gaps in intact forests, IPACIs, HVCFs, KBAIs, and marine areas with presence of IP, ADP, and LC.	and proposed solutions. Conservation Gaps & Opportunities: GIS maps and layers showing gaps and opportunities. Technical report summarizing findings by country.
	Risk Mapping – Identify threats such as fires, deforestation, floods, infrastructure, and mining.	Risk Mapping: Thematic maps of fires, deforestation, floods,
	Frontier Opportunities – Map transboundary conservation opportunities (e.g., mangroves and coastal forests traditionally managed by IP and ADP).	infrastructure, and mining. Database with geospatial risk overlays.
	Watershed Opportunities – Map conservation potential in river basins and micro-basins with IP, ADP, and LC presence.	Frontier Opportunities: Transboundary conservation maps (e.g., mangroves, coastal forests). Case examples documented in report annexes.
gaps	Marine Ecosystems – Identify opportunities in mangroves, coastal, and marine areas, especially transboundary zones.	Watershed Opportunities: Maps of river basins and micro-basins with IP, ADP, and LC presence. Accompanying analysis report.
	Buffer Zones – Map buffer areas managed by IP, ADP, and LC that protect national parks.	Marine Ecosystems: Maps of mangroves, coasts, and marine ecosystems. Documentation of transboundary opportunities.
		Buffer Zones: Maps of buffer areas managed by IP, ADP, and LC and evidence of their role in protecting national parks.
Activity 3 Collection of primary information and participatory validation	Virtual dialogue meetings and interviews with key stakeholders in 13 countries, plus validation sessions with RRI Coalition organizations, to assess conditions, challenges, and opportunities for rights-based conservation.	Summary reports of stakeholder inputs from the 13 countries, including annexes of agendas, minutes, and attendance lists. Validation workshop reports and feedback notes from RRI Coalition organizations.

		Consolidated document integrating validated findings.
Activity 4 Final report and executive summary	Analytical report with country and regional assessments, recommendations, political/legal opportunity mapping, complementary maps and visualizations, and an executive summary for decision-makers, partners, and community organizations.	Draft and final analytical report (country assessments, regional analysis, recommendations, political/legal opportunities). Set of maps and visualizations (conservation opportunities, presence of IP/ADP/LC, rivers, environmental attributes). Executive summary document tailored for decision-makers, partners, and community organizations. Validation records (feedback from reviewers and RRI Coalition).

Proposed timeline

The study will be contracted as a consultancy and will be carried out over a period of four (4) months, starting on October 15, 2025

The selected consulting team must communicate regularly with the RRI Latin America program team about the study's progress.

Deliverables	Delivery date
Deliverable 1: Ten Case Studies; WDPA Inclusion Review; Opportunities Analysis;	
and Financing Barriers Assessment.	November 14, 2025
Deliverable 2: Conservation Gaps & Opportunities; Risk Mapping; Frontier Opportunities; Watershed Opportunities; Marine Ecosystems and Buffer Zones involving IP, ADP, and LC populations across 13 countries	
Deliverable 3: Virtual dialogue meetings and interviews with stakeholders in 13 countries, plus validation sessions with RRI Coalition organizations, to assess	December 5, 2025
conditions, challenges, and opportunities for rights-based conservation. Deliverable 4: Comprehensive analytical report with country and regional	January 30, 2026
assessments, political/legal opportunity mapping, complementary maps and visualizations, and an executive summary for decision-makers, partners, and	January 30, 2020
community organizations.	

Eligibility criteria

In selecting the consultants for this project, RRI seeks a highly specialized consulting team with technical and practical experience in three areas: legal-political, environmental, and GIS expertise.

Minimum team qualifications

1. Legal-political expertise:

- Knowledge of national and international legal and regulatory frameworks related to land rights and biodiversity conservation in IP, ADP, and LC territories in Latin America.
- Environmental law and public policy experience focused on IP, ADP, and LC.

- Experience in land tenure, rights-based conservation, protected areas, and territorial governance.
- Knowledge of biodiversity conservation strategies at institutional and community levels, both from state and community regulatory frameworks.

2. Environmental-biological expertise:

- Experience in biodiversity conservation, protected areas, and IP, ADP, and LC conservation strategies in Latin America.
- Understanding of co-management of protected areas, rights-based conservation approaches, analysis of the compatibility IP, ADP, and LC territories with official conservation categories, and knowledge of conservation area financing.

3. GIS expertise:

- Experience in the use of geographic information tools such as ArcGIS, Google Earth, among others.
- Experience performing environmental risk analysis (such as deforestation and fires) and in issues related to biodiversity conservation, protected areas, and IP, ADP, and LC territories in Latin America.
- Experience in detecting conservation gaps and complex environmental analysis.

Minimum professional skills required of the consulting team:

- Fluency in Spanish.
- Analytical and technical writing skills.
- Experience coordinating virtual activities (workshops, interviews, presentations).
- Ability to synthesize complex information and develop practical and viable recommendations.
- Intercultural sensitivity, in-depth knowledge of the social and political contexts of Latin America.
- Ability to facilitate participatory processes and validation spaces with Latin American IP, ADP, or LC organizations.

Preferred qualifications

- Fluency in Portuguese (for analysis of experiences in Brazil).
- Demonstrated experience performing systematization and comparative analysis of legal frameworks related to protected areas and territories of IP, ADP, and LC in the region will be valued.

Key contractual conditions

Type of contract

This will be a deliverable-based contract.

All other anticipated costs/expenses must be included in the consultant's proposal. The consultant is responsible for ensuring that they have all necessary insurance, certifications, and/or licenses, and that they comply with all legal requirements to provide services in the location where the work is performed.

Equipment and supplies

Unless stated otherwise in the proposal, the consultant is responsible for providing all equipment, software, and/or supplies required to perform the services.

Budget

The estimated budget for this project is up to USD \$20,000, including any software or licenses that may be required. The research is expected to be conducted virtually.

Proposals will be evaluated based on criteria of reasonableness and cost comparison. We encourage proposals that reflect value for money.

Submission requirements

Those interested in this Request for proposals must submit:

- 1. CV/resume of the consultant or consultants.
- 2. Written proposal detailing the methodology and approach to be used to produce the deliverables mentioned above. This should include:
 - A rights-based approach to conservation.
 - Intercultural and interdisciplinary approach to meet the objectives, results, and timeline of the consultancy.
 - Demonstrated feasibility of delivering all products.
 - Clarity in the design and development process.
 - Contextualized approach that considers ethnicity, gender, youth, IPs, ADPs, and LCs.
- 3. Financial proposal/budget detailing the cost per deliverable and the total fixed price of the consultant in US dollars.

The proposal should be sent to fperez@rightsandresources.org and mvasquez@rightsandresources.org with the subject line "RRI Rights-Based Conservation Consulting Proposal."

The deadline for submission is September 30, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. EDT-Washington DC time.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Evaluation Criteria Table

- 1. Technical and methodological relevance of the proposal, 30%
- 2. Experience of the consultant or consulting team, 30%
- 3. Gender, multicultural, and intergenerational approach of the proposal, 15%
- 4. Cost, 25%

Ethical behavior

RRI is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and ethical conduct in the procurement process. We expect all vendors and consultants to adhere to ethical business practices and

comply with applicable laws and regulations. Any attempt to influence the procurement process through unethical means, including but not limited to fraud, bribery, or conflicts of interest, will result in immediate disqualification.

RRI's procurement processes are fair and open and allow all vendors/consultants equal opportunity to win our business. If any individual or organization becomes aware of potential violations of ethical standards related to this procurement process, we encourage prompt reporting to our hotline at www.lighthouse-services.com/rightsandresources. By submitting a proposal, the bidder acknowledges this commitment and agrees to conduct all interactions with RRI in an ethical and transparent manner.