



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

Photo: ©Beka Munduruku

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.

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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