



AMAZONIA AGAINST THE CLOCK:

A REGIONAL ASSESSMENT ON WHERE AND HOW TO PROTECT 80% BY 2025



This report has been prepared with the support of the coalition of the Initiative "Amazonia for Life: Protect 80% by 2025": AVAAZ, Wild Heritage, One Earth, and Amazon Watch.

Investigative research conducted by the Red Amazónica de Información Socioambiental Georreferenciada (RAISG) within the framework of the Initiative “Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025” and coordinating organizations COICA and Stand.earth.



**AMAZONIA
FOR LIFE:
PROTECT
80% BY
2025**
AVERTING THE TIPPING POINT

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Foto: [Gregorio Mirabal](#)
General Coordinator
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To world leaders,

For millennia, through ancestral practices and knowledge, the Amazonian indigenous peoples and nationalities have protected our forest and all the life that nests in its trees and that flows through the rivers of the largest basin on the planet.

People refer to our home as the "lungs of the world" but what climate change has pushed us all to realize is that it is in fact, the "heart" of planet Earth.

Understanding the planet as a living organ allows us to find similarities to explain the destruction from the simplest image of a human body with diseases that have entered a metastasis phase or, at a planet level, in a climate crisis.

From an ecological perspective, the Amazonia is crossing a dangerous tipping point: if deforestation and degradation continues at the current pace, the Amazonia will die as we know it today and will rapidly change from a tropical rainforest into a savannah, releasing enough carbon emissions to wreck our planet's climate stability, and undermining international efforts to keep us under 1.5°C temperature rise.

Make no mistake: reaching the point of no return is the result of continuous and systematic wrong political decisions and omissions, made over the last decades. The data we present confirm the role of states in the proliferation of drivers of deforestation throughout the region. In the coming weeks and months, governments around the world will decide on the environmental policies that will govern the next decade and, incredible as it may seem, the Amazon is not listed as a priority in these negotiations.

We all have a shared responsibility in bringing on this crisis. The fashion industry benefits from the leather produced in Brazil; European and American banks finance the crude oil from the Amazon so that it is then consumed mainly in California; soybeans, beef and other basic products to feed humanity are desertifying the Amazon rainforest, while mining poisons the rivers where we bathe, from which we feed

ourselves and which are our source of life. More than 500 indigenous peoples face these risks, and some are disappearing.

Every step of this year's environmental negotiations is an opportunity for the world's governments to come forward with real ambition: Stockholm+50, the CBD talks, UNFCCC and other spaces. Our hope is that political decision makers listen to science, indigenous knowledge systems and ancient wisdom to ensure the survival of humanity. Without the Amazon, life on Earth staggers. It is upon their honesty to define our future.

Since 1992, states gathered in the United Nations Convention, joined efforts to mitigate climate change. It is not enough. The Amazon Indigenous Peoples bring an immediate mitigation measure proposal to global negotiations. Indigenous Territories can change the current trend.

Up until now, global policies have ignored the role our worldview and culture play in conserving nature and biodiversity. By making our efforts invisible, the States and the international financial system do not take our territories into account. This set of data that we offer to political decision makers shows that indigenous territories are as efficient, or even more, than protected areas. In exchange, the extractive industries arrive in our territories with "legal" concessions granted by the States themselves without our free, prior and informed consent. In the process we are silenced by omission and violence.

In this report, produced in partnership by RAISG, Stand.earth, and COICA, with the support of several ally organizations¹, we offer breakthrough data describing the current state of the Amazonia. We have measured in detail where the destruction and degradation has occurred but most importantly, we have identified where are the key priority areas that can save the Amazonia.

We cannot afford to lose another hectare of forest. We know that intact ecosystems and low degradation areas represent 74% of the Amazon and that we can still restore 6% to achieve the protection of 80% of the region and revert the tipping point. This goal is not ambitious, but rather the minimum we need for this mega-ecosystem to survive.

Key Priority Areas are found in indigenous territories, protected areas, and undesignated lands. This is not an open stage, this is the time for us all to work in unity and in unison. We urge the international community to fully recognize the rights of indigenous peoples as a first step towards achieving this goal, which is not just for us, but for all of humanity. We have the power to stop the end of the world.

With determination,

Gregorio Mirabal
General Coordinator
Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA)

¹ AVAAZ, Wild Heritage, One Earth and Amazon Watch.

Executive Summary

The Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), together with its national branch organizations in the 9 Amazon countries, representing more than 500 indigenous peoples, , in collaboration with a coalition of allies², launched the “Amazonia for Life: Protect 80% by 2025” in September 2021, in the midst of the Covid 19 global pandemic. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Congress, in Marseille, France, was the stage to present this global call to avoid the tipping point in the Amazon . The international community welcomed it with the votes of 32 countries and 541 non-governmental organizations in [Resolution 129](#)³.



Voting on Emergency Motion 129 at IUCN
Marseille, France, September 10, 2021.

The ambition currently proposed in the global goals that are being negotiated in various forums do not respond to the current state of the Amazonian ecosystems and other eight ecosystems⁴ where a changing climate could push them into a tipping point⁵. Furthermore, the time horizon (2030) under discussion, ignores the proximity of the region to an irreversible state where the current level of degradation and deforestation prevents restoration processes, accelerating its savannization.

The Amazon is home to 5 of the 17 megadiverse countries⁶, that is, a third of the countries whose borders contain the greatest wealth of biodiversity in the world⁷. To qualify as a megadiverse country, a country must have at least 5,000 of the world's plant species as endemic (Mittermeier et al. 2003). In addition, it is the largest river basin in the world and contains 20% of the world's fresh water. It is the most biodiverse habitat in the world (UNEP 2012, 14 cited in UNEP-WCMC 2016).

The loss of Amazonian ecosystems impacts the planet and all forms of life and, in an inverse relationship, climate change affects the ways of life of indigenous peoples, their cultural and linguistic diversity, health and food security⁸, and threatens to make up to 1 million species extinct⁹. Expanding indigenous rights and territories is a global imperative that can mitigate the climate and biodiversity crisis as 80%

² Stand.earth (Co-Coordinator with COICA), AVAAZ, RAISG, Wild Heritage, and Amazon Watch.

³ Avoid the point of no return in the Amazon protecting 80% by 2025.

⁴ Boreal Forest Shift, West Antarctic ice sheet disintegration, West African monsoon shift, Permafrost loss, Greenland ice sheet disintegration, Boreal forest shift, Atlantic meridional overturning circulation breakdown, and Indian monsoon shift; in McSweeney, R. (Ed.). 2020.

⁵ The IPCC AR4 adopted for the first time a definition of a “tipping point”, given the evolution of the concept in the IPCC, this report adopts the definition in the IPCC (2019) which defines the tipping point as when achieving “irreversibility – such as degradation of ecosystems that cannot be restored to their original baseline”.

⁶ Madagascar, República Democrática del Congo, Sudáfrica, China, Filipinas, India, Indonesia, Malasia, Australia, Papúa Nueva Guinea, Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Estados Unidos, México, Perú y Venezuela.

⁷ “The World's 17 Megadiverse Countries.” World Atlas

⁸ IPCC 2022, TS.B.7.2.

⁹ IPBES 2019.

of the world's remaining biodiversity is on Indigenous homelands¹⁰. The international and national climate and biodiversity frameworks have systematically omitted the role of indigenous peoples, the knowledge systems that build their worldview and their values¹¹, preventing humanity from informing policy with ancient practices to combat climate change.

The lack of recognition of the self-governing structures of the indigenous and local communities in the territory is the fundamental cause of the conflict and violence in the Amazonia . Between 2015 and the first half of 2019, 232 indigenous community leaders were killed in the region due to disputes over land and natural resources (cited in CEPAL-FILAC 2020, 143). In 2020, this trend continued¹². In 2021, a third of all violations recorded in the Americas were against defenders of environmental, territorial, and indigenous peoples' rights¹³. Currently, and given the alarming situation of violence in the region, the European Parliament¹⁴ has adopted a resolution in July 2022, condemning the human rights policies of the Brazilian president and denouncing the growing violence against human rights defenders, indigenous people, minorities and journalists in Brazil, including the murder of Dom Philips and Bruno Pereira.



“La mitad de los casos de muertes de defensores ambientales registrados a nivel global, son de Colombia. Las cifras de deforestación en nuestros territorios crecen al igual que los asesinatos a los defensores y defensoras indígenas que protegen los territorios de las amenazas generadas por el extractivismo. Lamentablemente, estos casos quedan en la impunidad, frente al silencio cómplice de los gobiernos y la falta de un sistema jurídico que los proteja. La falta de información, vuelve opaco el número real de quienes pierden hasta su vida por proteger sus territorios. Nos negamos a ser falsos positivos en una guerra que tiene al país sumido en violencia por una causa en común: un sistema de inequidad basado en el extractivismo. La Iniciativa “Amazonía por la Vida: protejamos 80% al 2025” es una medida urgente propuesta por los pueblos indígenas en honor a los que no están y a los que quedamos, y, para frenar la muerte de nuestras familias.”

Julio César López Jamioy

Coordinator

Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana -OPIAC
Colombia

In this context, a horizon of 2030 could be catastrophic for the largest continuous forest on the planet and for more than 500 distinct indigenous nationalities and groups that inhabit it, and for humanity. The impacts of climate change affect everyone, but some groups such as indigenous peoples, are more vulnerable¹⁵. The path for a just transition in the Amazon must be led by those who conserve it without receiving a penny from national budgets and who, through their knowledge of millennia, know its deepest secrets to keep it standing. It is essential that global and national policies recognize the role of

¹⁰ IPCC 2022, TS.B.1.6.

¹¹ IPBES 2022, 3.

¹² Front Line Defenders 2020.

¹³ Front Line Defenders 2021.

¹⁴ European Union 2022.

¹⁵ IPCC 2022, TS.B.3.5, TS.B.4.1, TS.B.4.3.

indigenous peoples and territories in the preservation of the most sensitive ecosystems on the planet as protagonists of the solutions to the current climate crisis.

This research, developed since 2021 by the **Amazonian Network of Georeferenced Socio-environmental Information (RAISG)** within the framework of the Initiative “Amazonia for Life: Protect 80% by 2025” with data from 1985 to 2020, yields a set of findings whose objective is to inform and guide global and national policy to achieve the protection of at least 80% of the Amazon by 2025. This report presents the main results based on updated information up to 2020 to provide a regional baseline that will allow transparent measurement of progress of this proposal. A detailed analysis at the national level will complement this analysis.

This report consists of six sections. The first presents a regional perspective with concise results of the current status of the Key Priority Areas in the Amazon, which have been defined by three criteria: according to the **Functionality and services of the ecosystems**, defined by the capacity of ecological processes to provide services that generate human well-being (De Groot 1992); for its **Ecological Representativeness**, that is, areas that concentrate greater wealth of biodiversity of species, for its heterogeneity and ecosystemic singularity and, the third criterion is the **Symptoms and changes** of the ecosystems in terms of the transformation occurred by deforestation and the change of land use, adding the degradation measured according to carbon loss, deforestation and land use change between 1985 and 2020.

The second section presents key biodiversity data that needs to be considered in a year where the negotiations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have resumed after the pandemic. In December 2022, the final text of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will be defined, which will guide the global and national policy of the international community for the next decade. Biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and indigenous knowledge systems are intrinsically linked and require comprehensive analysis.

The third section of the report is a comparison of the current territorial management regimes: protected areas, indigenous territories and what remains outside these areas that add up to 48% of the Amazon. The goal is to measure performance in each governance model and define priority actions and concrete solutions based on the report's findings.

The last part presents the drivers of destruction that are present in the Amazon: roads, hydroelectric plants, oil blocks, legal and illegal mining, and debt. The latter is understood as a systemic driver that promotes extractive activities throughout the region. The report closes with the call of the indigenous peoples that summarize the policy options described in the document.

Key Statistics and Facts ([Headlines doc here](#))

Our data shows that the protection of 80% of the Amazon is necessary and possible, but above all, urgent. If the current trend of deforestation continues, the Amazon as we know it today would not reach 2025. This report presents ten compelling conclusions resulting from the comparison of the status of the Priority Areas by territorial management regimes: protected areas, indigenous territories and undesignated areas. It also proposes a comparison by country.

1. **The Amazonia is in the midst of a tipping point crisis as deforestation and high degradation combined have already reached 26% of the region.** The scientific work available so far establishes that the tipping point in the Amazon occurs once combined deforestation and

degradation cross the 20-25 percent threshold (Lovejoy and Nobre 2019). However, it is essential to emphasize that the authors were referring to the eastern, southern and central Amazon and not to the entire region described in this document, which covers **847 million hectares**. The information that we make available to the public in this study establishes that **the tipping point is not a future scenario but rather a stage already present in some areas of the region. Brazil and Bolivia concentrate 90% of all combined deforestation and degradation. As a result, savannization is already taking place in both countries.**

2. **Preserving 80% of the Amazon by 2025 is still possible, 2030 presents a challenge given the current state of the region.** This goal [80%] **requires urgent measures to safeguard the remaining 74% (629 million hectares) of the Amazon that are Intact Key Priority Areas¹⁶ (33%) and with Low Degradation (41%).** Likewise, the **restoration of 6%** (54 million hectares) of land with high degradation is vital to stop the current trend.
3. **Indigenous peoples safeguard the remaining 80 percent of the world's biodiversity¹⁷. The Amazonia is megadiversity: it is the habitat with the greatest biodiversity in the world¹⁸, hosting 5 of the 17 megadiverse countries¹⁹ on the planet. Four²⁰ of the 36 existing hotspots on the planet are located in the region. The preservation of these hotspots has been primarily thanks to the knowledge systems of the indigenous peoples who inhabit them. Around **137 living species are driven into extinction each day in the Amazonia** due to habitat loss (Müller in IPOL EU 2020, 13).**
4. This report offers a comparison between existing territorial management regimes. **Protected Areas (PA) and Indigenous Territories (IT) are vital to protect the Amazonia. Between both regimes (PA and IT), about half (48%) of the Amazon is covered; however, the other half (52%) are undesignated areas that are in danger of disappearing and without which it is impossible to avert the tipping point. Most of the deforestation (86%) took place outside national PA and IT.**
5. **255 million hectares of intact areas and Key Priority Areas with low degradation have not been titled to indigenous peoples or designated as protected areas and are at imminent risk. The undesignated areas register the greatest transformation (33%) and high degradation (10%) being six times more the transformation registered in the PAs and more than eight times that of the IT.**
6. **Indigenous Territories do not have budget allocations from their governments and yet, they have equal or higher levels of conservation than the protected areas** even when these overlap with the IT. This is mainly due to the worldview of more than 500 distinct indigenous peoples who have inhabited the Amazon for millennia.
7. **The overlapping of two regimes (IT and AP) does not result in substantially higher levels of ecosystem integrity.** On the contrary, **creating PA over IT can weaken indigenous governance models in the territory and, consequently, deteriorate the conservation of ecosystems but, in some cases, can even result in violence.** The Initiative's approach is a collaborative and inclusive governance model to achieve the design and implementation of sustainable alternatives such as those proposed by the Durban Accord in 2003 and more recently by IPBES (2022).

¹⁶ We define Key Priority Areas to those areas with very high functionality, connectivity and representativeness of biodiversity (see Methodology)

¹⁷ Banco Mundial; IPCC 2022.

¹⁸ UNEP 2012, 14 citado en UNEP-WCMC 2016.

¹⁹ Madagascar, República Democrática del Congo, Sudáfrica, China, Filipinas, India, Indonesia, Malasia, Australia, Papúa Nueva Guinea, Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Estados Unidos, México, Perú y Venezuela.

²⁰ Two in Brazil: Mata Atlântica and Cerrado, and two in the Andes: Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena and the Tropical Andes.

8. There are around **100 million hectares of IT in dispute, or in the process of identification, or declared, that require immediate recognition** and titling to stop the degradation rates already present within the IT.
9. **Indigenous territories are not intended to join the conversation as an additional category or other conservation measures or mechanisms (OMEC).** IT pre-exist national states and responds to their own social, economic, cultural and political structure, while OMEC can be created and their management can be defined privately or publicly. Recognizing the cultural heritage on which the integrity of ecosystems is based is a differentiating factor to face the climate crisis that must be integrated into conservation policies.
10. **66% of the Amazon is subject to some type of fixed or permanent pressure.** Where there is a strong state presence, there are threats and pressures recognized by States that represent "legal" drivers. Where the State presence is weak, "illegal" drivers are present. IT and PA are not exempt from this reality. Oil blocks, hydroelectric plants and mines are planned throughout the Amazon. **Current legal frameworks create conditions for states to grant licenses in intact forests or ITs without the free, prior and informed consent of the populations that inhabit the region.**



"The Amerindian Act of 2006 the law for indigenous peoples in Guyana is deficient, It does not guarantee our rights. On one hand, it is flexible for the exploitation of minerals in ancestral territories under the pretext of "Public Interest", and on the other hand, it does not recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in that we do not have all of our territories demarcated, causing the government of the day to continue granting concessions to Miners both local and multinational companies for the extraction of gold and diamonds, generating irreparable environmental and cultural damage. Indigenous peoples have fulfilled our role of living in harmony for millennia, in reciprocity and symbiosis, thus protecting the forests, rivers and animals, but we cannot continue to do so without the effective recognition of our collective and territorial rights."

Michael Mc Garrell

Coordinador de Derechos Humanos y Políticas de COICA
Guyana

11. The restorative capacity of the Amazon is running out. An immediate transition is necessary. The industries that occupy the Amazon do not have the free, prior and informed consent of the populations that inhabit the region.
 - a. **The areas dedicated to agricultural activity have tripled since 1985. The sector is responsible for 84% of Amazonian deforestation.** Invasions as well as fires, are directly related to the expansion of the agricultural frontier. PAs and ITs were not exempt from the problem. **The expansion of the agricultural frontier grew within the PA 220% between 2001-2018 and in the IT it grew by 160% in this same time period²¹.** In both cases, forest was replaced. **The cattle industry is the biggest driver of deforestation in the Amazonia. Deforestation caused by cattle ranching in the Amazon rainforest accounts for nearly 2% of global CO2 emissions annually.**

²¹ RAISG 2020.

- b. **Mining is present in all the countries of the Amazon, affecting 17% of the region. 9.3% of all mining activity is located in PA and an additional 9% in IT. 85% of the mining activity in IT occurs in already recognized IT.** Currently, half of the mining areas in AP and 68% of those present in TI are in the application phase, which means that they could be reversed. **Illegal mining that lacks registration is expanding throughout the basin.**
- c. **Oil blocks occupy 9.4% of the surface of the Amazon (80 million hectares). 43% of the oil blocks are located in protected areas and indigenous territories.** 89% of the crude oil exported from the Amazonia comes from Ecuador²² and its main destination is the US. More than half (52%) of the Ecuadorian Amazon is an oil block, 31% in Peru, 29% in Bolivia and 28% in Colombia.
- d. Currently, there are **eleven major road projects that are expected to enter the most remote Amazonia** in the near future and that represent a serious threat to the integrity of the intact forest.
- e. Of the 350 hydroelectric plants (CH) that operate in the basin, **483 are projected for future build-out, adding up to a total of 833 potential hydroelectric plants.** The construction of hydroelectric projects **alters the free flow of more than 1,100 tributaries** that make up the Amazon basin.
- f. **Debt:** Debt must be understood as a systemic problem that intertwines all the activities of the countries of the South and the North. Debt is one of the structural causes of the destruction of the Amazon and other vital ecosystems for humanity. Latin America is the most indebted emerging region on the planet. This result of the pandemic shock adds to five decades with at least 50 sovereign debt crises and sovereign debt restructurings²³. According to data from ECLAC (2021), the gross debt of governments averages 78% of regional GDP. Total debt service alone represents 59% of its exports of goods and services. The measures that have been taken have been palliative and insufficient and the frameworks for action are on the way to obsolescence.

The current frameworks for debt and Official Development Assistance (ODA) whose emphasis is on the poorest nations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 28 of the 33 countries are considered to be in the middle income category and, therefore, do not qualify for low-interest loans for which the poorest countries are eligible, nor are they eligible for ODA .

The proposal of the Initiative "Amazonia for life: let's protect 80% by 2025" is a conditioned debt forgiveness. This innovative approach is pillared with debt as a mechanism to protect key priority areas in the Amazon rather than continue to fuel destruction. As mentioned in point 9 of the Declaration of the indigenous peoples, this proposal presents a unique opportunity for debtor and creditor nations, international financial institutions, and private equity firms that own the debt of the Amazonian nations to actively support the ambition to avert the tipping point by protecting 80% of the Amazonia. The *quid pro quo* is to forgive existing debt in exchange for commitments to end industrial extraction and promote protections in key priority areas, indigenous territories and protected areas.

²² SRG 2021c.

²³ Ian Clark, Thomas MacWright, Brian Pfeiffer, Dimitrios Lyratzakis y Amanda Parra Criste, "[Sovereign debt restructurings in Latin America: A new chapter](#)", White & Case, 25 October 2021.

Global and national politics require innovative and immediate solutions. The indigenous peoples hold the ancient knowledge of the Amazonian ecosystems. **A first step is to recognize their territories and rights in innovative governance models for their territories and the protected areas as well. A second step is to recognize its management with national and international resources.** Finally, priority areas without a territorial management regime can consolidate a new co-management model where states create biocultural connectivity corridors that connect ecosystems and indigenous cultures and territories as an immediate protection measure. Amazonian leaders have identified 13 solutions to stop the tipping point in the Amazonia.

A call to Action from the indigenous peoples

The international community requires immediate action to strengthen these areas with funding. The approval of IUCN Resolution 129 in Marseille in September 2021 is a first step to achieve a **Global Pact to protect at least 80% of the Amazonia** that will require:

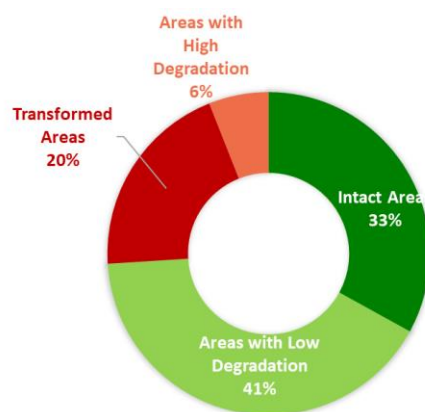
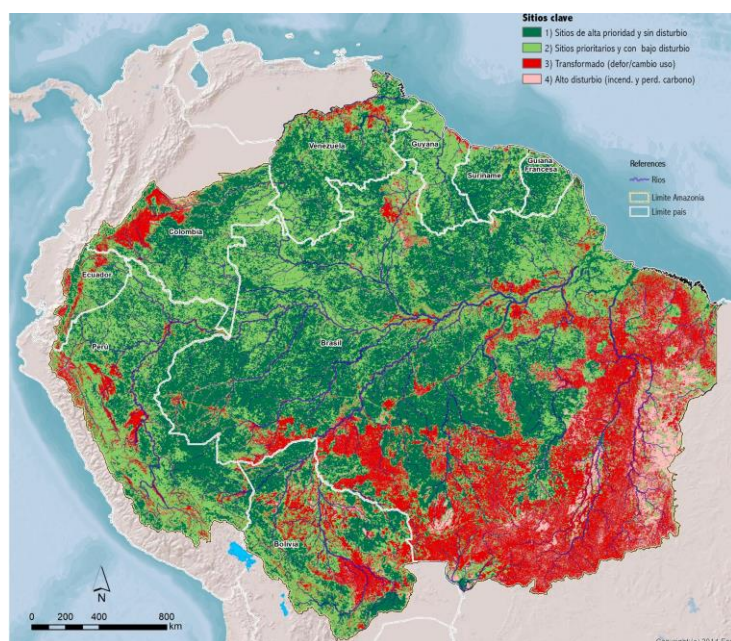
1. A **Pan-Amazon regional vision** that lands in a shared strategic plan built upon the strict guidelines of Free, Prior, Informed, Consent (FPIC). To reach the 80 percent by 2025 vision, each Amazon country must develop **National Amazon Biome Action Plans (NABAP)** to spell out their commitments for meeting the target. The process should be with the full participation of civil society, including Indigenous peoples who have been effective stewards of this biome for millennia.
2. **100 percent legal recognition and demarcation of Indigenous lands** and the allocation of **permanent financial resources** that allow their titling and expansion.
3. Implementation of **a governance model with political representation** and formal recognition of the role of indigenous peoples in reaching this goal at national and international levels.
4. **An immediate moratorium on deforestation** and industrial degradation of all primary forests.
5. **Forest policy and zoning** that enables the creation of intangible zones for areas that remain intact/roadless and other zones that are for industrial activities.
6. **Ecological restoration** for degraded lands.
7. **Creation of expanded indigenous or co-managed reserves** for unprotected indigenous that are not currently listed as TIs or ANP and other territories (OECM), with the **safeguards and responsibility** of the States to guarantee the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI).
8. **Halting key drivers of** current and future deforestation and industrial development pressures by suspending new licensing and financing for mining, oil, cattle ranching, large dams, logging, and other industrial activities.
9. **Conditioned debt forgiveness** in exchange for permanent moratoria on industrial extraction in key priority areas and indigenous territories and protected areas.
10. **The finance sector** commits to **ensure respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and an end to deforestation** throughout financed supply chains.
11. **Supply-chain transparency and accountability.**
12. The international community's immediate **adoption of policies and frameworks** that guarantee a permanent influx of resources to accomplish this target.
13. The international community facilitates the financial resources necessary to cover the costs of access to basic services for indigenous communities, consolidate their self-determination, and strengthen the comprehensive management of territories, sustainable livelihoods and use of ancestral knowledge.

Amazonia: A Regional Outlook

The Initiative "Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025" adopts the concept of "Amazonia" developed by the Amazonian Network of Georeferenced Socio-environmental Information (RAISG) to geographically identify all the ecosystems that are part of this mega-system (biome and associated drainage basins, headwaters, Amazonian ecosystems, and administrative regions) present in nine countries. From this definition, the data obtained is not comparable with other investigations unless it responds to the same geographical area as detailed in the Methodology.

Since the approval of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)²⁴ [Motion 129](#), RAISG updated the 36-year data series (1985-2020) corresponding to land cover and use, which shows that by 2020, **26% of the Amazon has undergone a transformation: 20% of irreversible land use change (164 million ha) and 6 % with high degradation (54 million ha).**

This percentage shows that **there are territories that are already immersed in a tipping point. Brazil (82%) and Bolivia (8%) concentrate 90% of the transformation and high degradation** (See Graphic 2). If the current trend persists, the Amazon as a whole would enter a process of irreversible change or tipping a point. The remaining 74% (629 million hectares) still contains Key Priority Areas with very high functionality, connectivity and biodiversity representativeness, which are indispensable to stop the current trend and safeguard the future of the Amazon.



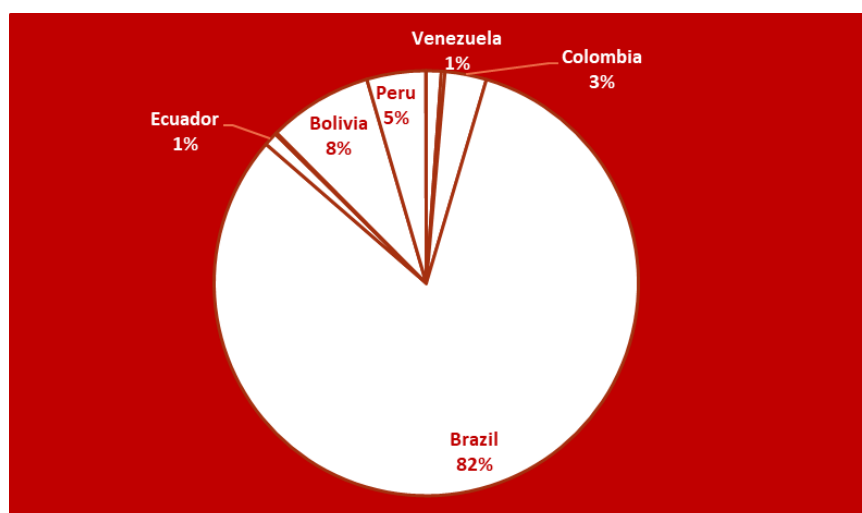
Map 1: Amazonia: Key Priority Areas: Intactness, low degradation, high degradation and transformation
Elaborated by RAISG

Source: Map 22, RAISG 2020 update based on MapBiomas Amazonia v.3.0 (Map forest cover and land

Graphic 1: Key Priority Areas distribution by their current status
Elaborated by RAISG

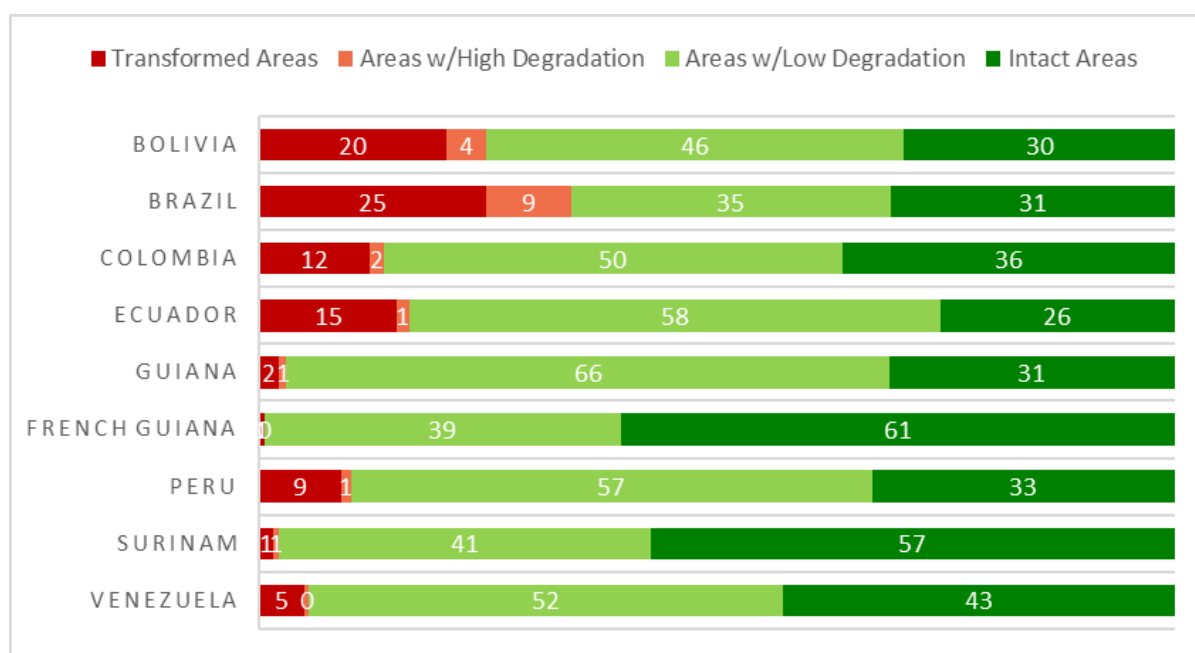
Source: Map 22, RAISG 2020 update based on MapBiomas Amazonia v.3.0 (Map land cover and use,

²⁴ Created in 1948, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organizations. By harnessing the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organizations and the input of some 15,000 experts, IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. IUCN, United for life & livelihoods.



Graph 2: Distribution of Transformed and Highly Degraded Areas by country
Adapted by authors

The distribution of Key Priority Areas (intact, with low and high degradation, and transformed) varies from country to country, as shown in Graph 3. As a point of reference, this report has adopted the range of 20-25% of deforestation and degradation established by Lovejoy and Nobre (2019) as the tipping point. However, it is essential to point out that the authors were referring to the eastern, southern and central Amazon and not to the entire region described in this document. Based on the geographical definition of the Amazonia used in this analysis, 34% of the Brazilian Amazon has entered a process of transformation. This is true also for 24% of the Bolivian Amazon, 16% in Ecuador, 14% in Colombia and 10% in Peru. **Savannization is already a reality mainly in Brazil and Bolivia.** 6% of the areas with high degradation are still subject to restoration; however, this percentage corresponds to the minority of the severely disturbed areas.

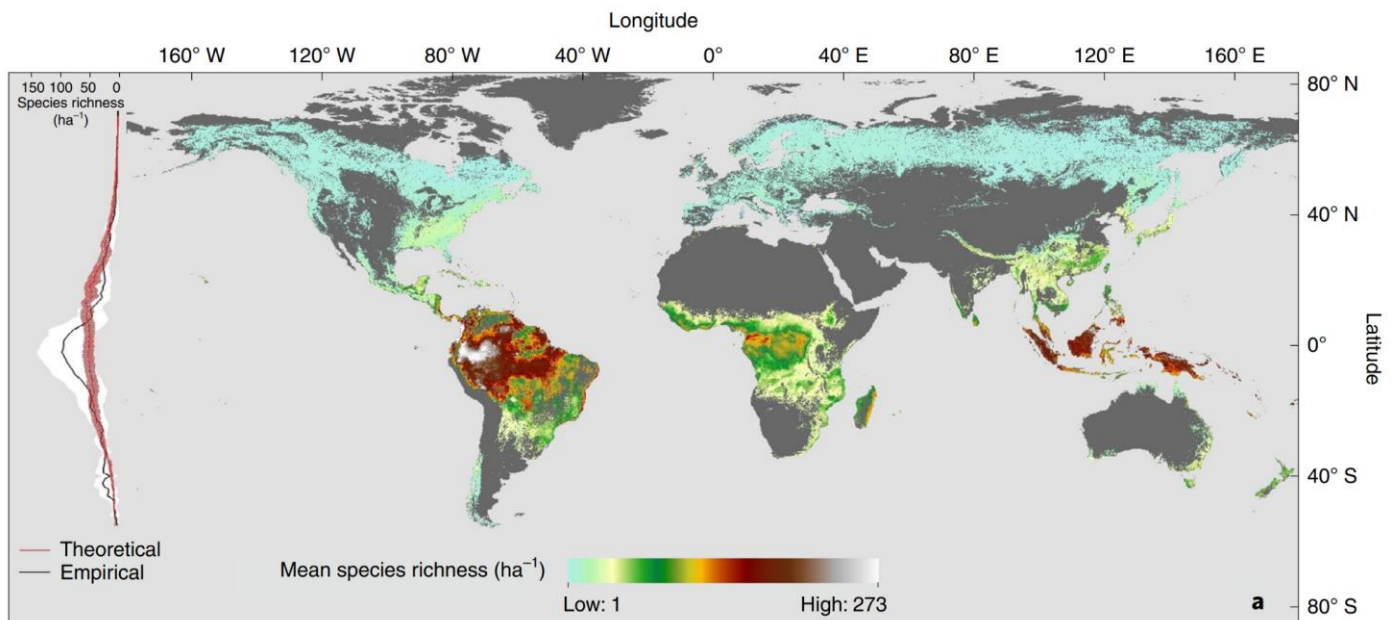


Graphic 3: Current state of the Amazon by country (in percentage)
Source: RAISG; Elaborated by authors

The Amazonia is megadiversity

The Amazonia is home to 5 of the 17 megadiverse countries²⁵, that is to say, a third of the countries whose borders contain the greatest wealth of biodiversity in the world (70% of the recognized species on the planet²⁶). To qualify as a Megadiverse Country, a country must have at least 5.000 of the world's plants as endemic (Mittermeier et al. 2003). It is also the largest river basin in the world and contains 20% of the world's freshwater. Furthermore, it is the most biodiverse habitat in the world (UNEP 2012, 14 cited in UNEP-WCMC 2016).

The presence of at least 16.000 tree species in the biome is estimated, of which only 227 are very common, while approximately 11.000 species are extremely rare, indicating high endemism (Ter Steege et al. 2013). The Amazonia together with the Southeast Asian and Melanesian rainforests are the regions with the greatest local tree species richness worldwide, containing >200 tree species per hectare (Liang et al. 2022). However, there are regions like the Yasuní National Park in Ecuador that register, on average, around 260 species of trees in one hectare (Pérez et al. 2014). By including the different groups of organisms, the region has 25% of all terrestrial biodiversity and more than 10% of all known species on Earth (Mittermeier et al. 2002; Prance & Lovejoy 1985). However, about 137 living species are driven into extinction each day in Amazonia due to habitat loss (Müller in IPOL EU 2020, 13).



Maps 2: Estimated tree species richness per hectare in forested areas worldwide

Fuente: Figure 4 en Liang et al. 2022.

This megadiversity is also expressed in the diversity of ecosystems, with terrestrial and aquatic landscapes interacting from the slopes of the Andes mountains to the lowlands of the basin. These interactions are of critical importance, contributing to the movement of animals, plants, and nutrients between floodplains and adjacent terra firme forests (Moraes et al. 2021). Besides, these climate and soils gradients provide the heterogeneity responsible for the presence of more than a hundred different Andean-Amazonian ecosystems (Comer et al. 2020).

Between 2001 and 2020, the Amazonia lost 9% (542,581 km²) of its forest area (RAISG 2022). The countries responsible for this deforestation are: Brazil (81%), Bolivia (7%), Peru (5%), Colombia (4%),

²⁵ Madagascar, República Democrática del Congo, Sudáfrica, China, Filipinas, India, Indonesia, Malasia, Australia, Papúa Nueva Guinea, Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Estados Unidos, México, Perú y Venezuela.

²⁶ "The World's 17 Megadiverse Countries." World Atlas.

Ecuador (1%) and the remaining 1% occurs in the Guyanas and Venezuela. RAISG (2022) establishes that at a regional level, the first 7 years of the millennium were marked by high deforestation rates that fell and remained below 20 thousand km² (2 million hectares) of annual deforestation between 2009 and 2019. However, in 2020 in a context pandemic, that figure was exceeded and 25,837 km² (2.6 million hectares) were reached, a trend that became more evident in Suriname, Colombia and Peru, which registered deforestation peaks this year. However, the deforestation rate is upward in the last eight years of the analysis in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Suriname, Peru, Venezuela and Guyana.

This data acquires greater relevance in climate change since “human communities that depend more directly on the environment for subsistence, especially indigenous peoples, are negatively affected by the loss of ecosystem functions and endemic species...These losses have cascading impacts on cultural and linguistic diversity and Indigenous knowledge systems, food security, health, and livelihoods, often with irreparable damages and consequences”²⁷.

- **Brazil:** The Brazilian Amazon is home to about 40% of the world's tropical forest²⁸. In its limits cohabit 6 different biomes²⁹. Despite the fact that the Pantanal and Cerrado biomes register declining rates of deforestation (RAISG 2022), the transformed and highly degraded areas in Brazil have already passed the tipping point, reaching a dangerous 34% (25% transformation plus 9% high degradation). This reality threatens the entire region as Brazil is the country that is home to two thirds of the Amazon. The registered loss compromises the Brazilian south and, without a doubt, advances to the Brazilian Atlantic Forest Hotspot known as Mata Atlântica, cataloged as one of the places on the planet with the greatest biodiversity. The transformation responds primarily to a process of intense urbanization. Close to 70% of Brazilians live in this rich region which is also home to various indigenous groups. The Map “Roads in the Amazon” included in the “Drivers” section, shows the relationship between the presence of roads and transformation in Brazil. When a road is opened, 40 kilometers on both sides of the road are affected (RAISG 2020, 22).
- **Bolivia:** is in the highest margin of the range proposed as a tipping point (20% transformation and 4% high degradation). Deforestation in the Chaco-Chiquitano biome is trending upward (RAISG 2022, 14). Savannization is a phenomenon that is already occurring in both countries (Brazil and Bolivia) and it is a symptom of the transformation that is taking place. It is necessary to weigh the invasions in Bolivia and Brazil that, although they acquire their own nuances in each country, they are two heads of the same phenomenon: land grabbing. The legal frameworks of both countries promote these forms of access to land where the borders of protected areas and indigenous territories are lost in the hands of the extractive industries that finance these invasions.
- **The Western Amazon**³⁰: Despite lower transformation rates than Brazil and Bolivia, the levels of deforestation and degradation registered in Ecuador, Colombia and Peru are still alarming as they are countries crossed by two hotspots: Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena and the Tropical Andes that follows the route of the mountain range from Venezuela to Bolivia. In the Andes Biome, where the headwaters are created, in 2019, the increase in deforestation reached 122% compared to 2018 and the upward trend continued in 2020 (RAISG 2022). If the current trajectories are maintained, 75 million hectares of Intact Areas and 121 million of Areas with Low Degradation are at risk, a total of 196 million hectares. The Western Amazon is one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet for many taxa, including plants, insects, amphibians, birds, and mammals ([Myers et al, 2000](#); [Mittermeier RA et al. \(2003\)](#); [Bass et al., 2010](#)). The region maintains large extensions of tropical rainforest intact and has a high probability of stable climatic conditions in the face of

²⁷ IPCC 2022, 10, 20 in TS.B.1.6 and TS.B.7.2

²⁸ Laurance 2001

²⁹ Müller 2020, 16.

³⁰ We define Western Amazon as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia

global warming.

“...keeping the northwestern Amazon—home to the Basin's highest biodiversity and the region least vulnerable to climatic drying—largely intact as a biological refuge is a global conservation priority of the first order.³¹”

However, the headwaters of the Amazon basin are located in this region, and more specifically in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, are threatened by 833 hydroelectric plants: 350 existing and 483 planned, most of which (52%) are located in Brazil (see Map 5).

- **Ecuador** is a country that represents **less than 2% of the Amazon, concentrates 18% of the hydroelectric plants in the region** (see Map: Hydroelectric, RAISG 2020). In Ecuador, not only hydroelectric plants are one of the major threats to the Amazon, but also oil blocks: **Ecuador is the country with the largest area of its Amazon territory (52%) destined for or threatened by oil activities** (see Map 6: Oil Blocks). All this occurs despite the fact that Ecuador was the first country to recognize the rights of nature in its Constitution. In the **Amazonia, 43% of the oil blocks are located in protected areas and indigenous territories**. This reality evidences the ambivalence of national policies and their impact.
- **The Guyanas, Suriname and Venezuela:** although the rates of Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname have been on the rise for eight years, these countries register the lowest rates of transformation and do not register High Degradation rates. Apart from Guyana's Amazon region which registers primarily Low Degradation; in these countries, the largest extension of the Amazon is Intact Areas. It is important, however, to emphasize that Venezuela has doubled its road density in the last ten years and that due to the impact of roads on deforestation and degradation, permanent monitoring is required.



“The indigenous people of Suriname suffer from the same problems as the entire region: dispossession, violence and exclusion, aggravated by the lack of effective recognition of our fundamental rights, since Suriname has not adopted the current international standards. Our wealth is our standing forests, clean rivers and our knowledge systems. However, a large part of our forest is currently a mining area, which pours poison into our rivers, so to prevent this situation from continuing, we intend to lead, together with the governments, effective actions based on the knowledge and ancestral wisdom of the peoples. indigenous people, to stop the point of no return, which is already a reality in other countries.”

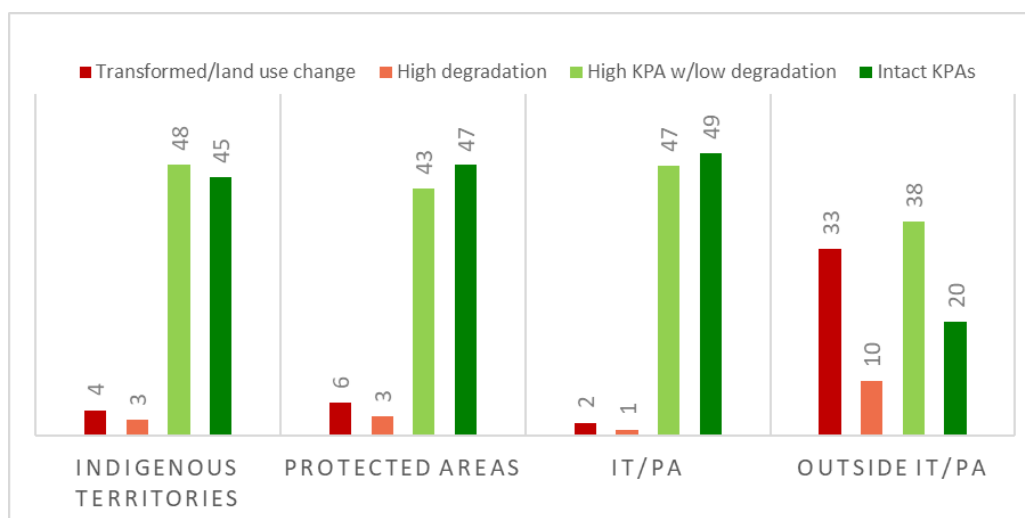
Sirito-Yana Aloema.
Organización van Inheemsen
Surinam

The following section presents the distribution of Key Priority Areas according to their state and their distribution by country and territorial management regime: Protected Areas (PA), Indigenous Territories (IT), overlaps and Undesignated Areas (Graphs 4-10). The objective is to inform the decision makers of these countries, their role in the conservation of these areas and how the different territorial management regimes [or the lack of] affect the results.

³¹ Bass et al. 2010.

Territorial Management Regimes

By comparing the current management of the Key Priority Areas by Territorial Management Regime, we can observe the effectiveness of the measures applied in the territory. Graphic 4 addresses the issue comprehensively and consequently, results in important conclusions that can guide global and national policy.



Graph 4: Current state of the Amazonia by Territorial Management Regimes (in percentages)
Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

Firstly, **the greatest transformation (33%) and high degradation (10%) occurs in undesignated areas (Outside IT/PA)** and is **six times more than the transformation registered in Protected Areas and more than eight times that of Indigenous Territories.**

Second, despite conservation efforts and national budgets, **Protected Areas show greater transformation than Indigenous Territories (6% vs. 4%).** The data indicate that the level of conservation of the IT is comparable and even higher than that of the PAs and the overlapping areas.

Third, **the overlapping of two regimes (IT and AP) does not result in substantially higher levels of ecosystem integrity.** On the contrary, creating PA over IT can weaken indigenous governance models in the territory and, consequently, deteriorate the conservation of ecosystems but, in some cases, can even result in violence. The Initiative's approach is a collaborative and inclusive governance model to achieve the design and implementation of sustainable alternatives such as those proposed by the Durban Accord in 2003 and more recently by IPBES (2022).

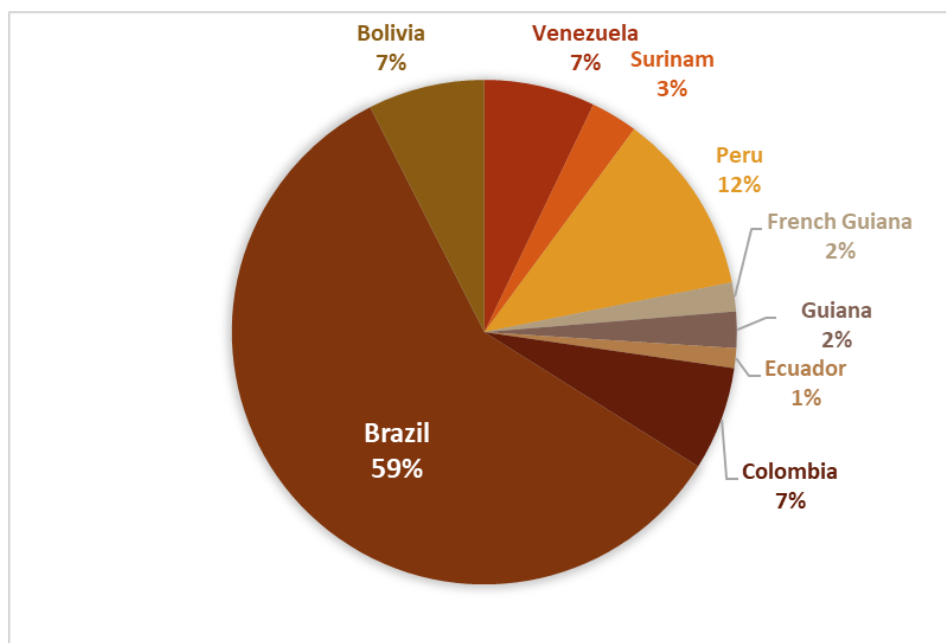
Finally, more than 255 million hectares of intact ecosystems and areas with low degradation are undesignated and require immediate protection through the establishment of moratorias that allow the definition of a territorial management regime as established later. Without proper management and conservation of designated areas, the Amazon is headed for an irreversible point of no return.

The following section analyzes the Key Priority Areas according to their current state, their distribution by country and by territorial management regime: Protected Areas (PA), Indigenous Territories (IT), overlaps between both (AP & IT), and Undesignated Areas (Graphs 5-10). The objective is to inform the decision makers of these countries, their role in the conservation of these areas and how the different territorial management regimes [or the lack of] affect the results of the region. The data in this report

includes a regional perspective and its weight by country or territorial management regime, that is, it does not reflect a percentage at the country level that will complement the regional analysis.

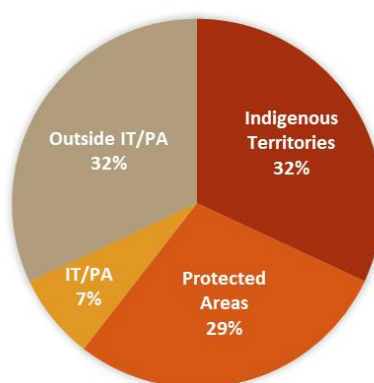
Intact Areas (IA)

Intact Areas (IA) represent 33% (277 million hectares) of the Amazon. Most of these are located in Brazil (59%), Peru (12%), Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia (7% each), and the remaining 8% is distributed between Suriname (3%), Guyana and the French Guiana (2% each), and Ecuador (1%).



Graph 5: Distribution of Intact Areas in the Amazon by country (in percentage)
Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

When we analyze the current territorial management regime in these IA (Graph 5), we see that 32% of these correspond to IT, 29% to AP, 7% are overlapping and the remaining 32% (**89 million hectares**) **are undesignated intact lands** that require immediate protection.



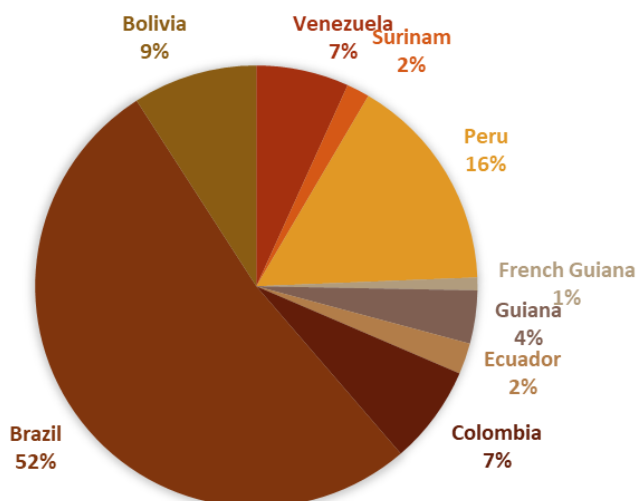
Graph 6: Distribution of Intact Areas in the Amazon by Territorial Management Regime (in percentage)
Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

The Intact Areas are distributed in three almost equal parts: a third are protected areas, more than a third are ITs and another third are undesignated areas. Despite having national budgets, the Protected Areas are smaller in surface area compared to the Indigenous Territories. Together with the ITs, they are the safeguard to stop deforestation and degradation, as corroborated in this investigation. It is

imperative to protect Intact Areas that lack a management regime to ensure their integrity and connectivity between ecosystems. **It should be emphasized that without the declaration of immediate moratoriums that allow a policy for their conservation, the ecosystems that remain intact are at imminent risk since it is in the areas where there is an absence of a territorial management regime that most of the deforestation occurs.**

Key Priority Areas w/Low Degradation (LDA)

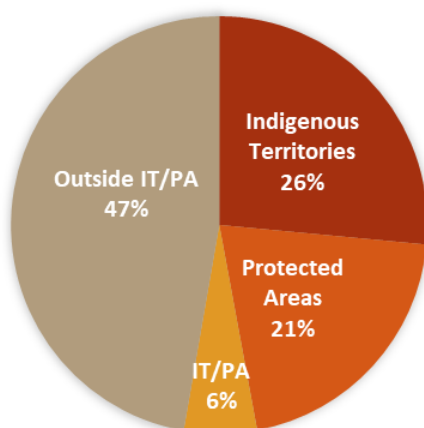
Key Priority Areas with Low Degradation (LDA) account for 41% (351.5 million hectares). These lands are located mainly in Brazil (52%), Peru (16%), Bolivia (9%), Venezuela and Colombia (7% each), 9% is distributed among the rest of the Amazon countries as shown in Graphic 6.



Graphic 7: Distribution of Key Priority Areas with Low Degradation in the Amazon by country (in percentage)

Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

Almost half (47%-166 million hectares) of the LDA's are found outside any territorial management regime. LDA together with undesigned IA require a Territorial Management Regime immediately. In the process, it is important that States establish moratoriums to curb destruction. **IT nest in their borders most of the ecosystems with low degradation (26%).**

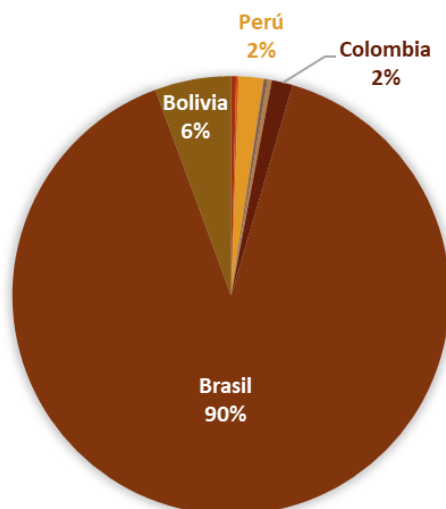


Graphic 8: Distribution of Areas with Low Degradation in the Amazon by Territorial Management Regime (in percentage)

Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

Key Priority Areas w/High Degradation (HDA)

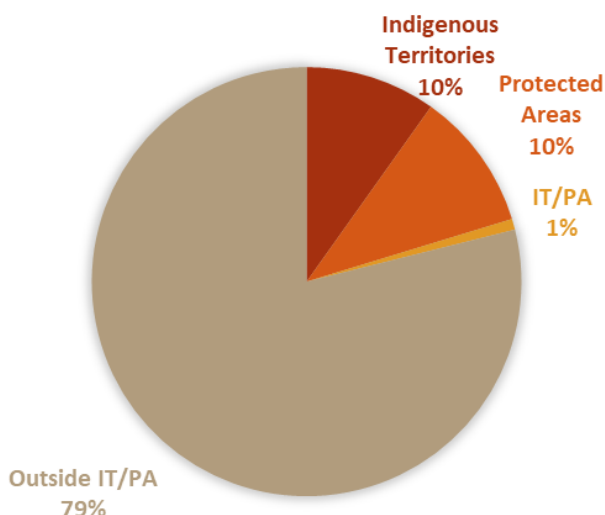
Key Priority Areas with High Degradation still with restoration potential make up only 6% of the region (54 million hectares) but are essential to avert the tipping point. They are distributed as follows: Brazil (90%), Bolivia (6%), the remaining 4% is distributed between Colombia and Peru.



Graph 9: Distribution of Areas with High Degradation in the Amazon by country (in percentage)

Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

79% of HDA are on undesignated lands. Yet despite their current regimes, HDA is already occurring within PA and IT. This is mainly due to permissive legal frameworks that, while recognizing IT and PA, also grant permits and licenses for extractive industries within them. At the origin of these supply chains are the international banks that finance these companies and the States that concession the territories to cover their national budgets.



Graphic 10: Distribution of HDA in the Amazon by Territorial Management Regime (in percentage)

Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors



"Today we are witnessing a government with a frontally anti-Indigenous State policy that tries, in every possible way, to legalize what is illegal. The unbridled destruction and greed of our ancestral territories, our Amazon, in the north of the country, is the face of the historical violation of rights to which we, the indigenous peoples of Brazil, have been subject for decades. Our territories are not respected or legally recognized as provided by the Magna Carta - the Federal Constitution, while the invasions increase, they are consumed by fire, mercury, grasslands, plantations, reaching historic levels of deforestation. In the process we resist with our lives, we are being killed for defending our territory throughout the region. Brazil has to be an example not to follow, history that cannot be repeated."

[Nara Baré](#)

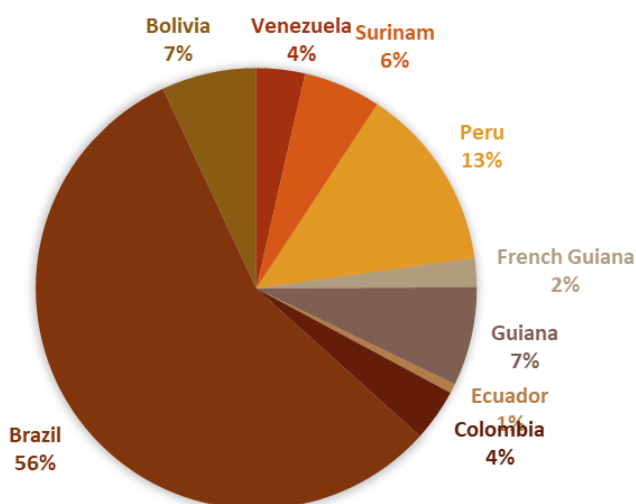
Coordinator

Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon - COIAB

Brazil

Undesignated Lands

The Key Priority Areas without a Territorial Management Regime or **Undesignated Lands** represent **more than half (52% or 443 million hectares)** of the Amazonian territory. More than half of this vast territory is in Brazil (56%), Peru (13%), Guyana and Bolivia (7% each), Suriname 6%, Colombia and Venezuela (4% each) and Ecuador (1 %) (see Graph 10). 86% of deforestation between 1985 and 2020, took place in these undesignated lands. The lack of policies, national budgets and the development model of the Amazonian countries focused on extractives, have left around 255 million hectares of Key Priority Intact Areas (20%) and Low Degradation Areas (38%) vulnerable to continued degradation and destruction. **Without the conservation of these vast areas, it is impossible to stop the advancement of the tipping point.**



Graph 10: Distribution of Areas without Territorial Management Regime in the Amazon by country (in percentage)

Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by authors

The regulation of access to land is a fundamental component of the guarantee of the right to Indigenous Territories and the integrity of ecosystems and, at the same time, its main obstacle. In Latin America, the consolidation of national States was based and still stands on agrarian reforms derived from the motto of the Mexican Revolution "*the land is for those who work it*"³². In an attempt to occupy the most remote territories, and in this case the Amazon, conceived as an empty space demographically speaking and as "loose or uncultivated" lands without an economic or social function; the government policy of the countries of the region has been aimed at populating the region for production. The legal frameworks of the countries of the region evidence this trend³³. The colonization of the uncultivated lands by a mainly white-mestizo population turned these uncultivated lands into *de facto* property (Rojas, Tapia and Bazoberry, 2000: 51 in i Mombiola 2011, 60).

This vision of the land puts the integrity of standing ecosystems at a crossroads because they are classified as "loose or waste lands", marginalizing their value and ignoring the traditional and diversified use that indigenous peoples obtain from them. On the other hand, it legitimizes the invasion and dispossession of these lands to make the forest and other ecosystems productive lands even at the cost of the lives of its inhabitants who become defenders who confront invasions or subjugation hand in hand³⁴, or the occupation of their territories by industrial agriculture, mining, or oil multinational interests.

Reversing the tipping point requires legal frameworks and enabling conditions that reconceptualize ecosystems, their uses and ecosystem services as subjects of law. The illegal appropriation of indigenous territories or ecosystems without a territorial management regime requires urgent public policy responses.

The political division of these lands in each country does not ensure their conservation. IT are fragmented by municipal or departmental administrative boundaries. For the most part, these areas have a weak or no state presence which allows organized crime to also enter with illicit activities that penetrate the non-designated areas but also IT and PA to extract mainly wood and minerals. A process where "forest roads" are opened that escape official radars to clandestinely enter areas rich in resources and impose themselves even with the use of violence on their inhabitants. The problem however does not end there. About a fifth of the deforested area on undesignated lands is abandoned after a few years (Salomão 2021).

Currently, there are legal frameworks in the region that promote these trends. It is no coincidence that Brazil concentrates the highest invasion rates in Undesignated Areas. With the approval of the land law in July 2017, the Brazilian government granted amnesty to those who illegally occupied rural public land between 2005 and 2011, a crime established in the 1966 federal law (Brito et al. 2019). The mechanism allows invaders to legalize public land tenure through post-invasion purchase at below-market prices; it is a privatization process that allows, on the one hand, to expel indigenous peoples or local communities

³² Emiliano Zapata coined the motto of the Zapatista Revolution in Mexico in this phrase.

³³ Some examples include Ecuador, where the enabling frameworks for the colonization of the Amazon rainforest were mainly the 1964 Baldías Law (an agrarian reform) and the 1978 Colonization Law. The former defines baldías as those that "remain or have remained uneducated for more than ten consecutive years", that is to say, that they do not fulfill an economic and social function. In Venezuela, the Land and Agrarian Development Law (LTDA, 2001) had as its main objective "to redistribute the land that remains idle or vacant and those that have low intensity of use and increase their productivity." In Bolivia, the Ministry of Colonization and Agriculture was created, whose mission was to make possible the colonization of colonizable land. The Colonies and Waste Lands Law of 1886 and the Rubber Law of 1895 were the basis of the colonizing policy (i Mombiola 2011) for the Bolivian Amazon region.

³⁴ We welcome IPAM's definition of invasion: illegal occupation and appropriation of this heritage (Salomão 2021).

from their territories without any legal consequences and, on the other, it is detrimental to tax revenues that would lose close to USD 32 billion (Brito et al. 2019).

This information that we make available to the authorities and civil society of each Amazonian country seeks to influence policies. Legislating and assigning these areas is mainly a matter of political will. For the Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia (Salomão 2021) “the end of illegal logging in the Amazon is closely related to discouraging new invasions.” Hence the need to know where they are in order to assess the legal frameworks in each country that allow them to be assigned within a territorial management regime. The issue is not only to provide a management framework for the territories, but also that national regulations guarantee their management without exposing them to “legal” extractivism.

This information that we make available to the authorities and civil society of each Amazonian country seeks to support a new era of visionary and future-oriented policies. Legislating and assigning these areas is primarily a matter of political will. To achieve this, it is urgent to implement the Prior Free Informed Consultation (FPIC) as a binding mechanism and a requirement for territorial planning processes.

Recognizing Indigenous Territories and designating Protected Areas

Assigning PA and recognizing IT, are two different policies. Protected Areas can be created from the national or subnational state with a public budget or by private entities. However, despite the fact that IT do not receive any type of budgetary allocation from the states and that indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) receive less than 1% of climate financing (Rainforest Foundation Norway 2021), many IT recognition processes get bogged down and are under-resourced.

In Peru, the Napo Tigre Reserve is home to PIACI groups live (OACNUDH 2012), after almost 20 years, in June 2022, the Multisectoral Commission of Law 28736, Law for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact (PIACI), approved the Prior Recognition Study that supports the presence of indigenous peoples in a situation of isolation in the area where they request that it be created the Napo Tigre Indigenous Reserve. The PIACI of the Amazon constitute some 200 indigenous groups: 82 confirmed³⁵ and more than 100³⁶ to be confirmed. As the drivers of deforestation advance, so does the threat to their survival. In Brazil, since the arrival of President Bolsonaro, the recognition processes of more than 100 already identified indigenous territories have not been fulfilled. Dozens of PIACI live on these undesignated lands and the non-assignment of IT puts them at risk of extermination.

³⁵ RAISG 2020.

³⁶ Land is Life, 2020.



“The Peoples in a situation of Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI) are extremely vulnerable and are in danger of extinction due to the absence of protection measures for their lives and their territories. Only today, after a global pandemic, do we understand the need to self-isolate in order to survive. The deep Amazon is home to more than 200 peoples in isolation, and in the case of Peru, the State has formally recognized 20 of these peoples, but it is estimated that there are many more. Currently, measures are being promoted by the governments themselves to make the PIACI invisible, while their territories become oil blocks or mines, violating their right to life and health, but even more so, silencing those who maintain the Amazon with their knowledge. and daily practices. The disconnection of our PIACI brothers with this world leaves their disappearance as peoples in impunity. In Peru, there are requests for recognition of PIACI territories that have been going on for almost two decades. What is humanity waiting for to protect the PIACI and their territories?”

Jorge Pérez
President
Asociación Interétnica de la Selva Peruana - AIDESEP-
Peru

On the other hand, in the region, there are many areas protected just in “paper”, that is, with symbolic national budgets that threaten efficient management that ensures PA. For Álvarez et al. (2020) "one of the great gaps in this decade was the budget increase, since as the system grew, in several cases the budget stagnated or even decreased." During the COVID-19 pandemic and with economies seriously damaged by the closure, "the negative impacts on management capacity, budgets and effectiveness were significant (Álvarez Malvido et al. 2020)". The pandemic allowed us to glimpse the real challenges of the economies of the Amazonian countries to provide sustainability to their protected areas.

The PA governance models, characterized by a rigid division between PA and IT, have excluded or underrepresented indigenous peoples and local communities³⁷, their worldview and systems of knowledge from decisions and policies for these territories. This has led to mistrust, less effective levels of conservation resulting in biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and, even conflict (IPBES 2022, 22-23).

The prevailing view that PA are the only path to address conservation is changing. There are efforts to reform the institutions associated with biodiversity conservation that allow indigenous peoples and local communities to develop their own community-based conservation models³⁸ and areas, without excluding the possibility that they may also participate in the governance of protected areas³⁹. Ethical and transparent involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities can guide transformative policies⁴⁰.

³⁷ IPBES 2022

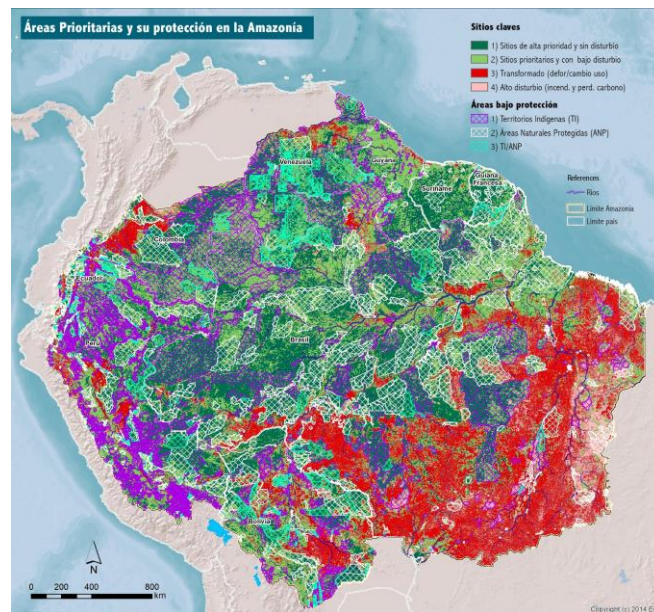
³⁸ IPBES 2022, 25.

³⁹ Idem, 30.

⁴⁰ Idem, 31.

Indigenous Territories to save the planet

Indigenous Peoples are about 500 million inhabitants (~6% of the world population) who live in all regions of the world, in approximately 90 countries⁴¹ and own, occupy or use approximately 22% of the planetary territory⁴² **safeguarding the remaining 80% of the world's biodiversity**⁴³. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have 826 indigenous peoples⁴⁴, of which, according to COICA data, 511 live in the Amazon. One third of the Amazon (28%+5% overlap with PAs) are Indigenous Territories (see Map 2), one third are Protected Areas and the remaining third are undesignated lands. The ITs and the PA add up to around 50% of the Amazonia and offer enough perspective to think about concrete actions to define the 80% protection in the short term. In this section we present the international legal framework of IT, their importance, and policy options.



Map 3: Indigenous Territories and Protected Areas in the Amazonia
Source: Maps RAISG, Maps FAN, and Ecociencia Maps; Elaborated by RAISG

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO 1989), **indigenous peoples are those who inhabited the country or geographic region at the time of the conquest, colonization or establishment of the current state limits. They are characterized by partially or fully conserving their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions**, regardless of their legal status. **It is these structures that result in conservation levels comparable to or greater than state or private land management regimes.**

From this framework, **indigenous territories do not seek to be added to the conversation as an additional category or other conservation measures or mechanisms (OECMs). IT are pre-existing** while the OECMs can be created and define their territorial management by the national regulations of each country. The worldview of indigenous peoples is based on harmony with nature and the data in this report corroborate it.

⁴¹ UN. "International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 9 August."

⁴² UNESCO. s. a. "Pueblos indígenas."

⁴³ Banco Mundial, IPCC 2022.

⁴⁴ CEPAL 2014, cited in FAO-FILAC 2021.

Indigenous Territories are tied to the cultural survival of peoples⁴⁵ and the right to cultural identity⁴⁶; they are a recognized right⁴⁷ and “the failure to adopt state measures to guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples and communities over land and natural resources in accordance with their traditional patterns of use and occupation violates the American Convention on Human Rights”⁴⁸. For indigenous peoples, the rainforest is sacred, it is their home and their temple.



“Despite the fact that France adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that was promulgated on September 13, 2007, it did not do so with Convention 169 of the ILO (International Labor Organization), denying us fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, such as the right to self-determination and the right to prior, free and informed consultation, specific measures that allow us to make decisions about our territories, based on our customs and worldview. This legal vacuum has historically caused a series of violations in the territories, with serious social consequences. Among the most serious in recent years is a wave of suicides among indigenous youth that testifies to the deep psychological, physical, emotional and social malaise of our people. The failure of the State to recognize us and the lack of access to education mean that children have to leave their communities at a very young age, which accentuates situations of danger and discrimination. We demand the recognition of collective and territorial rights, because as indigenous peoples we need decent living conditions in accordance with our reality.”

[Claudette Labonté](#)

Women and Family Coordinator

COICA

Representative of French Guiana

The role of indigenous peoples and their territories are largely invisible in climate change and conservation policies, but above all, and systematically, in national budgets despite the fact that these are largely nourished by Amazonian resources that are extracted from IT. Protected areas are undoubtedly beneficiaries of these resources as well. However, the indigenous peoples of the region live in a vulnerable and threatened situation. This occurs despite the fact that ILO Convention 169 (1989, art. 15) establishes that “The peoples concerned should participate whenever possible in the benefits that such activities bring, and receive fair compensation for any damage they may suffer as a result of these activities”.

⁴⁵ As recognized by the IACHR-OAS 2009.

⁴⁶ IACHR, Democracy and Human Rights in Venezuela. Doc. OEA/Ser.L/V/II, Doc. 54, December 30, 2009, paragraph 1050. Cited in IACHR-OAS, 2009, p.48.

⁴⁷ Article 26 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired. 2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired. 3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned. ONU 2007.

⁴⁸ Normas y jurisprudencia del Sistema Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, Derechos de los pueblos indígenas y tribales sobre sus tierras ancestrales y recursos naturales : normas y jurisprudencia del sistema interamericano de derechos humanos, CIDH-OEA 2009.

In the Amazon, indigenous peoples not only do not participate in the benefits of income derived from extractive activities, but in several countries, the region lacks a legal framework that guarantees their rights, such as consent to carry out these activities. In contrast, they lack basic public infrastructure and concentrate high rates of poverty. In the context of the pandemic, the State-Amazon-indigenous peoples relationship revealed the absence of state investment and response capacity in the face of the emergency.

The confirmed cases of COVID in the region as of November 2021 totaled 5 million people and nearly 114 thousand people died (REPAM 2022). The lack of infrastructure and medical personnel, added to the lack of information in indigenous languages, made the first phase of COVID a lethal wave in which several leaders in charge of organizing their communities died. IT were the refuge of the indigenous peoples to confine themselves in the pandemic.

Indigenous peoples have the right to the delimitation and demarcation of their territory by the State⁴⁹. According to COICA data, **nearly 100 million hectares of IT are in dispute, in the process of identification, or declared and require immediate recognition and titling.** The territories of the Peoples in a situation of Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact⁵⁰ (PIACI for its acronym in Spanish) are a priority since these groups, by definition, are not going to initiate bureaucratic processes to guarantee their territories. The lack of recognition of these IT can lead to the extermination of several PIACI⁵¹. In the climate crisis, the analysis presented by the IPCC (2019) highlights the role of IT and the need to assign those areas without designation.

“Insecure land tenure affects the ability of people, communities and organizations to make changes to land that can advance adaptation and mitigation (medium confidence). Limited recognition of customary access to land and ownership of land can result in increased vulnerability and decreased adaptive capacity. Land policies (including recognition of customary tenure, community mapping, redistribution, decentralization, co-management, regulation of rental markets) can provide both security and flexibility response to climate change⁵².”

Securing land tenure is essential in the face of a growing population. According to national census data, which in most cases is incomplete for the Amazon region, there are more than 2 million indigenous people who inhabit the Amazon. The total population of the region is approximately 50 million people. This continuously growing figure is a latent pressure that requires planning but above all territorial management regimes that guarantee the survival of the Amazon.

⁴⁹ CIDH-OEA 2009.

⁵⁰ Peoples in isolation are peoples or segments of indigenous peoples who do not maintain regular contact with the majority population, and who also tend to avoid any type of contact with people outside their group. They can also be groups belonging to various peoples already contacted who, after an intermittent relationship with the surrounding societies, decide to return to a situation of isolation as a survival strategy and voluntarily break all relations they may have with said societies. For the most part, isolated peoples live in tropical forests and/or inaccessible off-road areas, places that very often have great natural resources. For these peoples, isolation has not been a voluntary option but rather a survival strategy. A distinction must be made between the two groups; the level of vulnerability of the groups that have never been contacted is greater than that of those who, although they have developed social relations with the majority society, have decided to return to their situation of isolation. Likewise, and for this reason, the need for protection is greater in the case of the uncontacted. Land is Life 2020.

⁵¹ Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact are human rights holders in a unique situation of vulnerability, and one of the few unable to advocate for their own rights. This reality makes ensuring respect for their rights take on special importance. Faced with the impossibility of defending their own rights, the States, international organizations, members of civil society, and other actors in the defense of human rights are the ones who must ensure that their human rights are respected in the same way as those of all the inhabitants of the Americas, taking into account the particularities of their situation. Cited in CIDH-OEA 2013.

⁵² IPCC 2019, C.1.2, p.27.

The inertia of global politics that is reflected in national policies does not include Indigenous Territories within mitigation policies. The planet needs flexible and urgent responses. The Durban Agreement (2003) almost twenty years ago denounced the lack of recognition, support and protection of indigenous peoples and local communities. It exhorted IUCN members to involve local and indigenous communities in the creation, proclamation and management of protected areas and further urged States to share benefits with indigenous peoples and local communities. Little or almost nothing has been achieved with this international instrument.

One of the most important contributions of the IPBES Report (2022) is the approach of a collaborative governance model and the joint design of territorial management plans and policies based on indigenous and local knowledge as a mechanism to achieve the design and implementation of sustainable alternatives. The report proposes the collaborative design of community-based conservation and sustainable use areas, as well as protected areas.

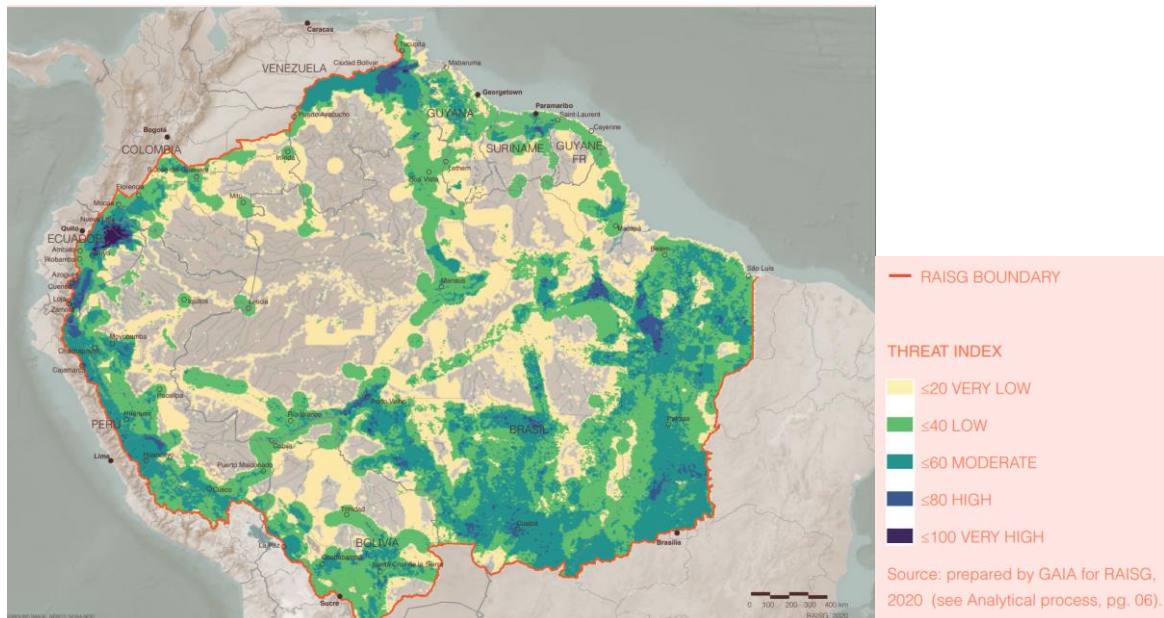
Stopping the trajectory towards the tipping point in the Amazon requires everyone. Our proposal has two edges. The first is the **immediate recognition of the identified Indigenous Territories** and the allocation of resources to strengthen their territorial management. The second is based on the **recognition that more than half of the Amazon has to enter into a territorial management regime in order to preserve the entire region**. The implementation of a co-management model such as the one proposed in the Durban Agreement and the IPBES requires on the one hand, indigenous knowledge systems to strengthen corridors of biocultural connectivity, it involves the states as guarantors of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples and their legal recognition, which in turn, must be crystallized in the national budgets of the Amazonian states and; finally, industrialized countries must also secure the resources for demarcation and conservation.

Drivers

The 66% of the Amazonia is subject to some type of fixed or ongoing pressure related to the presence of "drivers" that result in the current degree of deforestation and degradation. In this report we mainly present the information presented by RAISG (2020) regarding the information related to Roads, Hydroelectric and Extractive Industries: Oil, Mining and Agricultural Activity. This information has been complemented with other sources and with the analysis of the debt as one of the main drivers of destruction in the Amazon.

Map 3 evidences the presence of drivers in almost the entire region. However, it is important to differentiate the drivers in each country by type and intensity. The intensity of the drivers is directly related to the transformation and degradation that is presented in Map 1, the greater the presence of drivers, the greater the degradation and transformation.

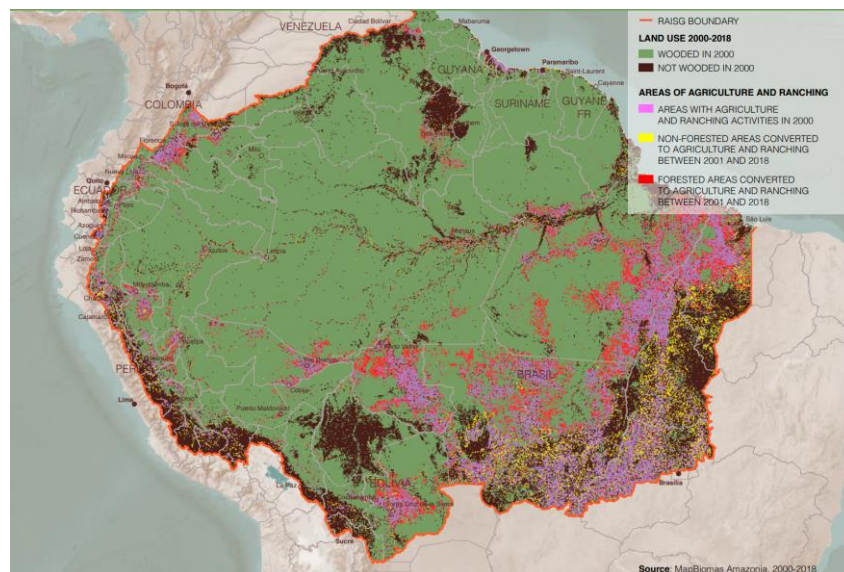
The presence of drivers in the Amazonia also occurs in IT and lacks any process of free, prior and informed consent. Although many countries have ratified ILO Convention 169, the countries have not generated a legally binding framework. Therefore, nearly all oil and minerals that are extracted from the region are obtained without the participation nor approval of the indigenous peoples and local communities that live there.



Map 4: Synthesis of pressures in the Amazon
Source: RAISG 2020

Agriculture and Livestock

The areas dedicated to agricultural activity have **tripled since 1985**. The sector is **responsible for 84% of Amazonian deforestation**⁵³. PA and IT were not exempt from the problem. The expansion of the agricultural frontier within the PAs was 220% between 2001-2018 and 160% in IT⁵⁴. In both cases, forest was replaced.



Mapa 5: Agriculture and Livestock Areas in Amazonia
Source: Map 12 in RAISG 2020, p.35.

The agricultural sector is taking on different activities in each country (soy, palm, cattle, etc). However, the cattle industry is the biggest driver of deforestation in the Amazon and in tropical forests globally⁵⁵. Deforestation caused by cattle ranching in the Amazon rainforest represents almost 2% of annual global

⁵³ According to data from RAISG and MapBiomass, RAISG 2020, p. 33.

⁵⁴ RAISG 2020.

⁵⁵ Cited in Stand.earth 2021b.

CO2 emissions, equivalent to the emissions from all airplane flights worldwide⁵⁶. Most of the livestock in the world occurs in Brazil, a country with the largest cattle herd in the world (215 million animals)⁵⁷. Leather is a lucrative industry for Brazil. In 2020, it accounted for \$1.1 billion in slaughterhouse revenue. 80% of bovine leather produced in Brazil is linked to nearly 100 well-known fashion brands: Adidas, Ralph Lauren, Zara, among many others⁵⁸.

Agricultural activities are directly associated with fires and invasions. Since 2000, fires have affected an area equivalent to the entire territory of Bolivia. Every year, they expand between 17-27 million ha.⁵⁹ In Latin America the preservation of the forest is not a way to obtain rights over the land but on the contrary, in its transformation for cattle grazing or crops is where tenure is formalized and granted. The process starts by invading the forest and burning it to then be occupied with cattle or any crop that establishes property to later sell the land.

As mentioned before, the invasions in Brazil and Bolivia are directly related to agricultural activities. National legal frameworks provide a set of enabling conditions to expand the agricultural frontier. As an example, Brazil is the largest soybean producer in the world despite the moratorium on soybean production. However, the entire Amazon region suffers from the same problem.

In early June 2020, Ecuador unanimously approved the Palm Law —called the Law for the Strengthening and Development of the Production, Marketing, Extraction, Export and Industrialization of Palm Oil and its Derivatives. This law allows the development of palm plantations within water protection zones, the use of prohibited pesticides, the failure to report phytosanitary risks, the initiation of plantations in protected areas, and the avoidance of prior consultation with the communities⁶⁰.

The role of the states to stop the current trend of degradation and deforestation of the Amazon associated with the violation of the rights of indigenous and non-indigenous populations is crucial. We are in the hands of the Amazonian governments that cannot and should not face their economic crises with extractive solutions. The international community that is connected to Amazonian supply-chains must assume ample responsibility in an imminent tipping point crisis and the violation of rights that leads towards this phenomenon.

Road Density

Drivers are connected, they are not isolated phenomena. The opening of roads is related to extractive industries such as oil, mining, and industrial agriculture. When a road is opened, 40 kilometers on both sides of the road are affected either by deforestation and/or degradation, which is why there are authors⁶¹ who consider this driver to be the greatest long-term threat. The roads fragment the ecosystems but also the life of the indigenous peoples that these roads cross. **Almost 19% of the Amazon is paved or unpaved road** (See Map 4). **Roads have affected 55% of the region's total area**⁶². This map shows the high penetration by roads in the Brazilian southeast, which is the area that has already entered a tipping point.

⁵⁶ Cited in Stand Research Group 2021b.

⁵⁷ Ibid

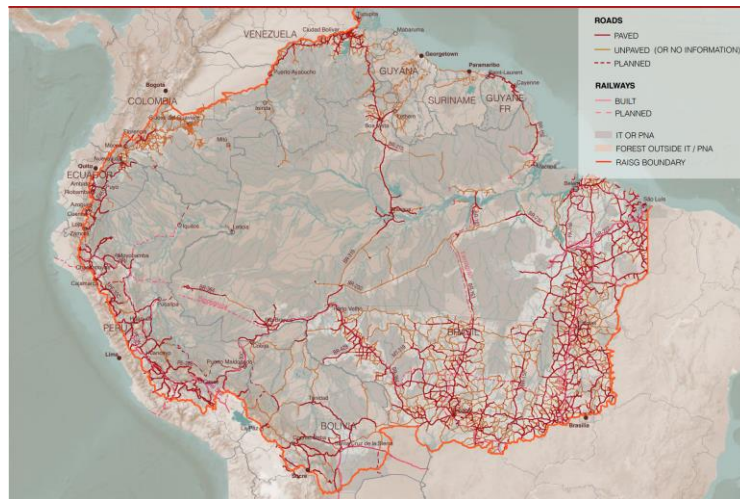
⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ RAISG 2020.

⁶⁰ Borja, María Sol, "Nueva ley de palma promueve la producción de aceite pero atemoriza a las comunidades." GK. 13 de septiembre del 2020. <https://gk.city/2020/09/13/nueva-ley-palma-ecuador/> [acceso 5 junio 2022].

⁶¹ Finer M, Mamani N. 2022.

⁶² RAISG 2020, p.21



Map 6: Roads in the Amazon
Source: Map 7 in RAISG 2020, p.21.

There are eleven projects that are expected to enter the most remote Amazonia in the near future and that represent a serious threat to the integrity of ecosystems⁶³. Four of the seven mega projects are in Peru, one in Colombia, another in Bolivia, but the Manaus Highway in Brazil is the largest. Although some projects have started, it is important to urge Amazonian governments to stop the destruction, the first cut in intact areas is always the most damaging.

1. Peru:
 - 1.1. **Boca-Manu highway** to connect Cusco with Madre de Dios through several national parks and reserves, and PIACI territories.
 - 1.2. **Pucallpa – Cruzeiro do Sul highway** (Peru – Brazil): it would cross or approach the Sierra del Divisor National Park in Peru and Brazil, destroying several intact areas.
 - 1.3. **Yurúa Highway** (Peru): it is a restored 200 km route between Nueva Italia (on the Ucayali river) and Breu (on the Yurúa river).
 - 1.4. **Genaro Herrera – Angamos Highway** (Peru) whose route threatens the Matsés National Reserve and the PIACI.
2. Ecuador:
 - 2.1. **Vía Taracoa** (Province of Orellana): its trajectory crosses primary forest and ends 800 meters from the northwest limit of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Yasuní National Park.
 - 2.2. **Vía Bataboro** (Pastaza Province): open within the Waorani territory and near the Yasuní National Park, 12 km from the buffer zone of the Yasuní National Park and 22 km from the western limit of the Intangible Zone of the PIACI Tagaeri and Taromenane.
 - 2.3. **Vía Nushiño** (Pastaza Province): located to the west of the Waorani Territory, it is projected to be extended by 41 km. It is an imminent threat to the primary forests in the area.
 - 2.4. **Vía Pumpuentza** (Province of Morona Santiago): this route could be linked to the development of oil activities in blocks 76, 77 and 78⁶⁴.
3. Brazil

⁶³ Finer M, Mamani N. 2022, MAAP: 157; Villacís, S., M. Finer y C. Josse. 2022. MAAP:159 2022.

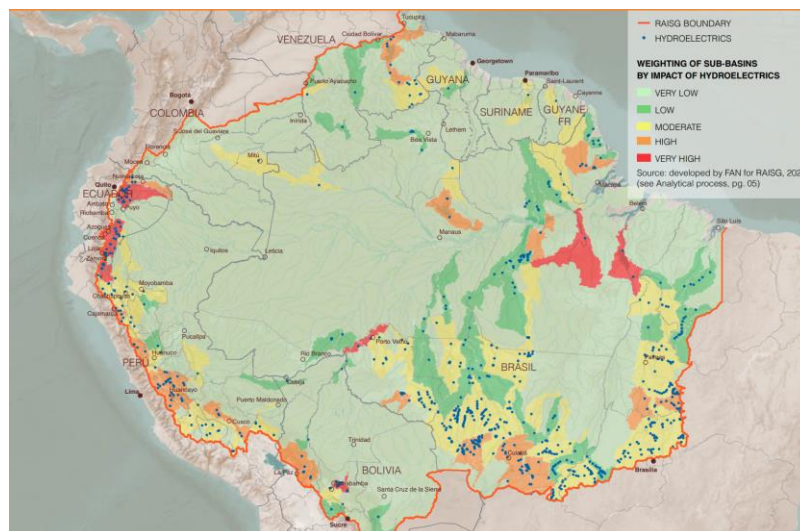
⁶⁴ Villacís S, Finer M, Josse C. 2022.

- 3.1. **Manaus – Porto Velho highway** (BR-319, Brazil) almost 900 km to connect Manaus (only access by air or river) with the rest of the Brazilian highway network in Humaitá and Porto Velho, to the south.
4. Colombia
 - 4.1. **Cachicamo – Tunia Highway** (Chiribiquete National Park, Colombia) affects the national park and the indigenous peoples that inhabit this region.
5. Bolivia
 - 5.1. **Ixiamas – Chivé Highway** (Bolivia) is a road project through intact ecosystems of the Bolivian Amazon.

Hydroelectric Power Plants

According to information from RAISG (2020), there are 350 hydroelectric plants (HPs) operating in the basin and 483 are projected, **adding a grand total of 833 hydroelectric plants**. The construction of hydroelectric projects alters the free flow of more than 1,100 tributaries that make up the Amazon basin.

Map 6 presents the location of current and planned hydroelectric projects and the impact or level of vulnerability of hydrological systems due to hydroelectric infrastructures. High vulnerability is defined when ecological systems prone to higher levels of drought; medium vulnerability refers to basins with high generation of emissions, areas subject to greater pressure due to existing irrigation areas (Andes and high basins in the south of the Brazilian Amazon) and those basins with a greater presence of CH; low vulnerability is given by HP in planning.



Map 7: Vulnerability of Hydrological Systems due to Hydroelectric Infrastructures
Source: Map 8 and 9 in RAISG, 2020, p.24.

Although half of the hydroelectric plants are in Brazil, it is important to note that Ecuador, a country that represents less than 2% of the Amazon, concentrates 18% of the hydroelectric plants in the region. The density of hydroelectric plants in the headwaters of the basin is of great concern given that they feed the Amazon River and their location affects the entire basin.

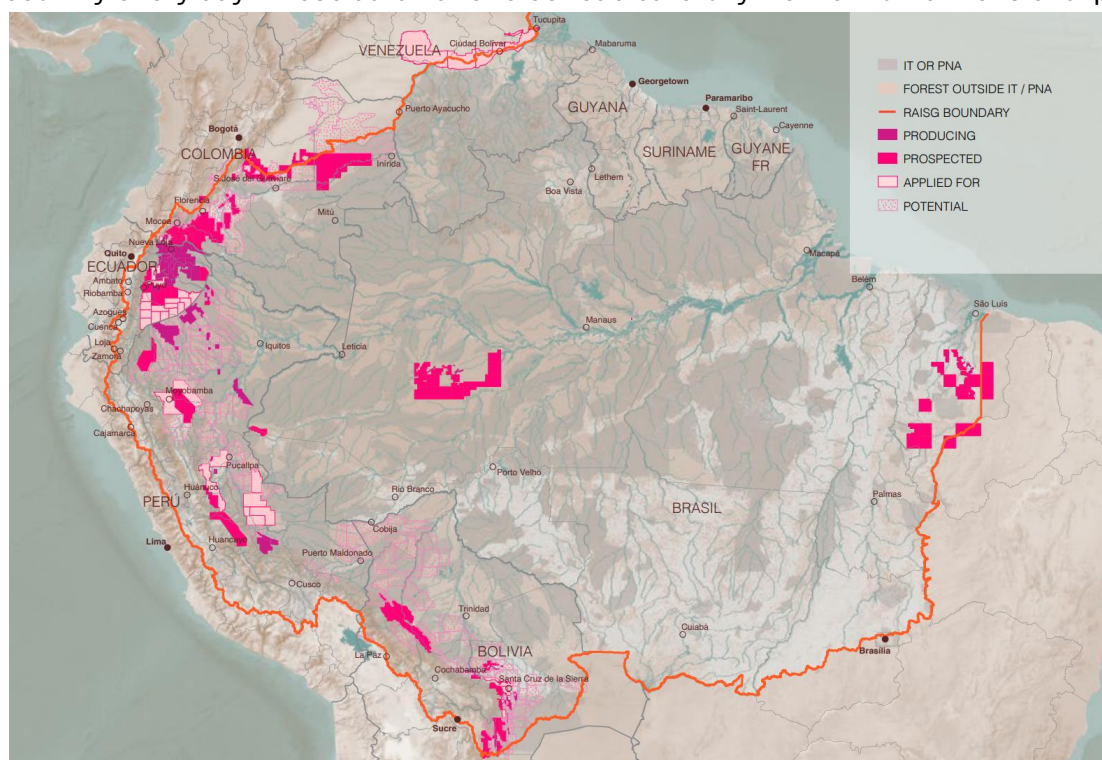
The HP in Ecuador are not only an issue of density but also of the environmental impact they generate. Coca-Codo Sinclair (Ecuador), built in a location indicated in technical reports from various administrations as risky, has produced a process of regressive erosion so acute that ruptures of the trans-Ecuadorian crude oil pipeline are almost weekly. In April 2020, the erosive force of the Coca River broke both national pipelines. More than 672,000 gallons of oil were spilled into the Coca and Napo

ivers. It was the worst spill in 15 years⁶⁵, leaving 27,000 Kichwa community members without fresh water or fish (the basis of the diet) during the strict confinement of the COVID -19 pandemic.

From a biodiversity perspective, existing and planned dams fragment most fish species' ranges, splitting them into more vulnerable populations that can reach a "vulnerability limit" below which species have heightened extinction risk (Carvajal-Quintero, et al., 2017). Just in Colombia, at least 74% (132) of fish species in the Magdalena River basin have at least half of their fragmented populations falling below the vulnerability limit⁶⁶. Carvajal et al. (2017) conclude from their analysis in Colombia that, "the construction of planned dams in addition to current dams would further heighten extinction risk at the species level". This decrease together with expected contamination impacts the food sovereignty of Amazon populations. Mercury contamination in fish and local human populations is expected to increase both above and below the dams creating significant health risks. Reservoir fish yields will compensate for some downstream losses, but increased mercury contamination could offset these benefits (Forsberg BR et al. 2017).

Oil Blocks

Oil blocks occupy 9.4% of the surface of the Amazonia and 43% of this extension is found within Indigenous Territories and Protected Areas. Most of the blocks (369) are located in the Andean Amazon (Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador). **Oil blocks overlap 11% of the total area of IT**, home to numerous indigenous peoples, including some PIACI. More than half (52%) of the Ecuadorian Amazon is an oil block, 31% in Peru, 29% in Bolivia and 28% in Colombia⁶⁷. **89% of the crude oil exported from the Amazon comes from Ecuador and 66% goes to the US⁶⁸.** More than 500 thousand barrels per day leave this country every day. These data have to be read carefully from a multidimensional perspective.



Mapa 8: Oil Blocks in the Amazon (according to phase of activity)

⁶⁵ Stand Research Group, Stand, Amazon Watch 2020.

⁶⁶ Carvajal et al., 2017, 711.

⁶⁷ RAISG 2020.

⁶⁸ Stand Research Group, Stand, Amazon Watch, 2021c, p.2.

First, the current legal frameworks of all the Amazon countries generate enabling conditions for extractive industries to operate in IT and PA. The absence of free, prior, and informed consent as a requirement for any government action in IT puts the health, food security and well being of indigenous peoples and local communities at risk, but above all, it represents a permanent threat to indigenous leaders, defenders and the indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation (PIACI).

Between 2015 and the first half of 2019, 232 indigenous community leaders were killed in the region due to disputes over land and natural resources (cited in CEPAL-FILAC 2020, 143). In 2020, this trend continued⁶⁹. In 2021, a third of all violations recorded in the Americas were against defenders of environmental, territorial, and indigenous peoples' rights⁷⁰. Currently, and given the alarming situation of violence in the region, the European Parliament⁷¹ has adopted a resolution in July 2022, condemning the human rights policies of the Brazilian president and denouncing the growing violence against human rights defenders, indigenous people, minorities and journalists in Brazil, including the murder of Dom Philips and Bruno Pereira.

Second, the role of the oil industry in the deforestation of the Amazon is decisive. Oil extraction requires roads and infrastructure that fragment ecosystems and acts as a "gateway to deforestation". When a road is opened, 40 km on both sides of the road are affected⁷², that is, they are deforested and/or degraded. This initial penetration allows other industries to enter such as illegal mining and logging, agriculture and unplanned occupation processes.

Third, **the benefits of an oil-based economy have not reached the Amazon populations or to these countries consistently and in a sustainable way**. The regions from which a large part of the revenues of these countries come from, have higher poverty rates. To solve the fiscal loopholes, debt structures linked to oil have been generated, as is the case in Ecuador, where the payment of debt is directly related to the expansion of the oil frontier and generates a vicious circle between destruction-poverty and indebtedness. Furthermore, international awards for international sentences where Ecuador lost trials, add to the negative side. Until 2018, Ecuador faced 31 legal processes in international courts and has paid USD 2,313 million for awards issued by arbitral tribunals, which have been contrary to the country⁷³.

Finally, it is crucial to understand that **50% of all oil extracted and exported from the Amazon goes to California**⁷⁴. The oil supply chain involves international banking, mainly the European banks⁷⁵ in oil in export and oil trade and, the US banks financing since the exploration of the project⁷⁶. There is a shared responsibility with the countries, banks and companies to which exports are directed regarding the violation of human rights, lack of fulfillment of rights such as FPIC, the criminalization of leaders who oppose extraction in their territories, and the cases of oil-related corruption. The US Department of Justice revealed more than a decade of bribery and corruption at national oil companies in Brazil and Ecuador that was instituted by oil traders like Gunvor and Vitol⁷⁷.

⁶⁹ Front Line Defenders 2020.

⁷⁰ Front Line Defenders 2021.

⁷¹ European Union 2022.

⁷² RAISG 2020, p.22.

⁷³ El Comercio, 1 de octubre, 2018.

⁷⁴ Stand Research Group, Stand, Amazon Watch, 2021c.

⁷⁵ Stand Research Group, Stand, Amazon Watch 2020.

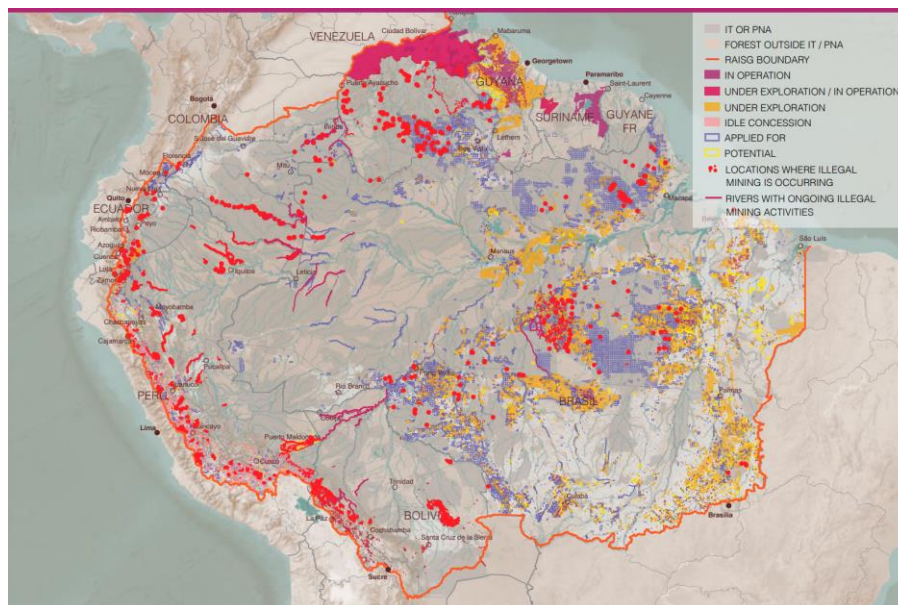
⁷⁶ Stand Research Group, Stand, Amazon Watch 2021a.

⁷⁷ Adrià Budry Carbó cited in Stand Research Group, Stand, Amazon Watch 2021a.

Legal and Illegal Mining

Mining, present in all the countries of the Amazon, **affects 17% of the region**⁷⁸. However, it is mainly concentrated in Brazil (75%), Venezuela (8%), Guyana and Peru. In Venezuela, the Orinoco Mining Arc National Strategic Development Zone promoted by the government occupies 24% of the Venezuelan Amazon and is based on AP and IT. In Venezuela, the Orinoco Mining Arc National Strategic Development Zone promoted by the government occupies 24% of the Venezuelan Amazon and is based on PA and IT. **This is the trend in the region. 9.3% of all mining activity is located in PAs and an additional 9% in IT.** Currently, half of the mining areas in AP and 68% of the overlapping ones in TI are in the application phase, which means that it could be reversed. 85% of the mining activity in IT occurs in already recognized IT⁷⁹.

All this information is about legal mining, licensed by the states. By its nature, illegal mining has no official records. However, the photos published in NASA (2021), reveal the repercussion of illegal mining: rivers of gold flowing mainly in the Peruvian Amazon, specifically in the Department of Madre de Dios, which nests three protected areas: Manu National Park, Tambopata National Reserve, and the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park. In 2020, during the pandemic, Peru climbed from the seventh country to the fourth country in the world with the largest gold reserves, it ranks second in copper and first in silver⁸⁰.



Map 9: Mining Zones in the Amazon (according to the phase of activity)

Source: Map 11 in RAISG, 2020, p.31.

Debt: a long term driver of destruction can possibly lever protection

The debt must be understood as a systemic problem that intertwines all the activities of the countries of the South and the North. Analyzing separately climate change, poverty, food insecurity, debt, loss of ecosystems and biodiversity, violence and the economy in general, reveals a bias that inhibits the possibility of responding to the crisis that is one with various symptoms. Debt is one of the structural causes of the destruction of the Amazon and other vital ecosystems for humanity.

⁷⁸ RAISG 2020, p.30.

⁷⁹ RAISG 2020.

⁸⁰ U.S. Geological Survey 2021, Mineral Commodity Summaries 2021.

COVID-19 pushed debt in developing economies to the highest level in more than 50 years (World Bank 2021). The World Bank acknowledges that the debt burden lingered long after the virus subsided, slowing the recovery. A decisive factor for debt in the short and medium term is the alarming increase in energy prices since the pandemic. Crude oil prices rose 350 percent from April 2020 to April 2022, the largest increase for any two-year equivalent period since 1970⁸¹. These spikes are reflected in exorbitant inflation rates that weigh on food prices in the whole world and consequently in the payment capacity of developing countries.

During the pandemic, the Amazon States faced serious levels of indebtedness: Brazil 101% of GDP, Ecuador 65% of GDP, Colombia 61% of GDP, among the highest. At the end of 2021, Latin America was the most indebted emerging region on the planet. This result of the pandemic shock adds to five decades with at least 50 sovereign debt crises and sovereign debt restructurings⁸². According to ECLAC data (CEPAL 2021), **gross government debt averages 78% of regional GDP in Latin America. Total debt service alone represents 59% of its exports of goods and services.** At the end of 2020, more than 60 percent of the IMF's emergency financing went to Latin America and the Caribbean for countries in debt crisis (Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada and Ecuador) and a line of flexible credit to countries with stable macroeconomic indices such as Colombia, Chile and Peru, that is, four of the 9 Amazonian countries. The measures that have been taken have been palliative and insufficient and the frameworks for action are on the way to obsolescence.

The frequency of natural disasters has increased significantly in the last 50 years (Buhr et al. 2018). Countries with higher degrees of climate vulnerability already face higher sovereign borrowing costs that translate into USD 40 billion in additional interest payments in the last 10 years (Buhr et al. 2018). These data reveal the vicious circle that adds developing countries that require more resources to cover their debts, a need that pushes to boost extractive supply chains in their countries, exerting greater pressure on natural resources and which, in turn, implies greater climate risk.

Furthermore, the emphasis of the current frameworks for debt and Official Development Assistance (ODA) is on the poorest nations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 28 of the 33 countries are considered to be in the middle income category and, therefore, do not qualify for low-interest loans for which the poorest countries are eligible, nor are they eligible for ODA. All Amazonian countries are middle income.

In relation to the debt with other countries or bilateral debt, Ecuador opened a new way of financing itself through the anticipated sale of oil to China. These are advance payments committing the direct sale of its oil until 2024. Between 2009 and 2016, Ecuador accessed USD 18.17 billion in financing conditional on the sale of Ecuadorian oil to Chinese state companies (PetroChina, Unipet and the Thai PTT). Two constants of these contracts are confidentiality clauses that prevent part of these agreements from being published and high annual interest rates between 6-7.25% (IMF interest rates is around 2%). Currently, Ecuador's debt with China now exceeds USD 5 billion, of which USD 2 billion are oil-backed instruments. All the oil from these transactions leaves the Yasuní National Park, which is in turn a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve where 1,300 species of trees, 610 species of birds, more than 268 species of fish and at least 200 species mammals⁸³. It is also home to two groups in voluntary isolation: the Tagaeri and the Taromenane.

⁸¹ Justin-Damien Guénette & Jeetendra Khadan, "The energy shock could sap global growth for years", World Bank (blog), June 22, 2022.

⁸² Ian Clark, Thomas MacWright, Brian Pfeiffer, Dimitrios Lyratzakis y Amanda Parra Criste, "Sovereign debt restructurings in Latin America: A new chapter", White & Case, 25 October 2021.

⁸³ WCS Ecuador.

This new mechanism for financing the exchange of debt for resources (commodities) demonstrates more directly the pressure of the debt on the natural resources of the indebted countries. However, the debt with IFIs and with Wall Street has to be analyzed with the same lens. Much of the debt of the Amazonian countries is market debt: it was made through the placement of bonds on the international market, with the big banks and investment funds on Wall Street as its main buyers⁸⁴. The private debt that includes international banking has to be audited to establish the role of those banking entities that finance the extractive value chains that are destroying the Amazon and their relationship with the debt of these countries.

Conditioned Debt Forgiveness as a Platform for the Protection of the Amazon

The proposal of the Initiative "Amazon for life: let's protect 80% by 2025" is the conditional cancellation of the debt. This innovative approach is pillared with debt as a mechanism to protect key priority areas in the Amazon rather than continue to fuel destruction. As mentioned in point 9 of the Indigenous Peoples Declaration below, the debtor nations, the international financial institutions and the private equity firms that hold the debt of the Amazon nations and want to support the ambition of avoiding the point of no return by protecting 80% of the Amazon, they have a unique opportunity before them to forgive existing debt in exchange for commitments to end industrial extraction and promote protections in primary forests and key priority areas, indigenous territories and protected areas.



“The external debt to the Amazonian countries must be understood as a systemic driver and fuel for extractive activities throughout the region. As a coalition, we propose the cancellation of this debt as an immediate protection measure to alleviate the economic challenges that our countries are going through. This debt forgiveness proposal would be conditioned on the protection of 80 percent of the Amazon. The industrialized countries and the International Financial Institutions would assume the responsibility of safeguarding the planet, mitigating climate change and alleviating the pressure on the Amazon with the leadership of the Amazonian countries.”

Tuntiak Katán
Vice Coordinador COICA
Ecuador

⁸⁴ Cota Isabela, “Deuda Externa: Latinoamérica, en las manos de Wall Street”, El País, 15 de diciembre de 2021.

Methodology

The Initiative “Amazonia for Life: protect 80% by 2025” adopts the definition of “Amazonia” established by the Amazonian Network of Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information⁸⁵ delimiting an area that includes the Amazon biome and associated drainage basins, headwaters, Amazonian ecosystems, and administrative regions in 9 countries. These criteria cover i) the limits of the Amazon biome in Colombia and Venezuela; ii) the limits of the Amazon basin in Ecuador, Perú and Bolivia; iii) the sum of the limits of the basins (Amazonas and Araguaia/Tocantins) and the limits of the administrative Legal Amazon in Brazil; iv) the whole continental territories of Guyana, Guyane Française and Suriname. The outcome is an area that covers 847⁸⁶ million hectares of which **protected areas and indigenous territories cover approximately 50 percent.**

The Amazonia is a more comprehensive concept that includes all the ecosystems that are part of this mega-system present in nine countries. As a point of reference, this information adopts the range of 20-25% deforestation and degradation established by Lovejoy and Nobre (2019) as the tipping point. However, it is essential to point out that the authors were referring to the eastern, southern and central Amazon and not to the entire region described in this document. In this sense, the results of this research are unique due to their geographical definition, data updates and depth.

This research was based initially on the available data up until 2019. This new release responds to updated information to 2020, that responds to a 36 year old (1985-2020) geographic monitoring of forest coverage and anthropic areas. The information related to drivers is based on data collected from 2012 to 2020 by RAISG.

RAISG warns that deforestation combined with fires is causing degradation and higher carbon emissions than ecosystems manage to absorb, and sequentially, resilience and ability to adapt to the effects of climate change are being lost. Despite this scenario, 74% of the Amazon contains sites with very high functionality and ecological representativeness called Key Priority Areas (APC) for water security, food security and climate resilience. These sites represent areas of opportunity to avoid and reverse the point of no return.

The Key Priority Areas and the current state of the forests are the product of a systematic analysis based on four criteria:

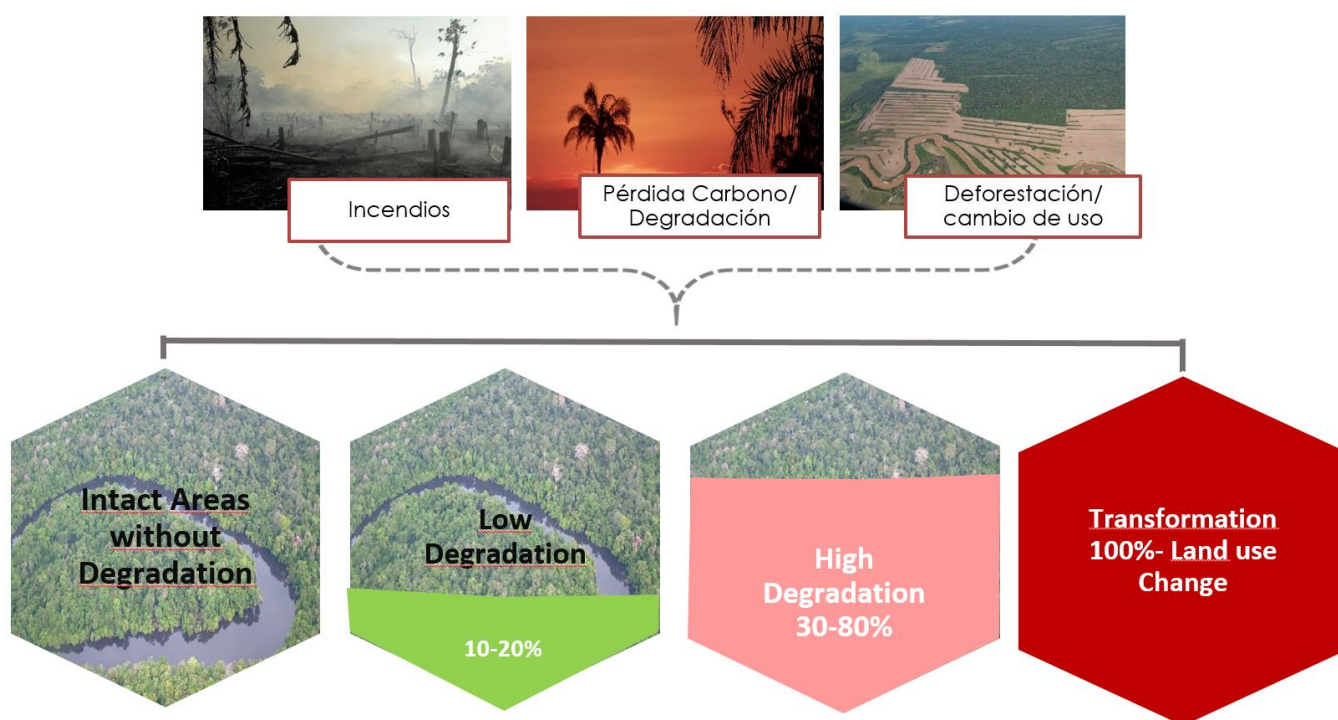
1. **Ecosystem functionality and services** defined by the capacity of ecological processes to provide services that generate human well-being (De Groot, 1992). This analysis integrates key priority areas for the supply of food, medicine (stable forest), and water (water productivity and headwaters). Key areas for the regulation of floods (aquatic systems), areas with the highest carbon stock for climate stability and the areas with the greatest ecological support according to their high heterogeneity were also integrated. Finally, support functions were delimited to guarantee a greater resilience of the Amazon through areas of greater ecological support according to their high ecosystem heterogeneity in mosaics of 2.000-hectares. The resulting map provides an innovative look at the role of the Amazon in human life. The layers that make up this analysis were prepared by the Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza (FAN) and the Fundación Ecociencia, both members of the RAISG.

⁸⁵ RAISG is a consortium of civil society organizations from the Amazon countries, supported by international partners, concerned with the socio-environmental sustainability of Amazonia, in RAISG’s 2020, p.11

⁸⁶ 847.020.911

2. **Ecological representativeness:** It is defined by the integration of areas that concentrate the greatest wealth of biodiversity of vertebrate species (amphibians, birds and mammals), encompass areas with greater ecosystem complexity defined by their high heterogeneity and high species richness and finally includes the ecosystem singularity defined by its restricted distribution in the Amazon. This map is derived from layers provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and analysis was performed by Ecociencia (Ecuador) and FAN (Bolivia).
3. **Symptoms and changes** represent the current state of ecosystems in terms of the transformation caused by deforestation and land use change, adding the degradation measured according to carbon loss, deforestation and land use change between 1985 and 2020. This map is the update of the map of Symptoms and consequences (RAISG 2020) with MapBiomass Amazonia v.3.0 (RAISG 2020).

This analysis defines degradation as the sum of fires, carbon loss, and deforestation by intensity: no degradation or intact, low degradation (under 10-20% disturbance), high degradation (30-80% disturbance), and total transformation of the natural land cover (80-100%).



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