

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge



Forest Tenure Funders Group: Annual Report 2025–2026 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COP26 Indigenous Peoples and local communities Forest Tenure Pledge concluded in December 2025. **During that period, the COP26 Pledge’s endorsers—collectively known as the Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG)—delivered \$2.35 billion towards the \$1.7 billion commitment, surpassing the target by 38%.** In the previous decades, Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ (IP and LC) tenure security received far less support than it required given that few investments deliver more for climate, biodiversity, human rights, and sustainable livelihoods. The COP26 Pledge attempted to respond to this. Donors are not solely responsible for the COP26 Pledge’s results. Credit must be given to our partners, especially Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who implemented the work and achieved real impact through decades of advocacy and daily territorial defense and stewardship.

When it was announced in November 2021, the COP26 Pledge affirmed what millions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities already knew: Forest protection requires supporting forest guardians and securing their tenure rights. The COP26 Pledge helped move forest tenure from the periphery of climate and biodiversity action to the center; it also facilitated the political space for governments to implement tenure security work. There was a palpable shift at UNFCCC COP30 with the announcement of the Intergovernmental Land Tenure Commitment (ILTC) in 2025, led by tropical forest governments and supported by the Forest & Climate Leaders’ Partnership (FCLP) Secretariat. Through this, governments committed to recognize and strengthen 160 million hectares of Indigenous Peoples’, local communities’, and Afro-descendant communities’ lands by 2030.

Communities have governed and cared for their territories for centuries, but escalating threats make secure tenure more urgent than ever. Without recognized and enforceable rights, they are more exposed to displacement, encroachment, violence, and illegal activity. Tenure security is multi-dimensional. Its foundation is legal recognition, but rights must be realized in practice. To achieve this, communities require the institutions, resources, and information to govern, manage, and safeguard their territories. In turn, tenure security requires nuanced support across multiple channels: building enabling conditions—from national policy and legal reform to the government systems that implement them; reliable, long-term, and high-quality financing to Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations; and technical work alongside communities, including mapping and demarcation, legal assistance, territorial management planning, and monitoring. In isolation, none of these are sufficient, and the COP26 Pledge helped demonstrate that they must be combined.

In 2025, COP26 Pledge-aligned funding was concentrated around clear themes and geographies. Together, territorial management and tenure security (32%) and sustainable forest management and forest-based livelihoods (34%) accounted for nearly two-thirds of 2025 funding, while support for national tenure reform processes rose to \$47 million from \$25 million in 2024. Regionally, Latin America received 71% of non-global funding, followed by the Asia-Pacific region (16%) and Africa (13%).



Although the COP26 Pledge did not reference direct financing, FTFG members responded to partner needs and placed increasing importance on direct financing over the five-year Pledge period. Members also learned ways to improve how funding reaches communities.

Over the course of the COP26 Pledge, direct financing to Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' organizations increased in volume and reach. **Funding directly reaching Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations rose from 2.9% of reported funding in 2021 to 7.2% in 2025; and members reported direct support to at least 135 IP and LC organizations in 2025, compared to just 22 in 2021.** Importantly, an expanding ecosystem of Indigenous-led and territorial funds opened new strategic options for donors, and offered communities financing pathways designed and governed by their own movements, which will be critical to the success of the renewed COP30 Pledge.

Progress in gender and youth support has been uneven and more focused effort is needed. Only 4% of 2025 funding had gender equality as a principal objective, down from 15% in 2024. This decline is best attributed to two factors: large, multi-year gender commitments were counted in earlier years and one donor's gender-focused portfolio sunsetted at the end of 2025. Less than 1% of funding had youth as a principal objective. Percentages for both funding areas must improve in the COP30 Pledge period. It is, however, worth noting that important gender-mainstreaming progress has been achieved: In the COP26 Pledge period's final year, over 60% of the funds integrated gender equality as a significant objective.

Government and philanthropic donors deliver funding differently, largely because they operate under different rules and constraints. Public donors manage taxpayers' money and are therefore bound by public budget rules, fiduciary standards, procurement requirements, and detailed financial management and accounting obligations. While this often makes it difficult to administer large numbers of small grants directly, public donors can mobilize funding at larger scales through intermediaries who are able to manage compliance requirements and regrant funding to Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' organizations. Because it has greater flexibility, private philanthropy tends to work with local actors and civil society; it can support innovative, community-driven initiatives, respond quickly to local needs, and build close partnerships that strengthen grassroots ownership and impact, including with small-scale or experimental projects.

The FTFG includes both types of donors, so their efforts complement each other and facilitate the multiple dimensions necessary to achieve tenure security. All FTFG members recognize that Indigenous Peoples and local communities should benefit from rights-based, reliable, long-term, and flexible funding. They use different channels to achieve that goal and aim to measure progress through direct funding percentages, understanding that these percentages do not capture all aspects of high-quality funding to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Five years of collective practice produced other lasting lessons. **The first is that tenure has moved from the margins of climate and conservation strategies to the center.**

The second is that legal recognition is necessary but not sufficient. Durable outcomes depend on robust and representative institutions, functioning territorial management, sustained financing, monitoring systems, and the capacity to respond to threats.



Third, donors worked to adapt to communities' realities by providing access to funding both directly and through trusted allies, partners, and intermediaries. They offered capacity-building support so Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' organizations could build administrative resilience. Donors also let partners choose their own financing pathways and invested in the Indigenous-led and territorial funds that expanded over the COP26 Pledge period.

The fourth lesson is that accountability is tied to transparency. Because the COP26 Pledge results were public and reported annually, Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' movements could use this recurring, evidence-based instrument to hold funders to their commitments. The shared reporting cycle pushed donors to examine their own portfolios and uncover programming gaps in direct funding, regional coverage, gender equality, and youth.

The work now continues with a broader commitment. **At the November 2025 World Leaders Summit in Belém, 39 government and philanthropic donors committed \$1.8 billion to the COP30 Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant communities Forest and Land Tenure Pledge.** The new COP30 Pledge extends beyond forests to all relevant terrestrial ecosystems.

This broader approach reflects the tremendous need for tenure security support across ecosystems. **Secure community tenure is increasingly recognized as foundational across all three Rio Conventions:** UNCCD recognizes tenure security as critical to halting land degradation and restoring degraded landscapes; the CBD and its Global Biodiversity Framework commit governments to conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030 while recognizing Indigenous and traditional territories; and in the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement preamble calls on Parties to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities when taking climate action.

Five years ago, the COP26 Pledge set out to prove that a transparent public commitment could change how the world funds tenure. It did. And Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and their partners turned that funding into recognized territories, stronger institutions, and a seat at the center of the global agenda. **The COP30 Pledge launches with proven delivery channels, a growing ecosystem of Indigenous and community-governed funds, deeper partnerships, and a shared evidence base. An ambitious plan guides our next five years.** We aim to support efforts that address the systemic drivers of tenure insecurity, direct more funds to reach communities on their own terms, and enhance partnerships that embed tenure security across the global and regional initiatives that protect nature and people.