



PROTECT AND DEFEND THE AMAZON



2021-2025 Strategic Plan



AMAZON WATCH





Executive Summary

In honor of Amazon Watch's 25th anniversary, our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan builds upon 25 years of work to protect the Amazon rainforest and defend the rights, lives and territories of Indigenous peoples. We commit to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and a growing global movement calling for urgent action to permanently protect the Amazon, defend the defenders, and advance climate justice.

The Amazon Rainforest at a Tipping Point

The Amazon rainforest is at a 'tipping point,' the point at which the degradation of the ecosystem is irreversible. According to Carlos Nobre and Thomas Lovejoy, members of the Science Panel for the Amazon, "Current deforestation across the Amazon basin is 17% and approaching 20% in the Brazilian Amazon." They estimate that the tipping point will be reached at 20-25% deforestation, not 40% as previously predicted. "This is our last chance for action to protect the Amazon," they warn.

We must take bold and immediate action to shift from a 'tipping point to a turning point! There is no time to waste. The time for global action is now!

Over the next five years Amazon Watch will work towards this critical goal: permanent protection of 80% of the Amazon, including Indigenous territories and protected areas, via solidarity campaigns for demarcation and recognition of ancestral territories. We will advance and amplify Indigenous rights, resistance and solutions to protect and defend the Amazon basin; elevate Indigenous womens' voices and solutions; develop and implement rapid response protocols and campaigns to defend the Earth Defenders of the Amazon; and redirect more than a million dollars per year in solidarity and emergency rapid response funds via our Amazon Defenders Fund (ADF).



Photo ©Midia India

“The Amazon is on fire, putting Indigenous lives, biodiversity, and the global climate at great risk. If we lose the Amazon, we lose the fight against climate change. Indigenous peoples know, and have been saying for quite some time, that everything in this life is interconnected. When you destroy Mother Earth in one place, every part of the world feels this destruction.”

-Sonia Guajajara, Executive Coordinator of the Association of Brazil’s Indigenous Peoples (APIB)

With a growing U.S.-based and international team in Brazil, Peru and Ecuador, we will expand regional and international advocacy and communication campaigns to halt and hold accountable the global drivers of Amazon destruction, including governments, corporations, extractive industries -fossil fuel and agribusiness- and their financial backers. We will work in collaboration with regional and international allies to build a Pan-Amazon and global movement to act for the Amazon, Indigenous rights, and climate justice.

Protect the Amazon and Defend Indigenous Rights: Our Theory of Change

The Amazon River Basin houses the world’s largest and most biodiverse tropical rainforest, covering an area larger than the continental United States, containing one-third of the plant and animal species and producing one-fifth of all flowing fresh-water on Earth. The hydrological system of the Amazon is an integral part of the continental climate system and critical for maintaining global climate stability.

The Amazon is home to over 400 distinct Indigenous peoples including 82 living in voluntary isolation. Indigenous peoples’ territories make up nearly 30% of the Amazon biome and are proven to be the best protected from increasing threats including deforestation, fires, land grabs, illicit activity, resource extraction, and large infrastructure projects. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a public health and humanitarian emergency across the region, disproportionately affecting Indigenous peoples who are protecting the bio-cultural integrity of the Amazon and the global climate.



Photo: ©Arthur Koch

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission

Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with Indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

Vision Statement

We envision a world where the collective rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of nature are respected; where healthy forests, biodiversity, and the global climate are fully protected.

We strive for a movement of global solidarity rooted in interconnectedness and practices of decolonization to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and to permanently protect the Amazon rainforest, a vital organ of the Earth's biosphere, which is perilously close to a tipping point of ecological collapse.

We believe that Indigenous self-determination is a critical component of any successful conservation strategy for the Amazon, and see that Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices are critical to sustainable and equitable stewardship of Mother Earth.

We seek solutions that will lead to the transformation of our economic, financial and political governance systems to ones that are life affirming and regenerative. We commit, in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect, to support Indigenous, forest, and traditional peoples in their efforts to protect life, land, and culture in accordance with their aspirations and needs, by advocating for true solutions that respect the principles of climate justice.



Core Values

Respect – honor diversity and promote respect for Indigenous peoples - including elders, women, youth - and the rights of nature.

Integrity – work honestly, ethically, and accurately in accordance with our vision and mission.

Commitment – to advancing Indigenous rights and territories to ensure the survival of the Amazon in defense of our global climate. We commit to address root causes, threats to the Amazon, and seek systemic solutions, while opposing false solutions.

Collaboration – we commit to work in solidarity with Indigenous and local partners across the Amazon, and be bridge builders with Indigenous peoples and movement allies in the Global North.

Accountability and Justice – we strive for a socially just world and commit to uphold human rights in defense of the Amazon and our global climate.



Decolonization Guidelines and JEDI Goals

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We recognize that the destruction of the Amazon is rooted in historic and perpetual colonization that began with the Spanish and Portuguese, and continues via government and corporate exploitation. The driving factors of colonial, white-supremacist and capitalist ideologies provide the justification for treating Indigenous peoples and their territories as sacrifice zones. As Amazon Watch grows in staff and influence, the organization is adopting new measures and practices to actively work for decolonization - both interpersonally among staff, team, and partners - and institutionally with hiring, fundraising, organizational relationships, strategies and campaigns. Amazon Watch commits to these critical decolonization guidelines and justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) goals:

Decolonization Guidelines

- Shift power to frontline communities
- Lift up Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous systems thinking
- Build equitable relationships
- Practice humility and integrate lessons learned
- Engage in clear and transparent communication
- Be accountable to harm

JEDI Goals

- Staff diversity at every level and on every team of the organization
- Commitment to ongoing learning and transformation
- Institutional implementation and active practice of JEDI objectives
- Multi-lingual accessibility
- A culture of self and collective care
- Equitable timelines and expectations
- Skills and systems for constructive feedback and generative conflict



Critical Strategies and Implementation

Photo: © Bruno Kelly/Amazonia Real

Stop Amazon Destruction

Amazon Watch resists destruction of the Amazon rainforest, which is perilously close to reaching a tipping point of ecological collapse, by challenging and bringing global media attention to government, corporate and financial actors complicit in deforestation, resource extraction, land grabs, rights abuses, and disastrous development projects.

Amplify Indigenous-led Solutions

Amazon Watch amplifies the voices, stories and solutions of Indigenous peoples to uphold rights, lives and territories. Amazon Watch uplifts and invests in Indigenous-led solutions for forest conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and regenerative, local economies.

Advance Climate Justice

Amazon Watch centers the voices and solutions of Indigenous peoples into policies that address the global climate crisis. Amazon Watch advocates for principled climate action that includes proposals and solutions from communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis –especially Indigenous peoples and people of color– who have historically been excluded due to systemic racism and economic oppression.

Methodology, Implementation, and Evaluation

To ensure the most effective strategic plan, Amazon Watch undertook a thorough and comprehensive planning process which began with an internal evaluation of our 2016-2020 plan by staff and the Board of Directors who then formed a strategic planning committee. We worked with outside consultants to survey Amazonian partners, NGO allies, funders, staff, and international team members in six countries.

Over the course of nine months, our consultants facilitated a staff-board strategic planning retreat, committee meetings, visioning sessions, decolonization sessions with the leadership team and staff, and worked with the committee to draft the plan which was adopted by the Board of Directors in November 2020. Implementation of this plan began in January 2021. Evaluation will be ongoing throughout the year at bi-monthly all team meetings, quarterly board meetings, and during the annual work-planning process.



2021-2025 Strategic Goals and Objectives

Protect and Defend the Amazon

Building on 25 years of work to protect and defend the Amazon, Amazon Watch commits to working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and in coordination with a growing global movement to address the current and multiple threats and crises facing the Amazon Basin by generating widespread support for Indigenous-led solutions and for climate justice.

Specifically, we will:

1. Advance and amplify Indigenous rights, resistance and solutions to protect and defend the Amazon Basin.
2. Develop and implement rapid response protocols and campaigns to defend Earth Defenders of the Amazon.
3. Expand international advocacy campaigns to halt and hold accountable the global drivers of Amazon destruction.
4. Support movement building for Pan-Amazon protection.
5. Amplify a global narrative of the integral role of the Amazon rainforest and respect for Indigenous rights to advance climate justice.
6. Deepen engagement and broaden base of donors to support mission fulfillment.
7. Increase and strengthen internal capacity to support team well-being and the successful delivery of the strategic plan.



1. ADVANCE AND AMPLIFY INDIGENOUS RIGHTS, RESISTANCE, AND SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT AND DEFEND THE AMAZON BASIN

1.1 Respect and uphold collective rights and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples

- » In solidarity and in collaboration with Indigenous partners, advocate for respect and recognition of the collective rights; demarcation of ancestral territories; sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples in accordance with national laws and international agreements, including ILO 169 and UNDRIP (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).
- » Practice and promote implementation of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) with and for Indigenous Peoples.
- » Ensure Indigenous voices are respected and amplified at local, national and international spaces and forums, especially where decisions are being made.
- » Support leadership development and solutions of Indigenous women and youth.

1.2 Promote Indigenous solutions, lifeplans and governance

- » Promote holistic frameworks of land stewardship, governance, local economies, justice and equity, such as Sumak Kawsay/Buen Vivir, which means “Living Well!”
- » Support and invest in Indigenous-led regional and regenerative local economies and livelihoods, life plans, including revitalization of collective social structures and Indigenous traditional knowledge, reforestation, energy and transportation alternatives, ecosystem restoration and agroforestry projects.
- » Provide solar energy, communications systems, and training to frontline Indigenous communities through the Power to Protectors Program.

1.3 Support resistance in defense to increased government and corporate assaults on Indigenous rights and territories

- » In close coordination with Indigenous and local partners, confront government and corporate attacks on the rights and territories of Indigenous peoples via local, regional and international avenues, including advocacy, communications and legal strategies.
- » Demand renewed commitments to improve socio-environmental governance and policies that prohibit doing business with local actors behind Amazon destruction and human rights abuses.

1.4 Increase solidarity funds and emergency rapid response for Indigenous partners

- » Via Amazon Defenders Fund, provide solidarity funds to Indigenous and local partners for emergency, short and long-term needs, including: general support, capacity building, meetings and mobilizations, communications and storytelling, travel, legal defense, territorial mapping and demarcation, development of life plans, women's economic initiatives, and direct threats to Indigenous leaders.
- » In response to unforeseen emergencies caused by climate change (including fires, floods and droughts), pandemics, political unrest and other unexpected threats, work closely with Indigenous partners to identify needs, provide solidarity funds.

1.5 Elevate Indigenous womens' voices and solutions

- » Support and uplift Indigenous Amazon womens' leadership and participation in mobilizations and direct calls for support to protect rights, lives and territories, including Women Defenders of the Amazon Against Extraction (Mujeres Amazónicas) in Ecuador to promote and implement demands articulated in the 2018 presidential mandate.
- » Coordinate closely with Indigenous women leaders and organizations to support economic empowerment projects for Indigenous women and their communities.
- » Support the growth of a Pan-Amazon wide Indigenous Womens' Movement in coordination with close partners at APIB (Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil), Women Defenders of the Amazon Against Extraction, COICA (Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin) and international networks of Indigenous Women of the Americas.
- » Expand participation and roles for Indigenous women at Amazon Watch and work together to build a Women Defenders Program.



2. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT RAPID RESPONSE PROTOCOLS AND CAMPAIGNS TO DEFEND EARTH DEFENDERS

2.1 Support Earth Defenders in defending themselves from violence, repression, and neglect

- » Improve and implement Amazon Watch protocols, policy, and mechanisms to defend the defenders.
- » Support development of rapid response protocols, including protection and security plans, for local partners under threat.
- » Via Amazon Defenders Fund, provide strategic grants to support Earth Defenders in seeking justice for threats and attacks against them.
- » Coordinate rapid response with ally NGO and donor allies to mobilize resources and advocacy.
- » Disseminate stories of rising criminality and violence of authoritarian governments, corporations, and financial actors.
- » Campaign to ensure justice for those whose rights and well-being are violated by governments and corporations in the Amazon.

2.2 Support increased legal capacity and accompaniment

- » Expand capacity to pursue regional and international legal strategies and accompany Earth Defenders.
- » Support regional human rights lawyers, in coordination with Indigenous and NGO allies, to monitor and advance critical cases for territorial recognition, demarcation, and the defense of Earth Defenders.
- » Provide analysis and documentation of rights violations and social, environmental, and cultural impacts associated with destructive governmental or private sector practices for litigation at local, regional, and international levels.
- » Coordinate with NGO allies and networks of lawyers coordinating cases for human rights and the rights of nature.
- » Support capacity of Indigenous Peoples to become lawyers for their communities and movement via Amazon Defenders Fund.



3. EXPAND INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS TO HALT AND HOLD ACCOUNTABLE THE GLOBAL DRIVERS OF AMAZON DESTRUCTION

3.1 Campaign to end industrial extraction that causes Amazon destruction

- » Stigmatize industrial extractive activities in the Amazon and link corporate and commodity campaigns, demands, and messaging with demands for Amazon-wide protection, defense of human rights and climate justice.
- » Continue campaigning to keep fossil fuels in the ground in the Amazon in solidarity with Indigenous and frontline community partners, and in coordination with NGO allies and networks aligned with global calls for warming not to exceed 1.5C.
- » Advocate for an end to new expansion and exploration of fossil fuels and the managed decline of existing operations in the Amazon.
- » Campaign for zero deforestation of the Amazon.
- » Engage US and EU policy makers in support of human rights and environmental defense of the Amazon rainforest.
- » Advocate for remediation and justice for past harms and fossil fuel legacy issues.

3.2 Campaign to dismantle the financial flows that bankroll Amazon destruction

- » Expose the links between financial actors, companies, and governments contributing to Amazon destruction and human rights violations.
- » Campaign for no new investments in Amazon destruction. Ensure that major financial firms drastically curtail investments in fossil fuels and deforestation-causing commodities.
- » Engage US policy makers in support of regulatory changes for the financial industry's role in driving climate change and forest destruction.



4. SUPPORT MOVEMENT BUILDING FOR PAN-AMAZON PROTECTION

4.1 Develop and strengthen Amazon-wide Initiatives

- » Participate in global campaigns to permanently protect the Amazon and its subregions from reaching an irreversible tipping point.
- » Collaborate and participate in Pan-Amazon and international alliances, coalitions and movements to protect, defend and restore the Amazon through virtual tools, platforms, and convenings.

4.2 Strengthen global solidarity and engagement in climate justice networks

- » Promote Indigenous leadership within climate justice movements.
- » Engage allies in the climate and climate justice movement to support advocacy efforts to protect the Amazon, defend Indigenous rights, keep fossil fuels in the ground, and stop commodity-driven deforestation.
- » Expand collaboration with and support for Amazonian peoples and communities with intersectional identities, for example women, LGBTQ+ people, non-Indigenous forest peoples, and more.



5. AMPLIFY A GLOBAL NARRATIVE OF THE INTEGRAL ROLE OF THE AMAZON RAINFOREST AND RESPECT FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS TO ADVANCE CLIMATE JUSTICE

5.1 Increase communication and digital capacity of the organization

- » Improve and expand tools and communications platforms for more digital organizing, participation, and collaboration with partners through increased staff capacity.
- » Increase documentation and reporting of on the ground realities with expanded field capacity.
- » Increase in-house video production and publications.
- » Ensure multiple language access and create more multilingual materials in strategic communications.

5.2 Elevate Indigenous voices, resistance, victories, solution and stories

- » Amplify Indigenous women and youth leaders on the front lines of resistance, solutions, and calls for climate justice.
- » Build capacity for Indigenous storytelling and collaboration through equipment and training.
- » Create more media platforms for Indigenous voices, stories, and reporting including live stream conversations and partner videos on website.

5.3 Shape global narrative and understanding of Amazon's critical role in climate protection and justice

- » Collect and amplify timetable of tipping points in the Amazon, steps to prevent collapse, Indigenous-led data monitoring, reporting, and scientific analysis of threats.
- » Challenge false solutions proposed by governments, international bodies, and corporations.
- » Encourage prominent voices and thought leaders to share Amazon Watch's vision to ensure maximum public engagement.



6. DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT AND BROADEN BASE OF DONORS TO SUPPORT MISSION FULFILLMENT

6.1 Raise philanthropic funding

- » Raise critical funds via individual gifts, monthly donors, online contributions, foundation partners, and business sponsors.
- » Increase online donations to achieve mission fulfillment.
- » Move towards mission fulfillment and away from restricted funding.
- » Create meaningful and impactful engagement for donors to understand the breadth and depth of their philanthropic giving.

6.2 Expand donor education

- » Expand donor awareness about the true realities facing the Amazon and its peoples via monthly communications, webinars, and meetings.
- » Ensure donors understand the true impact of their giving to Amazon Watch and Amazon Defenders Fund.
- » Increase partner storytelling for donors in coordination with program and communications teams.
- » Invite new and current donors to join in movement building for the Amazon.
- » Invite donors to join field visits and gatherings in the Amazon (post-pandemic).

6.3 Decolonize philanthropic practices

- » Provide donor education supporting decolonized philanthropy at Amazon Watch and in the global movement for racial and climate justice.
- » Invite supporters to contribute to Amazon's Watch's mission fulfillment vs. restricting contributions.
- » Encourage funders to support Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and women-led Initiatives of Amazon Watch and our partners.
- » Promote solidarity funds via Amazon Defenders Fund.
- » Share resources and relationships with Indigenous and movement partners to ensure equitable distribution of resources.
- » Review internal practices to ensure that the Development and Philanthropy Team is empowered to practice and implement decolonization guidelines with donors.



7.1 Support current staff and increase team capacity

- » Review and improve staff salaries and benefits annually.
- » Support internal leadership and professional development annually.
- » Prioritize diversity (BIPOC, women and gender non-binary) in hiring new staff and field team members.
- » Broaden team expertise in science Amazon-wide and global diplomacy, data monitoring and communications.
- » Improve on-the-ground infrastructure and expand field team to include more Indigenous, communications and legal capacity.
- » Develop paid Indigenous youth fellowship program.

7.2 Develop and incorporate Decolonization Guidelines and and Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) objectives into all aspects of work

- » Refine and determine how to operationalize Decolonization Guidelines and JEDI objectives in work plans, communications, internal practices, campaigns, and partnerships.
- » Engage staff, team and board in decolonization and JEDI trainings to ensure shared understanding and application.

7.3 Improve internal culture, systems, and structures

- » Hire HR Director with equity and decolonization expertise.
- » Improve welcome and orientation for new staff and team members.
- » Review and update organizational decision-making structure as needed.
- » Develop clearly defined and coordinated communication systems and processes across departments, teams, and programs.
- » Improve and ensure internal accountability procedures.
- » Establish clear protocols to ensure legal protection, physical and digital safety of staff and organization, with particular attention to the needs of field team members.
- » Institutionalize a wellness fund to implement mental and emotional health support plans.
- » Engage in ongoing relational processes to improve trust, communication, and respect across programs and departments.

7.4 Increase diversity and capacity of the Board of Directors

- » Prioritize recruitment of more women, youth, and Indigenous representation on the Board.
- » Support retention of new Board members, particularly youth and Indigenous, by enhancing the onboarding process and reviewing the Board Welcome Packet.
- » Formally develop and activate the Advisory Board and Indigenous Advisors/Council.

Organizational Snapshot of AMAZON WATCH in 2025

Over the next five years, Amazon Watch will build upon our 25 years of work to protect and defend the Amazon in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples resulting in the following bold and ambitious goals:

1. Permanent protection of 80% of the Amazon rainforest, including demarcation of Indigenous territories and expansion of protected areas.
2. Pan Amazon and global movement influence grows to advance calls and campaigns for permanent protection of the Amazon, Indigenous rights, and climate justice.
3. No new investments in Amazon destruction and ensure that major financial firms drastically curtail investments in fossil fuels and deforestation-causing commodities.
4. Rapid response protocols and campaigns to defend Earth Defenders of the Amazon developed and implemented.
5. Women Defenders Program launched and expanded across the Amazon.
6. Redirect \$1 million+ per year in solidarity and emergency rapid response funds via Amazon Defenders Fund (ADF).
7. Raise over \$5 million per year to sustain work and team of 35+ people by 2025.
8. Field teams, including campaigners, communicators, lawyers in all of the countries where we work.
9. Increased communication and digital capacity of Amazon Watch and our partners.
10. Grow online constituency to over 1 million globally.
11. Decolonization guidelines and JEDI goals implemented across the organization.
12. More representation of Indigenous and women of color at all levels of the organization.



Protecting the rainforest and our climate
by supporting Indigenous peoples

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