



**Contributing to  
a More Resilient  
Direct Funding  
Ecosystem for  
Indigenous  
Peoples and Local  
Communities:**  
Case Studies  
on Intermediary  
Support





## Introduction

Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs) achieve some of the world's most impactful forest protection outcomes through exercising their territorial rights and traditional governance systems. Their territories, home to approximately 36% of intact tropical forests, consistently experience lower deforestation rates than neighboring lands under other forms of tenure. Despite this, they receive less than 1% of international climate funding. This contradiction reveals a fundamental dysfunction in the climate finance ecosystem: those on the frontlines of forest protection face the greatest barriers to accessing it, while funding remains concentrated in bureaucracies and offices far removed from the realities on the ground.

The barriers to direct finance are systemic and numerous. They include eligibility criteria incompatible with the realities of IP and LC organizations; persistent capacity gaps driven by chronic underinvestment; intermediaries that act as gatekeepers rather than strategic facilitators and ecosystem catalysts; a lack of predictable, flexible, and fit-for-purpose funding; and deep-rooted power and trust imbalances.

Transforming this ecosystem demands sustained, medium- and long-term investments alongside structural reforms to overcome colonial legacies and entrenched systemic barriers. Existing funding mechanisms must be reoriented to provide direct, flexible, and long-term support driven by the priorities and strategies defined by IPs and LCs.

### The Role of Intermediaries

Over time, various organizations in the ecosystem have stepped in to fill these gaps, becoming key actors in the flow of funding to IPs and LCs. While many of them play valuable roles, for both IP and LC organizations and donors, the involvement of multiple intermediary layers often absorbs significant resources and adds bureaucratic hurdles—creating dependency rather than building pathways to autonomy.

The term "intermediary", however, lacks an accepted definition in the philanthropic space and has become a catch-all term for a diversity of roles. These range from organizations that catalyze systemic change to those that extract resources without delivering proportional value. This lack of distinction makes it critical to examine the actual functions, contributions, and accountability of different intermediaries within the ecosystem.

Intermediation is not inherently good or bad—the value lies in how it is designed and implemented.

The critical distinction is not in the existence of intermediaries, but whether their roles are intentionally designed to deliver clear, equitable, and outcome-driven support. **Intermediaries with adaptable roles and clear strategies for gradual transfer of control can accelerate pathways to direct funding by prioritizing autonomy and institutional strengthening of IP and LC organizations.**

These systemic challenges require innovative approaches to intermediation—ones that create pathways to autonomy rather than perpetuate dependency. The following four case studies, drawn from diverse contexts and funding models, illustrate how well-designed intermediary relationships can contribute to overcoming systemic barriers and strengthen the broader ecosystem.

### The Case Studies

To support the conversation around transitioning to direct funding for IPs and LCs, Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) developed four case studies that showcase distinct approaches to playing a strategic and value-added intermediary role. These cases, informed by RFUS's three decades of partnership experience, highlight approaches based on trust and co-creation, with roles that continuously adapt as partners' capacities and needs evolve:

- ▶ ***Building Pathways to Direct Funding Through Long-term Partnerships*** examines how sustained, trust-based collaboration has enabled Indigenous peoples' organizations in Guyana to strengthen their capacity and gain greater access to direct financing, ultimately leading to the adaptation of partnerships.
- ▶ ***Using Fiscal Sponsorship to Advance Global Impact*** demonstrates how responsive fiscal sponsorship of the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities has accelerated movement-building across Asia, Africa, and Latin America while preserving organizational autonomy.
- ▶ ***Breaking Down Divides to Unlock Bilateral Funding for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Mesoamerica*** shows how intermediaries can bridge cultural and technical gaps to help IP and LC organizations access complex government funding while strengthening their institutional capacity and supporting them to independently access larger and more complex funding in the future.
- ▶ ***Strengthening Indigenous-government Partnerships for Territorial Rights*** illustrates how strategic intermediation can help reshape relationships between Indigenous organizations and government agencies, supporting collaborative models that advance land rights.



## The Value RFUS Adds to Its Partnerships

These case studies demonstrate four interconnected ways in which RFUS adds value to its partnerships and creates pathways for IPs and LCs to access funding:

- ▶ **Leveraging institutional credibility for joint fundraising success** that enhances partners' competitiveness in funding landscapes where access is often determined by track record and organizational capacity. We also break large grants into manageable sub-grants that bypass overwhelming compliance requirements. For organizations lacking legal status, this may include providing fiscal sponsorship that opens access to funding streams otherwise unavailable to them.
- ▶ **Absorbing administrative complexity while maintaining transparency** through comprehensive grant administration that allows partners to focus on programmatic implementation rather than bureaucratic compliance. This includes managing extensive funding requirements, bridging donor disbursement delays that could disrupt partner operations, and facilitating intercultural dialogue that translates between donor expectations and partner realities.
- ▶ **Enabling partner-driven capacity strengthening** that aligns with organizations' self-determined priorities rather than solely addressing compliance needs. This comprehensive approach includes actively facilitating direct relationships between partners and donors, providing technical assistance to build sustainable organizational systems, and adapting support roles as partners' capacity and autonomy grow.
- ▶ **Supporting the reshaping of partnerships between IP and LC organizations and diverse ecosystem actors** to ensure meaningful participation in decision-making, greater influence over priorities, and active co-design of agendas that directly affect their rights.

## Building Diverse and Resilient Ecosystems

The case studies suggest that **robust funding ecosystems benefit from diversity: multiple direct funding pathways and support models adapted to specific contexts, times, and needs can be complementary in supporting IP and LC organizations**. Trusted intermediaries with clearly defined added value can strengthen this diversity, supporting IPs and LCs in different ways over time, adapting their roles as new challenges emerge in dynamic political and environmental contexts.

This publication constitutes an invitation to joint learning. The cases presented aim to inform, inspire, and provoke constructive dialogue among donors, intermediaries, policymakers, and IP and LC organizations about how to build funding systems truly fit for the purpose of strengthening their autonomy in protecting territories critical to their futures and that of the entire planet.

## RFUS AS A TRUSTED PARTNER

Rainforest Foundation US cultivates long-term relationships founded on trust and co-creation, supporting partner-led projects that advance IP and LC organizations' self-determined priorities. As trusted partners, as requested we provide adaptive financial, technical, policy, and capacity strengthening support, with roles that evolve as partner capacities grow and according to changes in contexts, creating pathways to direct funding.

## References

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Photo: APA / Rainforest Foundation US



## Building Pathways to Direct Funding Through Long-Term Partnerships

This case study examines a decade-long partnership between Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) and two Indigenous organizations in Guyana: the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA) and the South Rupununi District Council (SRDC). It demonstrates how lasting, trust-based partnerships can be an element that enables Indigenous peoples' organizations to evolve from under-resourced entities into robust institutions capable of managing funding independently. Through strategic support for long-term funding access, capacity strengthening, and donor relationship development, both partners achieved substantial growth and expanded their territorial protection and advocacy efforts. This case illustrates how sustained investment can clear the way toward funding independence, while highlighting the complementary nature of both direct and intermediated funding approaches.

<b>Geographic scope</b>	Guyana
<b>Timeframe</b>	2015 - 2025 (10 years)
<b>USD facilitated</b>	<b>US\$ 7 million</b> Intermediated: US\$ 4.5 million Direct: US\$ 2.5 million
<b>Donors</b>	Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative/ Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NICFI/Norad), Swedish Postcode Foundation, Nia Tero, Samueli Family Foundation, among others.
<b>Partners</b>	Amerindian Peoples Association - APA South Rupununi District Council - SRDC (and its NGO arm, the South Central Peoples Development Association - SCPDA)



## CHALLENGES

### Limited organizational resources

In 2015, both APA and SRDC operated under significant resource constraints that limited their ability to implement comprehensive territorial protection and advocacy agendas. Operating at the national level, APA had five staff members and a single funding source totaling US\$153,000 annually. SRDC, having just emerged from grassroots community organizing, operated with two full-time staff and an annual budget of US\$120,000.

### Misaligned funding models

The available funding landscape presented multiple challenges. Most funding opportunities consisted of short-term cycles (1-2 years) with rigid budget categories that offered minimal flexibility for operational needs. Additionally, these funding opportunities provided limited support for the institutional strengthening necessary for sustainable growth.

### Barriers to funding access

Access to major funding opportunities remained constrained by donor requirements for demonstrated grant management and strong organizational capacities. This created a circular barrier—organizations needed experience to secure the very funding required to build that experience—effectively excluding many capable but under-resourced organizations from growth opportunities.

## PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS

### Securing access to long-term funding

RFUS collaborated with APA and SRDC<sup>1</sup> to develop and secure multi-year funding agreements with NICFI/Norad, resulting in US\$ 2.8 million channeled to APA and US\$ 850,000 to SRDC between 2016 and 2025. This decade of sustained funding provided critical organizational stability and enabled organizational growth.

### Supporting funding diversification

RFUS, in partnership with APA and SRDC, pursued complementary funding sources, facilitating an additional US\$670,000 to APA from eight additional donors and US\$130,000 to SRDC from five separate funding sources. As intermediary for these funds, RFUS managed most of the administrative burden, enabling APA and SRDC to focus on programmatic implementation.

### Facilitating direct donor relationships

During this period, APA and SRDC established direct relationships with donors with active support from RFUS. This included assistance with proposal development, strategic donor introductions, and donor stewardship—ultimately helping both partners secure and leverage over US\$2.5 million in additional funding.

### Investing in organizational capacities

APA and SRDC successfully secured dedicated capacity strengthening funds within their grants, while RFUS and other partners provided complementary technical support. This enabled both organizations to recruit qualified staff and invest in organizational development, including program structuring, financial management systems, administrative procedures, and governance strengthening.

## RESULTS

### Organizational growth

APA grew from a staff of five and an annual budget of US\$153,000 to 15 full-time employees within specialized departments (finance, communications, advocacy, mapping, and governance) and an annual budget of US\$1.7 million—about an elevenfold increase since 2015. SRDC evolved from two full-time staff and an annual budget of US\$120,000 to 12 full-time staff and an annual budget of US\$1.1 million in 2025 that enables expanded territorial monitoring, management, and advocacy work. Both organizations built new organizational policies, developed more robust internal systems, and invested in their grassroots governance structures.

### Direct funding transition

Both partners currently manage large multi-year direct grants from donors with increased capacity for direct funding—APA from The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility and SRDC from Rainforest Trust. While RFUS continues providing intermediated funding and playing a key advisory role, as of 2025, it represents less than 5% and 7% of APA and SRDC's organizational budgets respectively. Notably, APA and SRDC now issue subgrants to RFUS for specific technical services, signaling an evolving partnership dynamic.

<sup>1</sup> And the Forest People Programme, which was also an implementing partner.





## Insights and Lessons Learned

### ► **Diverse funding pathways strengthen the ecosystem**

Funding intermediation bridges capacity gaps for donors and partners, while also creating pathways to direct funding relationships. Rather than viewing direct and intermediary models as competing approaches, both can be strategically leveraged as complementary depending on project complexities, donor relationships, and partner organization's current capacity

### ► **Direct funding requires capacity strengthening**

The increase of direct funding demands simultaneous capacity strengthening for both partners and donors to engage effectively. For some Indigenous peoples' organizations, this requires sustained long-term investment in both compliance-oriented capacities and their self-determined organizational priorities.

### ► **Trust-based partnerships adapt over time**

Long-term, trust-based partnerships enable transformative collaboration by moving beyond transactional roles. As partner capacities and needs evolve, the intermediary's role in the ecosystem may shift dynamically to ensure the partnership remains relevant and impactful.

#### **To learn more:**

Amerindian Peoples Association - APA:  
<https://apaguyana.com>

South Rupununi District Council - SRDC:  
<https://srdcgy.org>



Photo: Rachel Elkind / GATC



## Using Fiscal Sponsorship to Advance Global Impact

This case study examines a six-year fiscal sponsorship partnership between Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) and the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC) – a global movement that represents 35 million people across 958 million hectares in 24 countries. It demonstrates how strategic fiscal sponsorship can enable political movements to rapidly scale their impact without compromising their core identity or mission. The GATC has evolved from a grassroots movement into one of the most influential global voices for Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs) in climate and forest policy, maintaining its political identity through strategic fiscal sponsorship and comprehensive administrative, technical, and advocacy support.

Geographic scope	Global
Timeframe	2019 - 2025 (6 years)
USD facilitated	US\$ 9,800,000
Donors	Ford Foundation, Skoll Foundation, Climate and Land Use Alliance, the Rights and Resources Initiative and Bezos Earth Fund, the Christensen Fund, the Jacobs Futura Foundation, the Packard Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Tenure Facility, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Campaign for Nature, Nia Tero, and FSC Indigenous Foundation.
Partners	Global Alliance of Territorial Communities - GATC



## CHALLENGES

### Global coordination complexity

GATC leaders manage extensive local responsibilities while pursuing significant involvement in global political arenas. Coordinating advocacy across 24 countries, five languages, and multiple time zones—while ensuring diverse territorial representatives can participate in high-level global events—requires sophisticated coordination mechanisms and substantial infrastructure support.

### Timing dilemma: immediate response vs institutional development pace

Escalating climate threats and narrowing windows of political opportunity demand immediate, coordinated global action. However, establishing the formal organizational infrastructure necessary to access and manage large-scale funding typically requires years of development, and this could divert efforts from core advocacy and movement-building work, weakening the GATC's ability to influence key moments in climate policy.

## PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS

### Tailored fiscal sponsorship model

RFUS, with the GATC, developed a customized fiscal sponsorship model providing access to 501©(3) legal status and comprehensive administrative infrastructure to the GATC. This arrangement went beyond transactional support, including ongoing technical assistance for operations, fundraising, grant management, financial administration, and logistical coordination, enabling the GATC to focus on advocacy while gradually developing its organizational structures.

### Capacity strengthening

The GATC received RFUS technical support to build administrative structures from scratch, including support for a Technical Secretariat with clear roles and responsibilities. Along with other allies, RFUS provided extensive hands-on support in the early stages while implementing a deliberate operations transfer approach, gradually shifting operational functions to the GATC as its technical secretariat developed.

### Strategic advocacy and platform development

RFUS provided additional technical support in climate finance advocacy and development of priority GATC initiatives such as the Shandia Platform. This supported the GATC to advocate for transformative changes in climate finance mechanisms to reshape access to funding for IPs and LCs worldwide.

## RESULTS

### Organizational growth and funding diversification

Over the last few years, the GATC evolved into a structured organization with a 15-person professional Secretariat featuring specialized teams for policy advocacy, communications, program management, and logistics and administration, plus its Leadership Council. Funding diversified from one major donor to partnerships with over a dozen foundations, increasing annual revenue from approximately US\$500,000 to over US\$3 million.

### Global policy influence and recognition

The GATC transitioned from event participant to influential policy actor on climate and forest policy debates, currently holding formal advisory positions within influential bodies such as the Forest Climate Leaders Partnership (FCLP) and Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF), and establishing ongoing collaboration with the Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG).

### Innovative finance mechanisms

The Shandia Platform emerged as a groundbreaking initiative advocating for improved funding mechanisms that reduce barriers for IP and LC organizations, representing a scalable model for transforming climate finance accessibility globally.





## Insights and Lessons Learned

### ► **Effective fiscal sponsorships are built on voluntary partnerships**

Sponsored organizations benefit from choosing fiscal sponsors that align with their values, capacity needs, and ways of working. To maintain strong partnerships and avoid breakdowns in accountability or communication, regular relationship reviews and clearly defined in-service standards are essential.

### ► **Fiscal sponsorship can enable rapid impact**

Strategic fiscal sponsorship allows organizations to exert timely influence while building their own organizational capacity. This approach provides essential administrative infrastructure to allow movements' grassroots organizations to access significant funding and coordinate jointly, while maintaining their political and territorial nature and identity.

### ► **Flexibility maximizes partnership value**

Flexibility in fiscal sponsorship enables partnerships to adapt as the organizations grow, with functions transferring based on emerging capacities rather than maintaining fixed agreements. This adaptive approach ensures partnerships remain relevant and mutually beneficial as organizations develop and strengthen.

#### **To learn more:**

Global Alliance of Territorial Communities - GATC:  
<https://globalalliance.me>

Shandia Plataforma:  
<https://globalalliance.me/shandia>



Photo: TV Indígena



## Breaking Down Divides to Unlock Bilateral Funding for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Mesoamerica

This case study examines how a strategic three-year partnership between Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS), Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) successfully bridged government aid and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP and LC) to achieve remarkable results. The collaboration enabled AMPB to expand its work, invest in organizational capacity, strengthen women's and youth participation, and establish the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund (FTM), an IP and LC-led financing mechanism that distributed US\$1.8 million to over 200 communities across six countries. This partnership demonstrates how trusted intermediaries can play a critical role in unlocking government funding opportunities while strengthening the broader ecosystem.

<b>Geographic scope</b>	Mexico and Central America
<b>Timeframe</b>	2021-2024 (3 years)
<b>USD facilitated</b>	<b>US\$ 3.4 million</b> Intermediated: US\$ 1.4 million Direct: US\$ 2.0 million
<b>Donors</b>	United States Agency for International Development - USAID, Community Land Rights and Conservation Finance Initiative - CLARIFI, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO, Inter-American Foundation - IAF, Forest Stewardship Council Indigenous Foundation - FSC Indigenous Foundation, among others.
<b>Partners</b>	Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB), and its initiatives Mesoamerican Territorial Fund (FTM), Mesoamerican Leadership School (EML), and Coordinator of Territorial Women Leaders of Mesoamerica (CMLT)





## CHALLENGES

### Need to better respond to territorial priorities

AMPB excelled as a regional advocacy coalition in forest and climate policy, but it identified the need to implement more projects at the community-level to better respond to member organizations' territorial priorities.

### Lack of direct community funding pathways

Traditional funding pathways weren't reaching AMPB's member communities effectively. AMPB and its member organizations recognized the need to establish an Indigenous-led mechanism for channeling direct funding to local communities throughout the region. Developing this innovative funding model required specialized technical support for legal incorporation, administrative procedures development, and monitoring systems that would meet both Indigenous governance principles and donor requirements.

### Cultural and technical barriers preventing government funding access

While USAID's commitment to "localization" represented a welcome departure from traditional funding approaches, substantial cultural and technical gaps still existed between the agency and IP and LC organizations. These included highly technical co-design processes, extensive eligibility and compliance requirements, and milestone-based disbursement models that posed challenges for organizations like AMPB, which lacked formal administrative infrastructure.

## PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS

### Strategic intermediation and compliance management

As a "non-traditional partner", RFUS developed its own capacity to meet USAID's extensive requirements, enabling AMPB to access government funding while RFUS managed the complex compliance obligations. This arrangement allowed AMPB to focus on programmatic work and capacity strengthening, rather than diverting limited resources to administrative burdens. RFUS also leveraged its cash reserves to bridge gaps between milestone-based disbursement, ensuring uninterrupted project implementation.

### Facilitated co-design and cultural bridging

RFUS supported the project co-design process between AMPB and USAID, helping prepare staff and leadership for effective participation. RFUS facilitated the translation of territorial and community priorities into donor-aligned language and collaborated closely with all parties to ensure the final project document fully reflected AMPB's vision and goals.

### Comprehensive capacity strengthening

Beyond meeting specific USAID requirements, RFUS provided comprehensive organizational development support to advance AMPB's institutional priorities. This included establishing the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund (FTM) to channel funding directly to communities, supporting the development of AMPB's new strategic plan, assisting the Women's Coordination (CMLT) with their regional gender and climate action plan, and enabling the expansion of the Mesoamerican Leadership School's programming. RFUS also provided targeted fundraising support to leverage additional funding and delivered hands-on technical assistance to address operational gaps across AMPB's structures.

## RESULTS

### Deepened territorial engagement and community-level programming

The project allowed AMPB to broaden the scope of its work and deepen support for on-the-ground efforts led by its member organizations. Specifically, it allowed the Mesoamerican Leadership School (EML), an arm of AMPB that provides leadership development opportunities for youth, to provide disaster risk management training for communities throughout the region, enhancing their climate resilience. The grant also provided targeted financial support for women's organizations through the CMLT.

### Operational territorial fund channeling funding to grassroots efforts

The Mesoamerican Territorial Fund (FTM) was successfully consolidated through legal incorporation and organizational development. The fund established clear proposal evaluation criteria, governance committees, and monitoring procedures, and raised and distributed nearly US\$2 million through two funding cycles to benefit over 200 communities across six Mesoamerican countries.

### Organizational strengthening and funding growth

Through the USAID grant, AMPB increased its organizational budget by 20% and made significant strides in institutional strengthening. Key achievements included progress toward legal registration, the development of a comprehensive strategic plan, and the enhancement of governance roles for women and youth. These institutional developments positioned AMPB to better serve its member organizations and laid the groundwork for increased direct funding relationships. With RFUS's support, AMPB secured an additional US\$2 million in direct funding during the project period.

### Successful government-IP and LC partnership experience

The grant partnership successfully overcame cultural and technical barriers between USAID and AMPB, creating a replicable model for direct engagement between government aid agencies and Indigenous organizations. The partnership generated valuable lessons on enabling direct funding through effective co-design processes and improved grantmaking procedures.



## Insights and Lessons Learned

### ▶ **Trusted intermediaries enable government-IP and LC funding partnerships**

Trusted intermediaries can effectively bridge substantial gaps between government aid agencies and IP and LC organizations, serving as enablers rather than gatekeepers. This approach supports IP and LC organizations to access complex bilateral funding sources, while strengthening both parties' capacity for eventual direct management.

### ▶ **Co-creation requires intercultural capacity**

Successful partnerships between government donors and Indigenous organizations demand significant adaptation from both parties, including flexible co-design processes, cultural understanding, and trust. Investment in intercultural capacity and patient relationship-building enables non-traditional partnerships to overcome systemic barriers and succeed.

### ▶ **Partner-driven capacity strengthening creates lasting impact**

Strategic institutional strengthening that extends beyond compliance requirements enables organizations to develop sustainable systems for managing diverse funding streams while better serving their constituents. This comprehensive approach creates lasting organizational transformation that extends beyond individual projects.

### **To learn more:**

Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests - AMPB:  
<https://www.alianzamesoamericana.org>

Mesoamerican Territorial Fund - FTM:  
<https://fondomesoamericano.org>

Mesoamerican Leadership School - EML:  
<https://www.escuelamesoamericana.org>

Coordinator of Territorial Women Leaders of Mesoamerica - CMLT:  
<https://www.facebook.com/mujeresmesoamericanas>





Photo: Sebastian Castañeda / Rainforest Foundation US



## Strengthening Indigenous-Government Partnerships for Land Titling

This case study examines an innovative partnership between the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSEP) and the Regional Directorate of Agricultural Development and Irrigation of Loreto (GERDAGRI) that has streamlined Indigenous land titling processes in Peru's Loreto department. With strategic intermediation and technical support from Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS)—which mobilized US\$ 530,000 over two years— the partnership developed a model that positioned AIDSEP as the primary coordinator while strengthening GERDAGRI's operational capacity. The collaboration resulted in 26 community land titles covering 77,265 hectares delivered in record time, establishing a replicable model for Indigenous-led public-private partnerships.

Geographic scope	Peru
Timeframe	2023 - 2024 (2 years)
USD facilitated	US\$ 530,000
Donors	Project Wren, Individual donors
Partners	Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest - AIDSEP, Regional Office for Agricultural Development and Irrigation - GERDAGRI, Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the East - ORPIO



## CHALLENGES

### Structural capacity constraints for titling implementation

GERDAGRI, the regional authority responsible for legally processing Indigenous land titling in the Loreto Department, faced severe resource constraints that hindered its ability to conduct effective fieldwork and advance titling processes throughout the region. Lacking sufficient funding for transportation, technical equipment, and personnel, the agency struggled to meet a growing backlog of requests from communities seeking territorial recognition.

### Historical exclusion of Indigenous leadership from titling processes

Previous land titling initiatives funneled resources through NGOs and government contractors, excluding Indigenous organizations and limiting their meaningful participation in the process. This approach failed to capitalize on opportunities for strengthening Indigenous organizations' institutional capacity to lead legal processes for land rights recognition, perpetuating dependency rather than building autonomous capacity.

### Logistical barriers to access communities

Land titling processes in Loreto require transporting technical teams and materials across vast, remote riverine areas to carry out field surveys and physical demarcation. Traditional contractor-based approaches proved costly on a per-community basis and often lacked the cultural competence needed for meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities. These shortcomings resulted in delayed or incomplete titling processes.

## PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS

### Indigenous-led public-private collaboration model

AIDSESP, representing Indigenous peoples across the Peruvian Amazon, and GERDAGRI developed an innovative public-private partnership that fundamentally restructured traditional roles. AIDSESP assumed primary coordination responsibilities, leading engagement with local communities and Indigenous organizations, while GERDAGRI maintained its technical and legal mandate to carry out physical-legal demarcation and formal titling procedures. This collaboration established a mutually reinforcing framework where both institutions leverage their complementary capacities and strengths to advance shared goals around land recognition.

### Strategic leveraging of funds

RFUS supported the partnership through targeted resource mobilization, channeling US\$ 190,000 to strengthen AIDSESP's technical coordination capacity and investing US\$ 340,000 in local logistical infrastructure to support activities on the ground. This strategic investment created enabling conditions for AIDSESP to assume primary coordination leadership while allowing GERDAGRI to focus on core technical and legal titling functions.

### Indigenous logistics network

In collaboration with ORPIO, Loreto's regional Indigenous organization, and local federations, RFUS supported the establishment of Indigenous-led logistics networks specialized in territorial services. This included capacity strengthening for business formalization, financial management training, and operational support. These networks transformed local Indigenous territorial knowledge into specialized services, facilitating the transport of technical personnel, equipment, demarcation materials, and food to remote communities.

## RESULTS

### Greater efficiency

The partnership framework enabled the successful completion of 26 community land titles covering 77,265 hectares between 2023 and 2024. These titling processes, which previously could take decades, were completed in just 8 to 18 months on average. The comprehensive approach included physical demarcation to prevent future territorial conflicts and full documentation with the public land registry, ensuring legally recognized land titles.

### Institutional strengthening

AIDSESP fundamentally transformed its institutional positioning, evolving from funding recipient to strategic coordinator of land titling. This evolution positioned AIDSESP to support strengthening state institutional capacity. It set important precedents for other regional governments to adopt similar collaborative frameworks and is a clear demonstration of the ability of Indigenous organizations to successfully manage complex partnerships.

### Sustainable Indigenous logistical capacity

The Indigenous-led logistics networks developed through the partnership are generating sustainable operational capacities that extend beyond land titling—supporting broader territorial governance initiatives. This model reduces reliance on external contractors while establishing revenue-generating opportunities for local Indigenous organizations, with profits intentionally reinvested to strengthen their long-term financial sustainability.





## Insights and Lessons Learned

### ► **Indigenous-government partnerships can enable mutual capacity building**

Effective collaboration between state institutions and Indigenous organizations requires rethinking traditional contractual dynamics, positioning Indigenous organizations as protagonists rather than beneficiaries, while maintaining essential governmental technical and legal authority. Such an approach can simultaneously strengthen Indigenous institutional capacity and governmental operational effectiveness, creating collaborative frameworks that enhance state responsiveness to Indigenous land rights.

### ► **Strategic intermediation can reconfigure ecosystem relationships**

Successful intermediation can contribute to reshaping relationships among ecosystem actors, extending beyond channeling funding alone. Strategic value emerges if intervention points can be identified to generate structural transformation over simply increasing funding volumes.

### ► **Indigenous territorial solutions can generate enduring economic infrastructure**

Capacity grounded in political and cultural values creates opportunities to build infrastructure that enhances efficiency while reducing the long-term costs of territorial protection. These investments can also generate sustainable economic models that promote territorial autonomy and deliver culturally appropriate, specialized services with lasting impact.





### **Contributing to a More Resilient Direct Funding Ecosystem for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Case Studies on Intermediary Support**

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#### **How to Cite This Publication:**

Rainforest Foundation US. 2025. *Contributing to a More Resilient Direct Funding Ecosystem for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Case Studies on Intermediary Support*. Rainforest Foundation US.

**Design and Layout:** W5 Publicidade

**Cover photo:** AdobeStock

#### **About Rainforest Foundation US**

Rainforest Foundation US has worked in partnership with Indigenous peoples and local communities throughout Central and South America to protect their lands and rights since 1988, strengthening more than 300 Indigenous and community organizations and protecting more than 42 million acres of rainforests.

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