

BRAZIL: *Protecting the Amazon through Indigenous Management Plans*

Photo: Morten Høy



- **Indigenous territories in Brazil make up 22% of the Brazilian Amazon, and act as a defense against forest destruction.**
- **Indigenous Managements Plans (PGTAs) represent a large-scale opportunity to sustainably manage these forests based on Indigenous peoples' rights and aspirations.**
- **A new tool enables the budgeting of the PGTAs and matching them with funding sources.**

In the Amazon there are 424 Indigenous territories inhabited by approximately 250,000 Indigenous peoples, covering more than 1.1 million km². The conservation and management of these territories, the majority of which are still intact forests, represent a cornerstone of any effective strategy to protect the largest rainforest on the planet, preserving its biodiversity and carbon storage¹.

The inhabitants of 110 Indigenous territories have now developed their PGTAs - Plans for Territorial and Environmental Management of Indigenous Lands. These management plans offer a unique opportunity for protecting the Brazilian Amazon through forest management based on Indigenous peoples' rights, needs and aspirations. A new tool developed by the Brazilian NGO, INESC, allows communities and financial supporters to develop budgets for the implementation of these management plans, estimating their cost and matching them with appropriate funding sources.

The Amazon Fund, funded forest projects with Brazil's REDD+ results-based payments, provided support to the Indigenous territories. Between 2010 and 2019 it contributed with funding to the management of 65% of Indigenous Peoples' territories in the Brazilian Amazon, covering 700,000 km², an area roughly twice the size of Germany. Payments from the Amazon Fund were frozen in 2019 due to disagreements over its governance structure.

Public funding for the implementation of the Indigenous management plans has also been continuously cut in Brazil, leaving their implementation practically without funding.

Rainforests in Brazil

Brazil hosts the by far largest rainforest in the world, with over 3 million km² tropical rainforest within its borders². Approximately 70% was still intact in 2016. These forests store enormous amounts of carbon and host the largest terrestrial biodiversity in the world. Deforestation rates have increased in recent years, and 2020 was the worst year in the decade with 10,851 km² forest lost. Research shows that deforestation rates in tenure-secure Indigenous forests in the Amazon were up to three times lower than similar forests not managed by Indigenous Peoples³.

What are PGTAs?

Indigenous Managements Plans (PGTAs) are developed by and for the Indigenous communities. They have become the most important instrument for implementing the National Policy for Territorial and Environmental Management of Indigenous Lands (PNGATI), established in 2012. FUNAI, the Department for Indigenous Affairs, has provided guidance for PGTAs, that define them as "instruments of intercultural dialogue and planning for the territorial and environmental management of the Brazilian Indigenous Lands".

The PGTAs consist of goals, actions and activities that are created, discussed, organized, and collectively agreed upon within the communities in an Indigenous territory. They are to be carried out in the short, medium, and long term with the



aim of controlling and managing the territory itself and the natural resources that exist within it.

The Brazilian Network for Amazon Cooperation, RCA, has documented the process of developing PGTAs in six Indigenous areas across six different Brazilian states⁴. Their report shows that PGTA-processes became an instrument for the communities to adapt to new realities and to realize their aspirations, building on their traditions, culture, and local knowledge. The unique context of each Indigenous territory is reflected in the territory's PGTA and should be acknowledged in the funding. The thorough process has enabled solid local ownership of the PGTAs. This ownership, combined with the legal policy requirement, establish the PGTAs as unique mechanisms for increased support to Indigenous communities.

Funding needs and opportunities

New opportunities to funding this unique and innovative approach are emerging. Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (INESC) has developed a methodology for estimating the cost of implementing a PGTA that can be replicated across PGTAs, that will be launched at COP26. This can help Indigenous communities budget their PGTA and identify funding sources, both public and from international donors, that are suitable for the different elements of their management plan.

An initial budgeting of the costs of implementing 5 PGTAs, covering roughly 150,000 km², estimates the cost of enhanced territorial protection of these territories to be about \$1 mill per year. Implementing all aspects of these five PGTAs – including health, income generation, communication, food sovereignty and education – amount to \$12 mill per year. This estimate gives an indication of the potential for sustainably managing large forest areas through relatively small investments.

In addition to the Indigenous organizations themselves, several civil society organizations have worked closely with Indigenous organizations and communities to support and facilitate the development of PGTAs and the implementation of the plans. Partners of Rainforest Foundation Norway support the implementation of PGTAs covering more than 364,000 km², about 12% of Brazil's total rainforest area. Continued and increased funding to the civil society organizations involved in the PGTAs is important for enabling its implementation, and for the continued development of PGTAs where they are not yet completed.

Fundo Podáali is a new funding mechanism developed by and for the Indigenous population. It was created by the Indigenous organization COIAB to facilitate access to resources for Indigenous peoples, their communities, and grassroots organizations in the Brazilian Amazon, who historically have had difficulties accessing direct financial support. It will be fully launched in 2022, aiming to grow steadily in activity and funding. Its initial priorities align well with the objectives of the PGTAs: to conserve biodiversity in Indigenous territories, promote rights and public policies in order to ensure the autonomous management of their territories, and to respect diversity and the unique ways of life of native peoples.

Some Indigenous territories already have established their own territorial funds, such as Rio Negro and Xingu.

Donors should look for opportunities to fund the implementation of PGTAs, through existing, Indigenous controlled channels, or through civil society organisations that cooperate closely with Indigenous communities. Donors should also work to have the Amazon Fund reopened when the situation allows, and for implementation of PGTAs to be prioritized in future REDD+ funding. 🌿

1) Malhi et al. 2008; Ricketts et al. 2010, Soares-Filho et al. 2010, Moutinho et al. 2011 2) State of the Tropical Rainforests (2020) Rainforest Foundation Norway. 3) Blackman, A., and P. Veit. 2018. 4) <https://rca.org.br/2021/02/novo-livro-da-rca-traz-historias-sobre-os-processos-de-criacao-de-planos-de-gestao-territorial-e-ambiental-de-terras-indigenas-da-amazonia-brasileira/>