



## THE TWENTY-YEAR-OLD PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ACRE, BRAZIL

*Lessons for realizing climate change mitigation and social justice in tropical forest regions through partnerships between subnational governments and indigenous peoples*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Indigenous peoples play an important role in protecting the world's remaining tropical forests<sup>1</sup>, and therefore are critical allies in the fight against climate change.
- The impacts of climate change are often just one facet of the challenges faced by indigenous peoples, who may struggle to secure land rights, defend their borders, and maintain and adapt their culture, livelihoods and traditions in the face of rapid social, economic and political change.
- Partnerships between indigenous peoples and subnational governments may help advance more systemic solutions to the global challenges of climate change and deforestation while supporting indigenous peoples' rights, well-being and cultural resilience. The state Government of Acre, Brazil has been developing such partnerships for over 20 years.
- In this report we document the experience of the state of Acre, Brazil and evaluate the role of dialogue and collaboration between subnational governments and indigenous peoples as part of sustainable development strategies.
- The main conclusions are:
  - While indigenous peoples and their territories often fall under the domain of federal governments, subnational governments are important protagonists, leveraging state programs and policies to attend to the demands of indigenous peoples and facilitate new forms of political participation and self-determination.
  - Building greater representation of indigenous peoples into state government decision-making is a long-term process, requiring sustained political will and investment. Regime change, institutional memory loss and unfavorable or antagonistic national governments may undermine continuity and test adaptive capacity of subnational governments.
  - Education and capacity building within indigenous communities, centered on indigenous identity and traditional knowledge, are instrumental in the shift of indigenous peoples from subjects of sustainable

development strategies to co-authors.

- Partnerships may yield multiple environmental and social benefits, including improved well-being, cultural revitalization, food security and recuperation of degraded lands.
- Acre's experience underscores that climate change mitigation and forest conservation can work in tandem with processes of cultural and political recognition that are at the heart of social justice.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades the state of Acre, in Brazil's western Amazon, has engaged in a large-scale experiment to create an economic development model based on the value of standing forests, rather than their conversion to other land uses. Between 2002 and 2015, Acre reduced its deforestation rate by 70%<sup>2</sup>, while increasing its GDP by 81%<sup>3</sup>. Between 2000 and 2010, it also increased its HDI 28%<sup>4</sup>. An important aspect of this experiment has been the state government's recognition of the relationship between forest conservation, sustained economic growth and well-being of forest-dependent communities – including indigenous peoples – and subsequent integration into policies and programs.

This report explores the evolution of partnerships between indigenous peoples and the state government of Acre over a twenty-year period. We trace the development of policies and programs that have facilitated these partnerships and explore the extent to which these policies and programs have fostered changes in sustainable and equitable development. We integrate the voices of indigenous leaders from 7 communities across 6 indigenous territories speaking on their perceptions of the partnership with the state of Acre and changes experienced in their quality of life, culture and community.

1 Nepstad, D., et al. 2006. Inhibition of Amazon Deforestation and Fire by Parks and Indigenous Lands. 20(1): 65-73; Ricketts, T. H., et al. 2010. Indigenous lands, protected areas, and slowing climate change. PLoS Biology 8(3); Vergara-Asenjo, G. and C. Potvin. 2014. Forest protection and tenure status: The key role of indigenous peoples and protected areas in Panama. Global Environmental Change 28: 205-215; Walker, W., et al. 2014. Forest carbon in Amazonia: the unrecognized contribution of indigenous territories and protected natural areas. Carbon Management 5(5-6): 479-485

2 de los Rios, M., et al. 2018. "Acre, Brazil" in C. Stickler *et al.* (Eds.), *The State of Jurisdictional Sustainability*. San Francisco, CA: EII; Bogor, Indonesia: CIFOR; Boulder, CO: GCF-TF.

3 IBGE. 2015. Contas Regionais.

4 Governo do Acre. 2017. Acre em Números.

## ACRE'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous peoples have inhabited Acre for millennia. It's only been in the last two centuries that colonists came into contact with Acre's indigenous peoples – first as part of the region's booming rubber industry, then most recently in the 1970s and 80s as part of Brazil's geopolitical expansion into the Amazon frontier. Indigenous peoples refer to the period from the late 1800s to 1980s as the "Time of Enslavement"<sup>5</sup>. During this time, many indigenous peoples were subject to debt slavery by powerful rubber barons, who exploited their labor to extract rubber from the forests, trapping them in a cycle of debt and poverty. Disease, displacement, expropriation of ancestral lands, prejudice from colonists, and policies and governments antagonistic towards indigenous peoples resulted in population decline, further marginalization and degradation of traditional cultures<sup>6</sup>.

Prior to the 1970s there was very little engagement between indigenous communities, government and civil society. In 1976, Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) began work in Acre, establishing the first contact between the State and indigenous peoples – primarily to demarcate indigenous lands. Brazil's 1988 Constitution reinforced the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and importantly, removed the mandate that indigenous peoples should assimilate into Brazilian society, opening up possibility of differentiated strategies for development for indigenous peoples. Acre's Pro-Indigenous Commission (CPI-Acre), established in 1979, was the first civil society organization to work in Acre's indigenous lands. CPI-Acre began training indigenous professors and health workers, and then in 1996 created the Indigenous Agroforestry

Agents training program that would later become the cornerstone of Acre's innovative climate change mitigation program.

The demarcation of "indigenous territories" (IT) as a legal land category was a major turning point for indigenous peoples, not only in defining their land rights, but also as a first step toward recovering and strengthening their culture and identity. Since 1976, 717 IT have been delineated nationwide – 422 in Brazil's Legal Amazon and 36 in Acre<sup>7</sup>. Because IT lie within the domain of the federal government, Acre's state government, initially, had little to do with them.

*"The Brazilian Government didn't understand the problems of indigenous peoples, and the state government didn't engage with indigenous peoples because it was a question of the federal government. Indigenous territories were seen as a problem for the government and a loss of land."*

- FRANCISCO PYANKO, ASHANIKA, FORMER SECRETARY OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS TO THE ACRE STATE GOVERNMENT

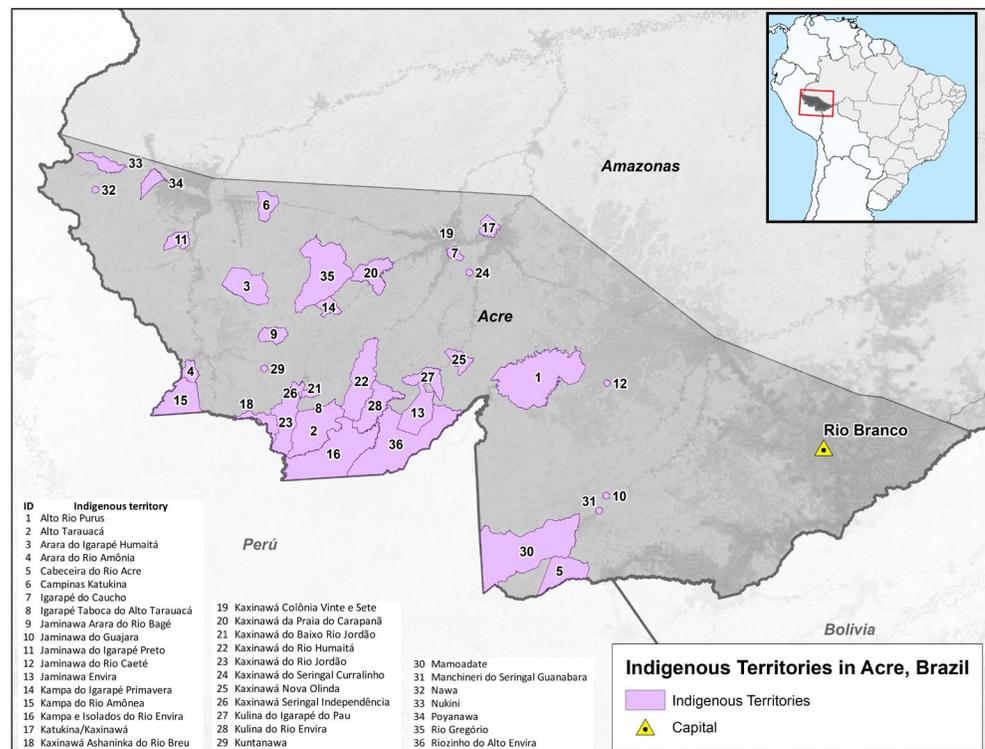


FIGURE 1. Indigenous Territories in Acre, Brazil

5 Ochoa, M., et al. (2003). *Índios no Acre: História e Organização*. Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre.

6 Hemming, J. 1987. *Amazon Frontier: The Defeat of the Amazon Indians*.

7 [https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Location\\_and\\_extension\\_of\\_Indigenous\\_Lands](https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Location_and_extension_of_Indigenous_Lands)

## BOX 1

### ACRE'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT A GLANCE<sup>1</sup>

- Total state population of 847,327
- Approximately 18,000 indigenous peoples, representing 2% of total population
- 16 Indigenous Groups
- 36 Indigenous Territories, encompassing more than half of Acre's forests and one-third of the state's total area
- 99% forest cover within IT vs. 87% statewide
- 43 active indigenous organizations

1 Sources: [www.acreppp.org](http://www.acreppp.org), de los Rios, M., et al. 2018. "Acre, Brazil" in C. Stickler *et al.* (Eds.), *The State of Jurisdictional Sustainability*. San Francisco, CA: EII; Bogor, Indonesia: CIFOR; Boulder, CO: GCF-TF; CPI-AC 2018

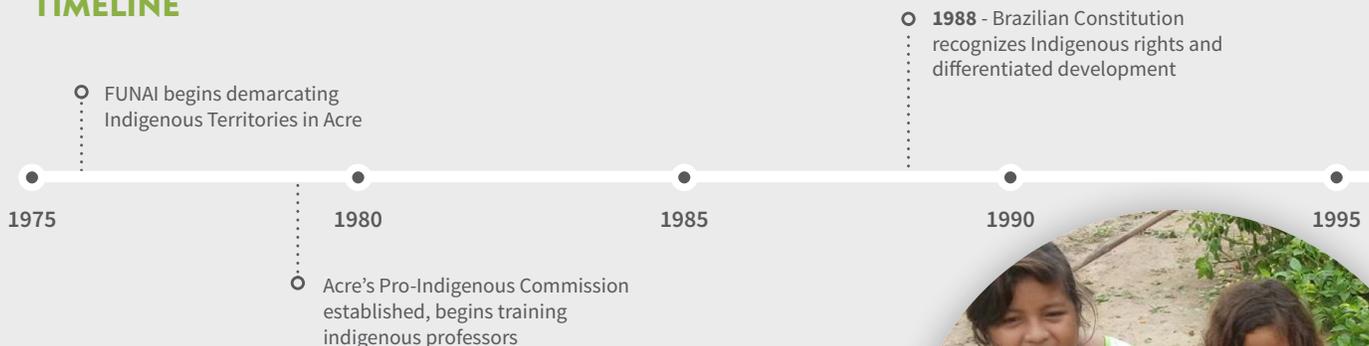
## FLORESTANIA AND ACRE'S FOREST GOVERNMENT

The plight of Acre's forest dwellers became international news when Chico Mendes, a traditional rubber tapper, union leader and environmental activist, was assassinated in 1988 by cattle ranchers for defending the rights of forest people. His death ushered in a new era in Acre's history, in which leaders from the environmental social movement and workers' party became the state's new political guard and began to transform the state's government<sup>8</sup>. At the heart of this transformation was the notion of "forest citizenship" or "florestania" – that the state's forest-dependent people – rubber tappers, indigenous peoples – had a right and responsibility to participate in designing and implementing a vision for development based on valuing standing forest, not destroying them.

With the election of Governor Jorge Viana in 1999, Acre's Forest Government began building broad societal support for the concept of sustainable development. Early in his term, Governor Viana visited the state's indigenous territories to better understand their needs, and as a result, recognized their existing efforts for self-determination over their territories and cultural survival. Governor Viana and his successor, Governor Binho Marques, instituted programs focused on health, education, environmental territorial management and cultural revitalization that directly benefited indigenous communities. According to indigenous leaders, the recognition by Acre's leadership

8 Schminck, M., et al. 2014. Forest Citizenship in Acre, Brazil. No. IUFRO World Series no. 32; Vadjunec, J. M., et al. 2011. "Rubber tapper citizens: emerging places, policies, and shifting rural-urban identities in Acre, Brazil." *Journal of Cultural Geography* 28(1): 73-98.

## TIMELINE



of indigenous peoples' struggles and advances and their inclusion in the Forest Government were instrumental in establishing trust and opening the possibility for dialogue between indigenous leaders and the state government.

*"During the 90s, it was the struggle for land. With the new government, it opened up the possibility of becoming one people of Acre. Indigenous peoples, rubber tappers – we were all proud to be Acreano, to all be part of the territory."*

- FRANCISCO PYANKO, ASHANIKA, FORMER SECRETARY OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS TO THE ACRE STATE GOVERNMENT

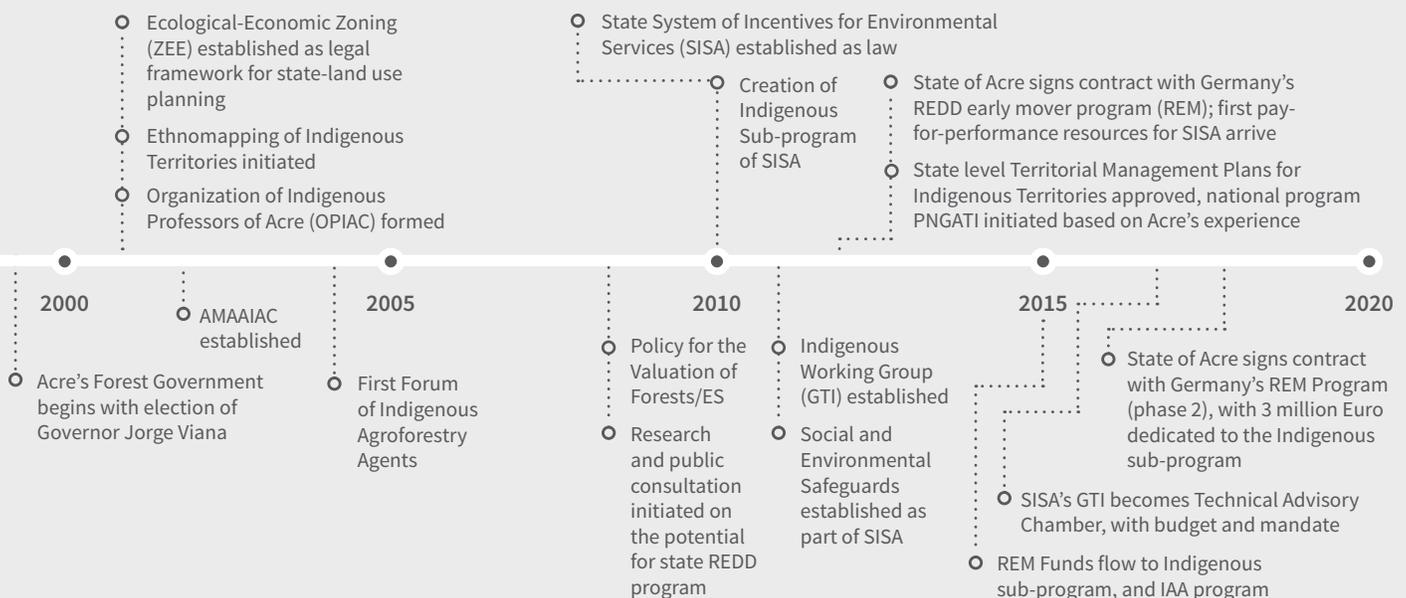
At the same time, the government began constructing the laws and institutional frameworks necessary to bring about a transformation of the state's economy and governance. First, the state government initiated a process of Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE), which mapped and prioritized land-use across the state through a participatory process with the state's diverse land users. The first ZEE was codified into state law in 2001, and then later revised in 2007, and serves as an important legal guide for land use decisions by the state.

The ZEE built on existing initiatives for territorial management by indigenous peoples begun in 1990s and incorporated indigenous peoples' territorial management practices and vision into land use planning through a process called ethnomapping or *etnozoneamento*. Importantly, while some IT were not yet officially recognized, the ZEE process allowed even unrecognized IT to be considered in state development



plans. Later programs such as PROACRE and PROSER (2009-2012), funded by the World Bank for socio-environmental sustainability, provided additional support for the participation of indigenous peoples in statewide environmental management planning, specifically, through consultations between state government agencies and indigenous peoples<sup>9</sup>. Acre's

<sup>9</sup> Acre, Governo do Estado. 2012. Programa de Inclusão Social e Desenvolvimento Econômico Sustentável do Estado do acre- PROACRE / Financiamento Adicional- PROSER.



experience in supporting the statewide development and implementation of Territorial Management Plans for indigenous territories was the impetus and model for the national program for the territorial management plans for indigenous territories (PNGATI) initiated in 2012.

In the early 2000s, indigenous peoples also began organizing through their associations to strengthen dialogue with the government. In 2001, they created the Acre Indigenous Teachers Organization (OPIAC). In 2002 the Acre Indigenous Agroforestry Agents Association (AMAAIAC) was created. In 2004, AMAAIAC organized the First Forum of Indigenous Agroforestry Agents (IAAs), inviting representatives of diverse government agencies that worked with IT. The Forum strengthened collaboration between state government agencies, such as the Secretary for Agroforestry and Family Production (SEAPROF), and IAAs, establishing a two-way knowledge exchange and a synergistic relationship between the IAA program and the state government<sup>10</sup>. In 2009 the state of Acre created the Secretary of Indigenous Affairs, opening up new channels for continued dialogue between indigenous peoples and the state government.

## POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS IMPACTING ACRE'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

As the Forest Government's first decade in power ended, the state government passed two seminal pieces of legislation to recognize the value of standing forests. The first was the Policy for Valuing Forest Environmental Assets (2008), establishing a range of sustainable forestry and agricultural programs. The second was the Acre State System of Incentives for Environmental Services (SISA), which the state passed into law in 2010. SISA covers a range of environmental services ranging from carbon sequestration to hydrological services and conservation of natural scenic beauty. SISA is composed of 7 programs, including the Incentive Program for Environmental Services of Carbon Sequestration- ISA-Carbono. The SISA system is based on a Stock-Flow approach, rewarding those who protect standing forests (stock), such as indigenous peoples, as well as those who reduce deforestation by changing their management practices (flow), such as small-scale agriculturalists and cattle ranchers.

Prior to being signed into law, Acre's SISA underwent an extensive research and consultation process, involving indigenous peoples and other potential beneficiaries, as well as state and federal authorities and civil society. The law recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples, establishes social and environmental safeguards and commits to equitable benefit-sharing. In 2015, following a 5-year planning, consultation and verification process, Acre became the first jurisdiction globally to develop and apply REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards as part of the SISA program<sup>11</sup>.

SISA also established important mechanisms for governance, transparency, accountability and oversight, including the State Commission for Validation and Monitoring (CEVA), a multi-stakeholder commission made up of both public authorities and civil society. CEVA was established in 2012 to guarantee social participation and oversight of SISA's governance, as well as approve investments and benefit-sharing schemes. CEVA established several temporary working groups to work on specific issues, including Indigenous Peoples and Women<sup>12</sup>.

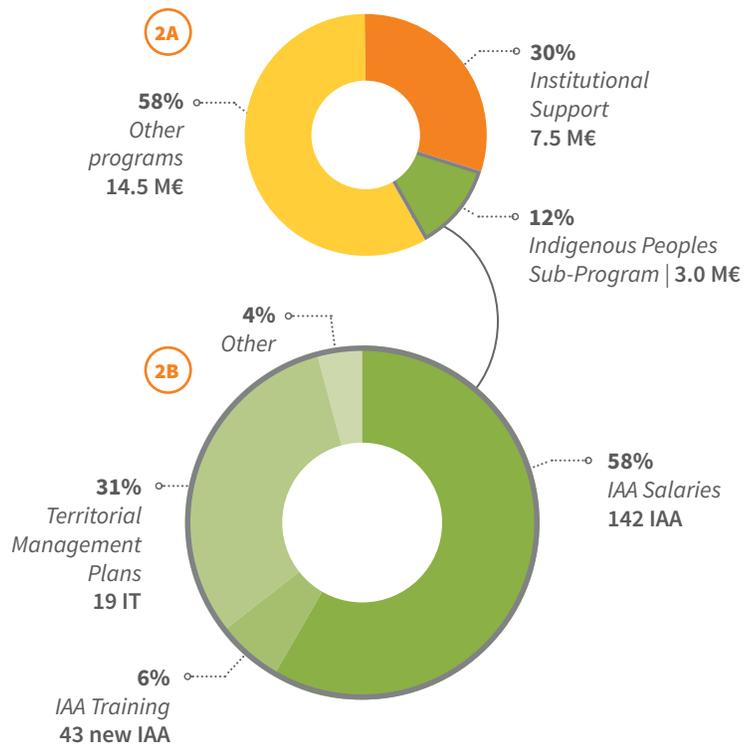


FIGURE 2. Allocation of REM Funds to SISA's ISA-Carbono indigenous subprogram.

11 Governo do Acre. 2012. Construção Participativa da Lei do Sistema de Incentivos a Serviços Ambientais do Estado do Acre.

12 Acre, Governo do Estado. 2017. Relatório de avaliação do desempenho do Programa REM I e II (2013-2017).

10 IIEB. 2007. Indigenous Agents active in Acre's Forests. In "Do Povo para O Povo".

In 2012, the state of Acre signed a 4-year contract with the German government's REDD Early Mover Program (REM), with the objective of supporting statewide reductions in emissions from deforestation<sup>13</sup>. Specifically, the REM program committed €25 million in performance-based finance to strengthen and expand Acre's forest and climate change mitigation programs, such as SISA, and provide benefits and incentives to local actors. SISA's ISA-Carbono program allocated REM funds across four main subprograms based on the stock-flow strategy: Indigenous Peoples, Extractivist Reserves, Smallholder Agriculture and Sustainable Cattle Ranching. Of the 70% of REM resources allocated to these programs (the remaining 30% for institutional support), 17.5%, or just over €3 million, went to the Indigenous Peoples Subprogram in the first phase of REM<sup>14</sup> (Figure 2a).

## SISA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PROGRAM

The Indigenous Peoples Working Group (GTI) was the first of several temporary working groups created within CEVA to ensure participation of key stakeholder groups (see BOX 2). The GTI was instrumental in designing ISA-Carbono's indigenous subprogram and tailoring the SISA program and safeguards to the specific needs of the state's indigenous populations.

The GTI established basic principles for SISA's ISA-Carbono indigenous subprogram, based on consultations and input from representatives of 22 IT. These principles outlined the ISA-Carbono program's commitment to improve the well-being of indigenous peoples, with special attention to women and vulnerable groups, compliance with local and national laws and relevant international treaties and conventions, as well as the participation of all relevant actors and rights holders in decision-making<sup>15</sup>. Please change this sentence to:

Acre's Letter of Principles has served as the basis for the Guiding Principles of Collaboration between Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities endorsed by the Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force in 2018<sup>16</sup>.

As part of its mandate, the GTI determined how to

13 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). REDD+ in the State of Acre, Brazil: Rewarding a pioneer in forest protection and sustainable livelihood development. KfW Development Bank, 2017.

14 Acre, Governo do Estado. 2017. Relatório de avaliação do desempenho do Programa REM I e II (2013-2017).

15 Acre, Governo do Estado. 2013. Serviços Ambientais, incentivos para a sua conservação. SISA: Dialogando com Povos Indígenas. IMC.

16 <https://gctf.org/news/gcf-approves-principles>

### BOX 2

#### ACRE'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TECHNICAL ADVISORY CHAMBER

- Acre's Indigenous Peoples Working Group (GTI) began as an informal group of indigenous leaders studying the SISA law and education other indigenous peoples about it
- The GTI was established in 2012 as temporary working group of CEVA
- In 2017 it was Institutionalized as a Technical Advisory Chamber of Indigenous Peoples to SISA
- Its objectives include:
  - Orient decision making on the indigenous peoples subprogram
  - Define benefit sharing
  - Facilitate dialogue between indigenous peoples and state government agencies
  - Coordinate consultation processes with the state's indigenous people
- Includes representatives of SISA, FUNAI, State Secretary of the Environment (SEMA), Acre's Climate Change Institute (IMC), Acre's Secretary of Indigenous Affairs, CPI-Acre and 19 indigenous associations

allocate the €3 million of REM funds to the indigenous peoples' subprogram. Acre's IAA Program became the central feature of ISA-Carbono's indigenous subprogram, with 58% of the funds going to support the salaries of 149 IAAs beginning in 2015, and to train 43 new IAAs (Figure 2b). Almost a third of the resources supported implementation of Territorial Management Plans in 19 IT, benefiting 17 indigenous associations<sup>17</sup>.

In 2017, the GTI was institutionalized as the Technical Advisory Chamber of Indigenous Peoples to SISA, guaranteeing a space for indigenous participation in SISA indefinitely. That year, the Chamber met to determine benefits for the second phase of REM, incorporating other components based on inputs and demands of indigenous leaders, such as strengthening and valuing traditional cultures, in addition to continuing support for the IAA program<sup>18</sup>.

17 Acre, Governo do Estado. 2017. Relatório de avaliação do desempenho do Programa REM I e II (2013-2017).

18 Comissão Pró-Índio-Acre. Nota Técnica: Subprograma Territórios Indígenas no Sistema de Incentivos aos Serviços Ambientais no Estado do Acre/SISA- O papel dos povos indígenas e da Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre (versão preliminar). 2018.

### BOX 3

## INDIGENOUS AGROFORESTRY AGENTS<sup>1</sup>

- IAA program began in 1996 with 15 IAAs in 4 IT
- Indigenous communities select IAAs for training
- 198 IAAs have been trained in Acre to date
- IAAs work with 12 indigenous groups in 31 IT, covering 1.7 million ha
- In 2002, IAAs established their own association (AMAAIAC)
- Since 2015, resources from REM support the salaries of 149 IAAs, with continued commitment through 2022. Prior to 2015, IAAs did not receive salaries
- IAAs are currently demanding recognition as extension agents by the state of Acre to secure long-term support

1 Sources: AMAAIAC. 2018a; AMAAIAC. 2018b. Relatório Final do Convênio 001/2014 AMAAIAC/SEMA-FEF. Tomo II- Resultados Alcançados. 2018; Comissão Pró-Índio-Acre.2018.

## INDIGENOUS AGROFORESTRY AGENTS — AGENTS OF CHANGE WITHIN ACRE'S INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

Indigenous Agroforestry Agents (IAAs) have been key actors in facilitating dialogue between indigenous communities, the Acre state government and civil society. What began as a training program for community extension agents has become a platform and catalyst for indigenous peoples' agency in shaping sustainable development within their territories and communities. IAAs bring new information and ideas to communities and facilitate discussion and analysis of these ideas within communities. At the same time, they also bring information regarding the needs, demands and aspirations of indigenous communities to bear on state-level socio-economic, environmental and cultural programs and policies.

*"We Agroforestry Agents are the guardians of the forest—we work to defend our people and our forest and to educate our people about the management of our territories."*

- VANDERLON SHANE HUNI, IAA<sup>19</sup>

The IAA training program was established in 1996 by CPI-Acre, initially training 15 IAAs. The educational approach adopted by CPI-Acre stressed self-determination and authorship by indigenous peoples—not just valuing and using traditional knowledge, but facilitating the critical analysis, adaptation and transformation of this knowledge by indigenous peoples themselves<sup>20</sup>. More than two decades later, there are almost 200 trained IAAs across the state, with 135 currently working with 12 indigenous groups across 31 of the state's 36 IT (BOX 3).

IAAs provide diverse services to indigenous communities. They provide technical assistance on agroforestry systems, recuperation of degraded lands, animal husbandry, beekeeping, integrated pest management and sustainable hunting. They are also environmental educators, integrating traditional knowledge into school curricula and sharing new information on management practices, policies and programs with community members. Working with indigenous professors and community health workers, it is estimated that IAAs reach approximately 60% of indigenous youth. IAAs also work with communities and government authorities to monitor IT borders and strengthen their defense against illegal land invasion and resource extraction, collaborating with the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), Acre's Secretary of the Environment (SEMA) and FUNAI.

IAAs are critical bridges between communities and the institutions and agencies who design the laws which govern them. In the early years of the Forest Government, IAAs played an important role in the participatory processes initiated by Acre's Forest Government, such as the ZEE, ethnomapping/ etnozoneamento and later territorial management planning. Through these processes, IAAs brought information from the communities into land use planning and informed a broader vision of what land use practices and alternatives existed for IT and could be supported by the state. In turn, IAAs facilitated direct participation and consultation of indigenous communities, informed and educated community members about programs and policies, and helped to direct and coordinate support and resources from various government sectors, including health,

19 Quoted in AMAAIAC. 2018a. Relatório Final do Convênio 001/2014 AMAAIAC/SEMA-FEF: TOMO I- Contribuição dos Agentes Agroflorestais Indígena do Acre para o Equilíbrio do Clima.

20 AMAAIAC. 2018a.

education, environment and production, to attend to pre-existing demands within IT<sup>21</sup>. In their role as rural extension agents, educators and liaisons between community and government, IAAs are the new generation of indigenous leaders in Acre. For many IAAs, the training program provided the necessary skills and transformative experiences outside of their communities to engage with broader society on equal terms. For example, for many the training was their first exposure to Portuguese, and where they acquired reading and writing skills. Today, 59 IAAs have completed secondary or technical education, and in addition to their work in their communities, several of these graduates have other professional roles in government and civil society, including as the current Secretary of Indigenous Affairs for the Acre state government<sup>22</sup>.



## IN THEIR VOICES: INDIGENOUS LEADERS DESCRIBE CHANGES IN QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES

We conducted in-depth interviews with seven indigenous leaders from six indigenous groups to better understand the impacts of two decades of dialogue between indigenous peoples and the state government. We highlight some of the key benefits in terms of **quality of life, livelihoods, environment, community organization** and **cultural revitalization**, as expressed by interviewees.

The indigenous leaders interviewed all cited great improvements in **quality of life** within their communities as a result of the various interventions led by the federal and state governments, civil society groups and indigenous associations. A fundamental change cited by all interviewees was improved access to **education** within their communities. Today there are 286 schools in indigenous territories and improved access to those schools with transportation services<sup>23</sup>. Intercultural education initiatives, including the initial work of CPI-Acre and later the IAA program, were seen as fundamental in cultural revitalization as well.

Interviewees also noted improved **health** conditions in

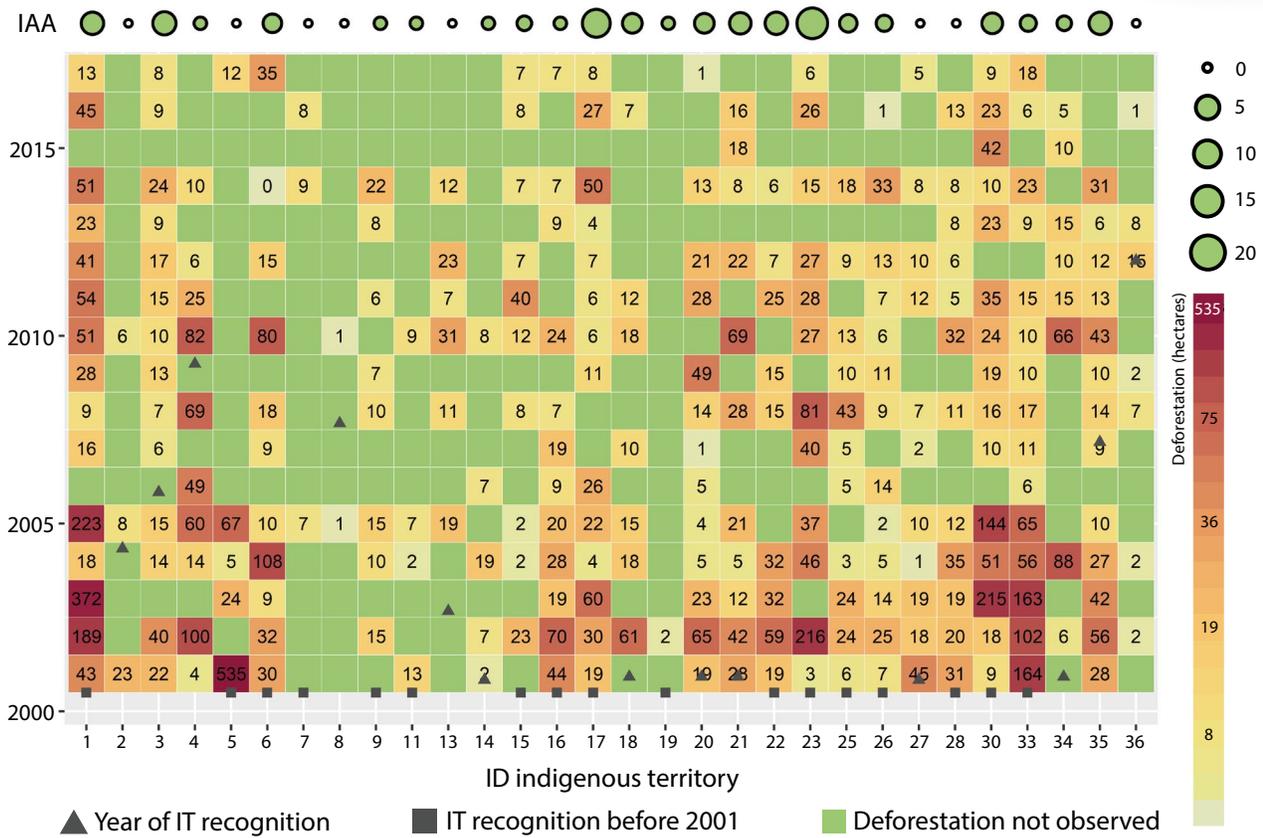
their communities. While forty years ago most indigenous communities lacked access to health services, today indigenous communities have improved access to clinics as well as mobile teams of indigenous health workers who collaborate with IAAs to provide integrated health services to community members. Interviewees noted that the combined efforts of indigenous health workers and IAAs to improve waste management helped to reduce illnesses associated with consumption of contaminated water and mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria.

The implementation of agroforestry systems with support from the IAA program, and state and donor investments to improve production systems, contributed to **increased and diversified agricultural production** in indigenous communities. These agroforestry systems provide healthy food of greater diversity for household consumption and surplus production is directed to markets outside the community. As a result, communities have experienced a range of benefits, from **increases in family incomes** to diversified diets. All seven leaders interviewed reported increased incomes in their communities, noting that prior to 2000 most families earned less than USD \$65 per month, while today family incomes are greater than the average minimum salary of USD \$250 per month. Government support programs and the increase in salaried professionals, such as professors and IAAs, also account for increased incomes. Interviewees also stated that new production systems afforded them greater control over their time, with more time available for family, spiritual and cultural activities.

21 AMAAIAC. 2018a.

22 Personal communication- Francisca Oliveira de Lima (AMAAIAC), Maria Luiza Pinedo Ochoa (CPI-Acre)

23 <http://see.ac.gov.br/educacao-indigena-do-acre-avanca-valorizando-os-povos-amazonicos/>



**FIGURE 3.** Deforestation within Acre's ITs between 2000 and 2017, shown in hectares per IT with information on number of IAAs serving IT and date of IT recognition. Based on PRODES deforestation data and the Protected Areas Monitoring Program.



THE TWENTY-YEAR-OLD PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ACRE, BRAZIL

Preliminary forest cover change analysis in Acre’s IT demonstrate a marked decrease in deforestation between 2000 and 2017 (Figure 3), suggesting that current production systems are supporting the **maintenance of standing forests**, while improving quality of life and incomes, as tracked by qualitative data. This indicates a positive trend, requiring further research on the relationship between program interventions, such as the IAA program, deforestation and well-being, among other variables.

Reflecting on key moments in their communities’ history, many interviewees referenced the decade following the “Time of Enslavement”, the 1990s onward, as an important turning point for **cultural revitalization** and for consolidating **community organization**. In the 2000s, indigenous communities began strengthening their organizational capacity in order to access government and donor programs and improve project administration. According to indigenous leaders, initiatives such as the IAA program and the spaces created for deeper engagement in policy-making (such as the Secretary of Indigenous Affairs and the formation of SISA’s Indigenous Technical Advisory Chamber) were critical to valuing indigenous peoples’ knowledge and reinforcing their role as agents of change within their communities and beyond.

*“Today we see our story as indigenous peoples and as a community in a different way; what made us change was the knowledge acquired through school, training, and while fighting for our rights...and above all the recovery of our mother tongue, our culture, traditions and identity. Today, we value our culture and feel proud to be Indigenous and today we can also talk on an equal basis with whites.”*

- LUCAS SALAS, KAXINAWA, IAA

## LOOKING BACKWARDS TO LOOK AHEAD: LESSONS LEARNED FROM ACRE’S EXPERIENCE

Acre’s two-decades experience fostering partnerships between governments, indigenous peoples and civil society for sustainable development holds important lessons for other tropical forest jurisdictions.

**Recognition—from land rights to cultural and traditional knowledge to political participation—is the foundation of change.** Territorial management and planning, and later initiatives to involve indigenous peoples in policy design, were all built upon the recognition of indigenous peoples as land managers and not just subjects or beneficiaries of the state.

Education and capacity building programs, such as the IAA program, helped to reinforce and value indigenous peoples' cultures, knowledge and agency in decision-making within their communities and broader state-level processes.

*"We indigenous peoples want to be independent, we want to speak for ourselves, and we do not want others to speak for us."*

- FRANCISCA OLIVEIRA DE LIMA, SHAWÁDAWA, TREASURER AMAAIAC AND POLICY ADVISOR TO THE IAA PROGRAM

**Acre's experience underscores the role of subnational governments as important co-designers and facilitators of change.**

The Acre state government demonstrated that while indigenous territories fall under the domain of the Brazilian federal government, subnational governments too can create space for political participation, leverage state policies and programs to attend to constituents' needs, and in doing so, support indigenous peoples' self-determination. At the same time, national governments must work together with subnational governments to tackle persistent threats of land invasion and illegal resource extraction and provide sufficient support to protect IT borders.

**Long-term processes require long-term investments,**

in capacity building, intercultural education, dialogue and finance. Acre's twenty-year process illustrates the importance of sustained investments in processes that may take years, and sometimes decades, to bear fruit. The state government's investments in participatory planning processes were critical in building consensus around land-use planning goals as well as in operationalizing the notion of forest citizenship at the heart of Acre's Forest Government. However, insufficient flow of information, and in some cases mis-information, about SISA has hindered participation and engagement of some stakeholders, underscoring the need for effective and extensive communications strategies. Political insecurity and changes in the state and federal government will test the strength of the state's innovative policy frameworks as well as the institutional memory required within state agencies to provide continuity to the Forest Government's programs.

**Integrating indigenous peoples into decision-making processes requires new forms of governance.**

Building indigenous peoples' participation and representation into state-level decision-making processes has been an experiment in redefining governance arrangements. These processes are still fragile, and demand greater commitments from the state government in terms of transparency with regards to resource distribution, information dissemination and broad representation of Acre's diverse indigenous groups in participatory processes. According to some indigenous leaders interviewed, paternalistic relationships between the state government and indigenous communities still persist. A virtuous cycle of creating and supporting indigenous leadership within communities, through programs such as IAA, may help address this challenge.

**Education and capacity building within indigenous communities are critical in transforming indigenous peoples from subjects of sustainable development to co-authors.**

After decades of debt enslavement by rubber barons and marginalization of indigenous peoples' culture, intercultural educational movements such as Indigenous Professors and IAAs were critical pathways to rebuilding and strengthening traditional knowledge and empowering indigenous leaders. In this context, indigenous peoples may evaluate and use mechanisms such as payments for environmental services and REDD+ as tools to achieve a broader set of goals established by indigenous peoples, and not as ends in and of themselves.

*"You have to start bringing back the spirit of belonging to a collective being, [and] know what you need. If you start to value yourself and do something, then you will find many people, many supporters on your side. So, I think the first step has to be that indigenous peoples value themselves."*

- FRANCISCO PYANKO, ASHANIKA, FORMER SECRETARY OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS TO THE ACRE STATE GOVERNMENT

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