

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF THE AMAZON



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Title:

Strengthening the Voices of the Amazon

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STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF THE AMAZON

How people in the Brazilian Amazon have come together and mobilized for their protection, rainforest conservation, and climate justice

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We have a relationship with the environment, with the river and its streams, knowledge that has been passed down from generations. We understand that we need to defend this territory so that we, and future generations, can stay here.

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INTRODUCTION: CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

“Indigenous peoples are on the frontline of the climate emergency. That’s why we must be at the center of the decisions that take place here.” In 2021, Indigenous activist Txai Suruí made this plea at COP26 in Glasgow. As the first Indigenous person to speak at a COP opening, she caught the world’s attention by demanding a place at the table for Indigenous peoples in climate governance spaces.

The fact is, (Afro)Indigenous groups and traditional communities have coexisted with the rainforest for centuries, developing unique cultures, languages, and sustainable practices that are integral to the preservation of the Amazon and its biodiversity. Their way of life protects the rainforest from deforestation and therefore preserves one of the largest carbon sinks in the world. But at the same time, they are also the first to suffer from changing weather patterns, fires, and droughts induced by climate change. This is why Txai said these communities are at the forefront of the climate crisis.

In her speech she also addressed the loss of a lifelong friend, an Indigenous land defender who was murdered for protecting the rainforest. This was a time when Brazil’s democracy and human rights were under direct threat from Jair Bolsonaro’s government. It openly encouraged illegal mining, invasion of Indigenous lands, and deforestation in the Amazon, while dismantling bodies for environmental protection. This painful backdrop highlighted the importance of Txai’s plea for local and Indigenous voices to be at the center of climate decision making.

This is where the Brazilian Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program comes in. Thirteen coalitions were formed, consisting of over 70 organizations in different Amazonian regions. Each facing specific problems and proposing different but complementary solutions to protect the rainforest. Their aim? By the end of the program in 2025, local Amazonian populations (both rural and urban), especially women and young people, had taken on central roles in climate justice discussions.

As you will see here, the program did this by linking and training local civil society organizations and groups representing a range of actors such as women, youth, Indigenous peoples, urban poor, digital activists, and citizen journalists to collaborate on a shared climate agenda and locally-shaped solutions. VCA also helped in setting the agenda, shaping public debate, and creating momentum on climate action through alternative storytelling. The network fostered joint lobby and advocacy to make climate policy, practice, and finance more responsive to locally-shaped climate solutions.

The 2025 climate conference, COP30, takes place in the Amazonian city of

Belém, drawing all eyes to the Amazon rainforest. An important moment for the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program in Brazil to amplify these pivotal voices of the rainforest. Because, without voices like those of Txai, we cannot begin to formulate an answer to the climate crisis and its injustices.

This publication gathers stories about many inspiring initiatives in the Brazilian Amazon supported by Hivos under the VCA program. From the largest Indigenous coalition to young activists fighting for urban sanitation. About our partner Casa Preta that collects and

shares Afro-Indigenous knowledge, and our partner Megafone Ativismo that builds a legacy of Amazonian activism. About Tapajós de Fato that connects remote communities through radio stations, and about the group Guardiões de Bem Viver that fights for nature's legal rights.

HIVOS AND VOICES FOR JUST CLIMATE ACTION

The Voices for Just Climate Action program in Brazil followed logically from

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CALL ON WORLD LEADERS TO TAKE
ACTION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE WITH THE CAMPAIGN
'WE ARE THE ANSWER'**



Hivos' experience with the All Eyes on the Amazon program (2017-2022), which protected the Amazon rainforest by defending the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities. VCA emphasized the importance of movement and network building between organizations, communities, and people. It focused on storytelling, training local leaders, and collective advocacy to change policies and re-direct financial flows.

VCA is an alliance of Hivos, WWF-NL, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Fundación Avina, Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and SouthSouthNorth (SSN). The program brings together global and local voices by connecting a diverse range of civil society organizations representing women, youth, Indigenous peoples, the urban poor, digital activists and more. It is implemented in Bolivia, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Paraguay, Tunisia, and Zambia.

BRAZIL'S INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT MOBILIZES FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of the Brazilian Amazon, comprising about 180 groups (and 305 groups in the whole of Brazil), each with distinct languages, traditions, and social structures. Together, they total around 1.7 million people, or 0.8% of Brazil's population. Indigenous peoples and their lands form an important protective shield for the flora and fauna of the Amazon, which have faced threats from modern human encroachment since Europeans arrived 500 years ago.

Indigenous peoples have an equally long history of mobilization and resistance to this encroachment. Ongoing oppression has forced them to protect their cultures and fight for their lands. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 protects Indigenous people and lands and acknowledges their rights. But in practice, their territories in

the rainforest are still being stolen and/or destroyed by climate change, deforestation, and mining.

COIAB'S INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE ADVOCACY

Enter the Joint Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon, also known as COIAB. Of Brazil's over two hundred Indigenous organizations, COIAB is the largest. Hivos supports COIAB in national and international advocacy and training through our Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program. One of the most important outcomes of our partnership was the creation of the G9 of the Indigenous Amazon, an international group of leaders from Indigenous organizations in the nine Amazonian countries. The G9 was announced in October 2024 at the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity in Colombia. The aim is to position these Indigenous organizations of the Amazon Basin as international authorities and world powers in terms of biodiversity and climate on the same level as the G7 or G20.

The group has formulated an international advocacy strategy for COP30, the



© PHOTO CREDIT: KATTI GAVIÃO

MARCIELY TUPARI FROM COIAB, MARCHING
WITH THE SIGN: 'WE ARE THE ANSWER'

UN climate summit taking place in Belém in November 2025. It addresses the authority and governance of Indigenous leaders, as well as current challenges regarding biodiversity, climate, and desertification.

Territorial demarcation is the central axis of G9's climate policy and strategy for COP30. "Unifying our actions with the other countries of the Amazon Basin is an achievement. We are continental brothers, but we don't always manage to speak the same language, even though we have similar problems," says Alana Manchineri, international advisor at COIAB. She is an Indigenous leader closely following the G9 agenda.

Their joint advocacy efforts have led to fruitful learning exchanges between the nine countries. "In Brazil we have a constitution that protects us through articles 231 and 232. And we can see that in some other countries, especially here in the Amazon Basin, Indigenous peoples have no article or law that guarantees them protection and, above all, recognition as Indigenous peoples. On the other hand, there are many Indigenous movements in various countries that have taught us about mobilization, like Ecuador, for example," explains Alana Manchineri.

TRAINING AND ADVOCACY

But COIAB engages in many more activities, for example, training. Their VCA-supported course, Climate Change, Carbon, and REDD in the Indigenous Amazon, drew over 230 participants from all nine countries. The course promoted dialogue between traditional and Western knowledge and featured Indigenous climate

authorities as facilitators, such as Sineia do Vale, coordinator of the Indigenous Committee on Climate Change (CIMC) and recognized as Brazil's Indigenous scientist. The sessions were also important for exchanging knowledge on territories and strengthening initiatives for climate change adaptation.

In 2023 COIAB was one of the organizers of the Assembly of the Peoples of the Earth for the Amazon, in which 800 Indigenous leaders took part. It resulted in a letter from the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon Basin to state leaders under the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA) treaty with demands for COP30.

VCA AND BUILDING NETWORKS

Since 2022, VCA in Brazil has been supporting advocacy and amplified the Indigenous voices of the Amazon as protagonists in building effective climate solutions. VCA builds bridges to strengthen their collective impact. That's why VCA and COIAB collaborated to scale up the movement and mobilized to hold governments accountable.

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE POWER AT BRAZIL'S LARGEST INDIGENOUS GATHERING

3 April 2025 saw the 21st edition of the largest gathering of Indigenous People in Brazil – and in the world. Called the Free Land Camp, or Acampamento Terra Livre (ATL), it aimed to strengthen Indigenous bonds worldwide by bringing together global leaders to improve Indigenous advocacy and protect the planet.

Since it was announced that Belém in the Brazilian Amazon would host COP30, Brazil's Indigenous movement has been laser-focused on ensuring it will be a milestone for climate policy. So, the 2025 ATL took on a distinctly international character, inviting Indigenous leaders from both Brazil and all over the world to come and discuss their initiatives for COP30.

We spoke to Marciely Tupari, secretary

coordinator of the Joint Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB). COIAB is pivotal for Indigenous mobilization in Brazil and has been a partner of Hivos' Voices for Just Climate Action program since 2021. "The 2025 Free Land Camp (ATL) reaffirmed the power of Indigenous diplomacy, bringing together peoples from the nine Amazon Basin countries, Australia, the Pacific

FREE LAND CAMP / ACAMPAMENTO
TERRA LIVRE (ATL)



CREDIT: THAIGON ARAPIUN/COIAB



CREDIT: THAIGON ARAPIUN/COIAB

Islands, and Canada. This didn't start just now - it's the continuation of centuries of resistance and solidarity between peoples who, although far apart, share the same struggle," she said.

Marciely – a young Indigenous leader – added that ATL has strengthened their collective voice by launching an International Indigenous Commission to be part of COP30 and supporting the "We Are the Answer" campaign. "It was a space for reaffirmation: while states are slow to act, we Indigenous peoples have been practicing true climate justice for generations - protecting the territories that sustain the planet," she said.

INTERNATIONAL MOBILIZATION

As one of the Indigenous hosts of COP30, COIAB led the pre-COP30 debates during the ATL. Also present were the G9 Indigenous Amazon, a union of Indigenous leaders from the nine Amazon Basin countries, and Troika Indígena, a union of Indigenous peoples from Brazil, Australia, and the Pacific Islands.

The two Indigenous coalitions declared in a statement: "From now on, we will be united, declaring to the world that, if it's up to us, COP30 in the Amazon will be the symbol of a decisive turning point in climate negotiations and mobilizations."

VCA, STRONGER TOGETHER

ATL is an example of joining forces, of how different communities can strengthen one another by sharing strategies. It showed that Indigenous peoples worldwide can work together to amplify their message. ATL launched the International Indigenous Commission for COP30, which is part of a Leadership Circle created by the COP30 presidency – The People’s Circle – that includes the largest representative bodies of Indigenous peoples.

Hivos has a history of supporting ATL. In 2024, VCA provided financial support for the organization to buy food and water for the attendees.

ACTIVISTS WALKING WITH A SIGN THAT SAYS:
THE ANSWER IS US.



CREDIT: DOÊTRO TUKANO/COIAB

AMAZONIAN URBAN DWELLERS FIGHT FOR SANITATION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE IN BELÉM

“With 29.8 million inhabitants, 76 percent of the population in the Brazilian Amazon is urban and faces problems typical for large capitals, but the main problem is their greatest resource: water.” This statement lies at the root of Mandí, an organization working to improve sanitation and climate adaptation in Amazonian cities in the state of Pará by raising awareness and influencing environmental and climate policy. We visited Mandí’s new headquarters to discuss their work and see how they are preparing for COP30 in November, when their city will take the global stage.

FROM LOCAL WATER SANITATION TO INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE ADVOCACY

The idea of Mandí took shape nine years ago in Belém, an Amazonian metropolis with 1.3 million inhabitants. Belém scores ninth worst in water sanitation of all Brazilian cities. While environmental protection

in more remote parts of the Amazon is discussed more widely, water sanitation is not often discussed.

A case in point is Belém’s rivers and canals, which were clearly not taken into account by its urban planners. This motivated a group of mainly oceanography students to found an organization specifically to tackle urban river pollution and the right to sanitation: Mandí. They initially aimed to raise awareness about the state of the rivers and sanitation in the city, but over time this focus has broadened to climate justice and empowering young women to fight for it.

While still at university, they started a project to raise local awareness about the city’s rivers by organizing expeditions along the Tucunduba riverbanks. Since 2017, 395 people have participated in 18 editions of the project. Gabriela Miranda, Logistics and Operations Advisor at Mandí, remembers an edition that really moved her: “You could really see that it engaged not only the people taking part, but also the neighborhood’s inhabitants. An older

MANDÍ EXPEDITION



CREDIT: MANDÍ/ARCHIVE



man came up to us and said this was first time he'd seen people talking about the river as something alive. Until then he had only seen people treat it as an outlet, just for discarding trash."

In 2021, Mandí provided free online training for 40 young women on participating in political debates and leading policy advocacy about Belém's environmental policies. They drafted an advocacy plan that later led to the official Climate Agenda for Belém. At the same time, Mandí and Rede Jandyras submitted a proposal to create the Municipal Forum on Climate Change, which was approved in Belém's Multi-Year Plan 2022-2025.

After just two years, the climate forum has become an important space for debate where local demands are heard by city authorities. Something that really changed Mandí's relationship with the municipality, according to Public Policy Advisor Gabriel Creão. "After the creation

of the forum, we were able to work more closely with the municipality and public officers. We now have better access to the power in the city, and we can work more closely on monitoring and influencing public policy."

ADVOCACY AND MOBILIZATION

Occupying these policy spaces is important. Mandí and a network of organizations now also advocate for climate policy, not only for climate adaptation in the city of Belém, but also within national and international spheres. In 2024 they provided input for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the Brazilian government's climate plans, making sure the urban voices of the Amazon were heard.

Mandí's network also holds the government accountable by tracking the

implementation of promised climate goals, collecting data, providing research to parliamentarians, and keeping track of possible harmful laws – such as laws allowing oil exploitation in the Amazon. If promised goals aren't met, they apply pressure for more action.

As Mandí focuses on mobilizing young, urban, and mostly non-white Amazonian women to press for climate justice local and globally, they need to make sure their rightsholders can accept the challenge. Mobilization Advisor Natasha Reis explains how: "We provide food, transportation, find flexible times and find locations where we need their voices to be heard, such as remote districts and slums, where climate change hits hardest."

The world's climate summit is being held in Belém in November 2025, but it

will be difficult to get there – especially for international NGO's – and the city is still building venues, parks, and roads. "The question of whether Belém is ready for COP30 is irrelevant to me. It's good that the whole world will now see the reality of living in a city like this. But the downside is that all the money put into COP30 could have also gone straight to the people who need it most," says Communications Manager Dalissa Cabral.

VCA and strengthening youth-led organizations

With support from the Voices for Just Climate Action program, Mandí was able to build a network, invest in staff training, and increase their activities. They also recently moved into their own headquarters, where they can have face-to-face meetings and host workshops.

TEAM MANDÍ



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

LEARNING ABOUT BLACK AND AFRO-INDIGENOUS CULTURE IN THE AMAZON

Casa Preta literally means “black house” in Portuguese. It is a cultural center in Belém, the capital of Pará state in Northern Brazil where people come to learn about Brazil’s African culture. In Casa Preta one can learn to make African drums, they provide music lessons at schools and aim to archive and educate black and Afro-Indigenous culture in real life and through their online tool Plantaformas.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

In 1888, Brazil was the last country in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery after having enslaved an estimated five million Africans. The effects are still being felt today and are worsened by climate change. “Black and brown people suffer disproportionately from the consequences of climate change. For example, when we have heavy rainfall and flooding, the slums suffer the most. The water washes away the houses where mostly Black people live. This is because Black

people have less access to education and good jobs; they are marginalized and live in the most vulnerable communities,” clarifies Paula Moreira, Hivos’ Voices for Just Climate Action program manager in Brazil.

Don Preto was born in Campinas, São Paulo, but has lived in the Amazonian city of Belém for two decades. He carries the African diasporic title “Onilu” - the one who builds drums – and is one of the founders of Casa Preta. “The racist colonial legacy continues to threaten the traditional knowledge of Quilombolas [Afro-Bra-

TEAM CASA
PRETA



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

zilian communities founded by Black people who were enslaved], Indigenous groups, and riverside populations,” Don explains when asked about the necessity of Casa Preta.

“Natural resources are being overexploited in lands these communities have protected for generations. The degradation of ecosystems, illegal mining, and large-scale monocultures of soy, cattle, and grains are displacing communities and threatening food sovereignty. What we see is the steady destruction of ecosystems that were long preserved by traditional knowledge. Now they’re disappearing under the pressures of industrial expansion.”

PLANTAFORMAS: A DIGITAL UTOPIA IN THE AMAZON

Don is cynical about international climate conferences, perceiving events like the COP as mostly interesting for political leaders and holding the danger of selling the Amazon for its goods instead of actually preserving it. “The money that has

been invested in the Belém for COP30 is not going where it should go. It’s not strengthening the slums, where people need it most. It’s being invested in the center of the city.”

Instead, Don works on mobilization and education online. “Imagine a free space that’s like a garden, a place where people can cultivate projects, meetings, ideas, and gatherings.” Don tells us that this vision gave birth to the digital platform Plantaformas, designed by Casa Preta – together with professor Jader Gama and Professor Luiz Sanches – to organize communal data, narratives, and collaborative planning of Black, Indigenous, and riverside communities.

Recognizing the need for stronger community-driven governance, they used Decidim, a free open-source software designed to facilitate democratic participation. With financial support from Hivos’ Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA), the platform emerged as a hub for social organization. “We want to take the discussion about technology from the elite and make it more accessible for communities. We envisioned a platform around politics, technology, and the social black movement.” Don states that this necessity comes from the idea that big tech is not Brazilian. “We lose ownership of everything we publish online, if we are fighting for land and territory offline, we must also do this online, we need to strive for digital sovereignty.”

Plantaformas has a national reach and has offered workshops and meetings to almost five thousand registered users. To date, some 700 meetings have been held, generating more than 200 proposals for organizing social and environmental data and knowledge from diverse groups and communities.



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

FIRST SUCCESSES

Plantaformas is deeply connected to a national network of digital culture advocates, uniting organizations, researchers, and activists who believe in the fight for free digital space. The network played a crucial role in shaping Brasil Participativo, the Brazilian Federal Government's participatory platform, which is also based on Decidim.

After discussions with Casa Preta, the Brazilian Minister of Technology decided the government would use the citizen participation tool to shape Brazil's national climate plan. Paula is confident: "We can say that the national climate plan of Brazil will probably be much more inclusive because of the platform that Casa Preta introduced in the country."

"Within Plantaformas we are also organizing the Pará Culture Committee, a project affiliated with the Ministry of Culture," Don continues. "The project is based on the Plantaformas strategy and provides workshops about developing public policies that expand access to

public and private resources. This project has already reached 31 municipalities in the Brazilian state of Pará. And helps us to address other topics the political arena as well, such as racism or the black community. It makes communication with the government a bit easier," says Don.

"Plantaformas represents years of research and engagement with community knowledge. Our goal is to ensure that digital tools remain rooted in grassroots movements and are accessible to all, influencing governmental decisions while staying true to their community-based origins," Don adds.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE VCA NETWORK

"Hivos provides financial support, but it goes far beyond that," Don says. "Through their support our operations have expanded; we are reaching more places where our work can be used, exchanged, and shown as an example for other organizations. We have also grown institutionally, and our organization has become more professional. The partnership introduced us to new funders and allies who believe in making the world a better place. Belonging to this network also puts us on an equal footing with other older or larger organizations. It teaches Casa Preta the decision-making processes in organizational management."

THE DRUMS IN
CASA PRETA



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

BUILDING A LEGACY OF AMAZONIAN CLIMATE ACTIVISM

While Brazil's artists, activists, and journalists are experiencing increasing backlash from conservative political forces, the Megafone coalition is shaping a counter narrative to support them – especially those who fight to save the Amazon. It aims to build a legacy through large-scale graffiti murals, annual activism awards, and workshops to empower local communities.

Megafone Ativismo is a coalition of five organizations under Hivos' Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program. The coalition is working hard to create recognition and appreciation for Amazonian activists and provide inspiration for minorities, such as youth and traditional peoples. Through their social media and media outreach they engage and inform the Brazilian audience. "Artists and activists are

being criminalized in Brazil. Our country has a high rate of journalist killings, so it's important that we shift the narrative and show that we're not criminals, but we are fighting for something important," says Jonaya, the general coordinator of the coalition.

An important way of doing that is through their Megafone Activism Award. Since 2022 they annually award activists

AWARDED IN THE DIRECT ACTION
CATEGORY OF 2025



CREDIT: MEGAFONE PUBLICITY

GRAFFITI MURAL IN SÃO PAULO, MADE
FROM ASH FROM AMAZON
WILDFIRES, ARTIST MUNDANO, 2021



CREDIT: MEGAFONE PUBLICITY

in 14 different categories – from street art to documentary to street demonstration – building a legacy of Brazilian activism. “It’s important to build a collective memory and narrative through years of awards so people can see that art and activism are something to be appreciated and valued,” Jonaya says.

Megafone also provides workshops on climate change, activism, and mobilization. And offers mini grants (under 1000 USD) to projects such as podcasts or murals in small communities.

Claiming public attention for climate change through art

Deforestation and forest fires in 2021 severely impacted local communities and nature in the Legal Amazon and other biomes in Brazil. To publicly address

this, the artist Mundano started a project called Cinzas da Floresta, or Ashes of the Forest. This art piece is a graffiti painting of a dozen stories tall in São Paulo made from the ash of burnt forests. The mural was covered by over fifty national and international media outlets. “International media seems important, but it’s also crucial to reach local press, to show the importance of activism and change the narrative locally,” Jonaya stresses.

Megafone also helped create a big mural in the center of the Amazonian city Manaus showing the face of Indigenous leader and environmentalist Raoni Metuktire. “In 2022 Raoni was nominated for the Nobel peace prize, but this was during the Bolsonaro government, and he didn’t pay any attention to it. That’s why we chose a

mural and big posters of Raoni in 50 different cities to draw attention to him and his legacy. A lot of press covered this campaign, and he finally got the attention he deserved,” says Jonaya.

ANTICIPATING COP30

“There is a bill under discussion that makes it much easier for environmentally destructive activities – such as mining and agriculture – to take place. This law threatens Indigenous lands and will probably result in a rise in the use of agricultural toxins,” says Jonaya. The coalition is hoping that the eyes of the world on Brazil during COP30 can prevent the law from being passed.

The coalition is also organizing workshops in preparation for COP30 to inform the public about the funds the UNFCCC provides. “There are many steps in between these huge global funds and local traditional communities. We need to inform people how these processes work,” explains Jonaya.

VCA AND ARTIVISM

VCA emphasizes the importance of art and activism in the context of climate justice. Art has the power to make complex issues such as climate change more relatable. In this context it can raise awareness, facilitate dialogue, and achieve personal and social transformation.

ONE OF THE FIVE FINALISTS IN
THE DIRECT-ACTION
CATEGORY OF 2025 / APIB



CREDIT: MEGAFONE PUBLICITY

RECLAIMING POWER OVER AMAZONIAN MEDIA NARRATIVES

Some Indigenous communities in the Amazon live in remote areas, where access to news, information and essential services can be limited. While a handful of powerful families with ties to politics and the agro-industry monopolize the Brazilian mainstream media, the independent media platform Tapajós de Fato speaks with a different voice.

WIELDING INFORMATION IN THE FIGHT TO SAVE THE AMAZON

João Paulo works for Tapajós de Fato and lives in Pará, a state in the Brazilian Amazon. "There are many 'news deserts' in the Amazon, only mass media reaches these places," he says. "The mass media always talks about how this region should be 'developed' economically.

All the while, centuries-old nature is being destroyed, and people are being chased off their land by commercial interests."

These mainstream media channels are financed by big agro, governments, and multinationals that mine for raw materials in the region. "In short, by parties for whom protecting the rainforest is not the highest priority," says João.

Tapajós de Fato is trying to cut through the fog of mass media messaging. This independent media platform informs the local population about human rights violations and exploitation of the rainforest.

JOÃO PAULO



CREDIT: TAPAJÓS DE FATO



NOT WITHOUT DANGER

The work João and his colleagues do is not without danger. “We are threatened and even attacked because we report on violations of human rights and the rights of nature. Every year, dozens of human rights defenders and environmental activists are murdered in Brazil. Pará is one of the most dangerous places for us.”

Nevertheless, João and his colleagues bravely carry on. “We are the only independent media platform working in the Amazon. Without our reporting, abuses in the region would go undiscovered. Local communities and victims of climate change need the information we provide to make their voices heard in the political and public debate.”

FIGHTING STEREOTYPES

But it doesn’t stop there. Tapajós also runs a 17-month communication course at the Federal University of Pará. They teach

independent communication but also focus on very specific topics like security for journalists. Half of the slots in the course are reserved for people who have worked in communication before, and 25 percent for students from the university, while the rest is reserved for people from communities in Pará. “This is especially important because mainstream media usually shows stereotypes of Indigenous and Amazonian communities. Reporters from traditional media who cover Amazonian territories normally come from different places in Brazil, for example from the South, and they don’t understand local realities,” says João. “Local communities only make the news when disasters occur, like droughts or floods. It doesn’t show their daily lives, which reinforces the existing narratives and stereotypes.”

Other ways Tapajós strengthens independent voices from these territories are through communication collectives and preparing communities for COP30 negotiations. They also cover the event itself.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is particularly important for Brazilian activism. In April 2025, 90 young people in Pará were trained to become citizen journalists in their communities. “They learned how to make videocasts, showing that with only a phone they can already communicate about their territories on social media,” João mentions.

This way, the young local reporters acquired the ability to connect with organizations and set up networks to defend environmental, human, and territorial rights. And they have become sources for national and international newspapers.

"It's important that we don't wait for them to be adults to engage in this fight for their rights," João says. "This not only enables them to tell their own stories, but it also helps youth reflect on their communities and understand their role in society."

Disseminating crucial information in remote communities through VCA

With the support of Hivos' Voices for Just Climate Action program, they built community radios to spread information to the most remote areas in the rainforest. The radios use loudspeakers to broadcast throughout each community, addressing topics such as sustainable tourism, climate change issues, and how communities can deal with them. The region PAE

Lago Grande in Pará has 154 communities, and 30 of them have now received a communication workshop.

"We go to the communities for two to three days to train them how to make a radio program and use social media, so they can use it to broadcast within their own community," João says. Radio Banzeiro is an online radio station with podcasts on useful topics for local people, but not all communities can access them. So, the workshops also focus on challenges around access to electricity or the internet. "Many radio stations in the Amazon are in places without internet. Thanks to Hivos, we were able to distribute our podcasts to them on USB sticks."

RADIO STATION IN THE COMMUNITY OF VILA BRASIL



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

AMAZONIAN COMMUNITIES FIGHTING FOR TERRITORIAL AND NATURE RIGHTS

8

Agro-extractivist settlements in the Brazilian Amazon combine agriculture with the sustainable use of forest resources, creating livelihood for local communities while conserving nature. With climate change and nature-harming activities threatening their way of life, the inhabitants of the Amazonian Agro-extractive Settlement Project (PAE) Lago Grande, are standing strong. A coalition of around 155 communities is advocating for legal rights to their existence and their environment.

FEAGLE – short for The Federation of Residents and Community Associations of the Agro-extractive Settlement Project (PAE) Lago Grande – is spearheading this bureaucratic fight. It represents the 155 communities in the region, fighting for collective titling of the territory and the implementation of public policy.

Maria Selma, vice president of FEAGLE explains the stress the area is under. “Of the territory, 55 percent is mapped for mineral exploitation, this

affects 62 communities out of the 155. In addition, land grabbing and illegal logging occur frequently and soybean expansion is knocking on our door.” On top of this, a new climate reality is taking its toll. Fish are dying as rivers disappear, and family farmers are losing seeds, no longer knowing when to plant.

According to Selma, obtaining this legal status for the Amazonian settlements would reduce conflict in the area. “When we get this collective title, we’ll

PRE-COP EVENT IN VILA
BRASIL



CREDIT: GUARDIÕES DO BEM VIVER

AGRO-EXTRACTIVE SETTLEMENT PAE LAGO GRANDE IN THE AMAZON



have a better chance of demanding public policies and getting settler rights. This title will stop logging, and land grabs will have repercussions."

In 2019, young people related to FEAGLE started a movement, Guardiões do Bem Viver or "guardians of good living," in response to mining interests in the area. Since then, the movement has grown, and they now address issues such as continuous electricity supply in the communities, access to education and territorial defense.

"Bem viver" is a way of living that maintains ancestral practices and a relationship of belonging and respect but is also about

living in safety. "It has to do with our way of planting and producing," Thaís de Oliveira, a member of the movement, explains. "We have a relationship with the environment, with the river and its streams, knowledge that has been passed down from generations. We understand that we need to defend this territory so that we, and future generations, can stay here."

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES

This includes the fight against climate change and protecting the natural environment where the communities live. In 2023, communities in the upper part of the river started suffering the impacts of logging ports. The water turned red, and bathing in it caused vomiting, diarrhea, and itchy skin. "We became very concerned about these reports. We wondered what we could do to protect the river and our lives, because in many communities people still drink river water, wash clothes in it and carry out other daily ancestral activities," Thaís explains.

That same year, the Amazon went through a major drought and many of the rivers began to dry up. Feeling pow-

THAÍS DE OLIVEIRA



CREDIT: JAEËL POELEN

MARLON REBELO



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

MOBILIZING IN PREPARATION FOR COP30

In May 2025, Guardiões do Bem Viver organized a pre-COP event for youth, women, and community leaders in PAE Lago Grande and neighboring territories to prepare for COP30. “Everyone here is feeling the impacts of climate change, but they don’t know how to talk about what is actually happening,” says Marlon Rebelo, president of the pre-COP event. “We realized that a more accessible narrative was needed, closer to our climate change realities. We wanted to talk about the COPs, but we didn’t really understand what a COP was, and even less how it works.”

Guardiões joined forces with the University of Brasília and the University of Rio de Janeiro to help them understand how the COP is run in preparation for their event. “We wanted our pre-COP to be a platform for youth from the territory, so we held it in Vila Brasil. That way, others could feel and experience the reality of those who live in the Amazon’s communities,” Marlon adds.

erless, Guardiões do Bem Viver launched the campaign ‘Rights to the Arapiuns river’ to try and find a legal solution for protecting the river from environmental degradation and climate stress. “We are taking this debate to the Santarém City Council because we also need commitment from council members. We established a committee, a group of people from the communities, that will act as spokespersons for the river. It consists of leaders from communities and villages from the Arapiuns region and different social movements. They will be responsible for monitoring the Arapiuns River,” Thaís explains. The campaign is also consulting lawyers in Santarém to support them.

‘WE ARE GUARDIANS OF THE FOREST’



CREDIT: JAËL POELEN

VCA AND AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SPACES

VCA supports these communities to access COP30. “We are suffering the impacts of climate change, so our future depends on the decisions taken there. But not everyone can be present.” The pre-COP gathering ended with a final document containing the demands of the people in PAE Lago Grande, to be presented at COP30 in Belém by the Brazilian youth representative.

GOING AGAINST THE CURRENT FOR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE AMAZON

Piracema is an ancient Tupi language word for the season when fish swim long distances upstream to find calm waters where they can lay their eggs. It inspired the name of the VCA program's coalition Na Piracema das Mudanças Climáticas: women and young people in the Brazilian Amazon "going against the current" to address social and climate issues through art. Lucía Santalices from the coalition talks to us about activism, climate justice, and ecofeminism.

The coalition works with women, young people, and artists. "Little by little, there is more conversation about the invisible work of caregiving, especially in households, which is mostly done by women. However, little is said about the fact that women are often also at the forefront of community and environmental care. That makes it particularly important to empower women for grassroots leadership in their territories," says Lucía. "On the other hand, we see that young

EQÜIT INSTITUTE COORDINATES
NA PIRACEMA DAS MUDANÇAS CLIMÁTICAS



CREDIT: EQÜIT INSTITUTE

people are increasingly distancing themselves from social movements and value individual achievements more. We want to seek dialogue with these young people and children in communities and territories, we believe that art is a good channel for this conversation,” Lucía continues.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM AND FEMINIST EMPOWERMENT

Piracema developed numerous activities in the municipalities of Altamira, Pará; Imperatriz, Maranhão; and Manaus, Amazonas for groups of women and racialized and dissident bodies. These are a few examples:

- The coalition pressured municipal authorities to finish building a sanitary landfill in Imperatriz. Up until then, there was only a garbage dump without sewage treatment, severely polluting the land and groundwater.

- In Manaus, the coalition built a strong bond with students at a public school who participated in the coalition’s theater workshops focusing on socio-climatic themes. This led to the creation of the cultural production company ,Ykamiabas Produções, with feminist and decolonial perspectives.
- The coalition works with the local Umbanda temple in Altamira, a space that welcomes a diversity of local youth, Black people, LGBTQIA+ people, and inhabitants of Almira’s periphery. The work focuses on forest maintenance, as forests are home to enchanted beings, entities, and deities.

ARTIVISM: WHERE NATURE AND CULTURE MEET

Art takes on a central role in Piracema’s approach. “It can be a tool for raising awareness about climate change. Socially

**TIDE FESTIVAL
IN ALTAMIRA, PARÁ**



CREDIT: EQUIT INSTITUTE

engaged art can explicitly highlight the issue,” states Lucía. “But art can also strengthen people’s sense of belonging. Cultural traditions teach us to have a relationship of deep respect for nature. Art influences our ways of thinking and being and keeps alive the Indigenous cultural traditions of territories. A people’s dances and songs, their food, their Indigenous cultural traditions, and their myths and rituals are a significant part of what gives them a sense of belonging to and wanting to care for their land. Art is collective.”

“In this sense, the relationship between culture and nature is fundamental. We

could say that culture, and more specifically art, is humanity’s dialogue with the earth and the cosmos. Therefore, I believe that relating art and climate, beyond the simple use of art as a tool for raising awareness of the climate agenda, is crucial for us to value local cultures and technologies in the maintenance of forests,” Lucía concludes.

VCA AND CONNECTING ARTISTS

With support from the Just Climate Action program, Piracema has achieved a lot to be proud of, from multilingual festivals to hundreds of climate debates and productive art courses. Amongst the latter, Lucía signals out their literary, film, and music productions. “We produced a cordel – rhyming poetic prose in northeastern Brazil – about the importance of sanitary landfills, and a short documentary about the same topic. We also recorded four singles by different Brazilian composers, addressing issues related to social and climate justice. We produced an animated music video, which has been selected for the Vitória Film Festival, and produced a children’s book on local environmental issues that tells about the fantastic childhood of Mãe Nayara, a religious leader, healer, and master of local culture.”

A final lasting impact is a website created for the artists involved. “Many artists live in the outskirts and have great difficulty in showcasing their work, most of them did not have a portfolio. The website allowed them to expand and promote their work,” Lucía says.

**THEATER PLAY “OXIGÊNIO” (OXYGEN)
IN MANAUS, AMAZONAS**

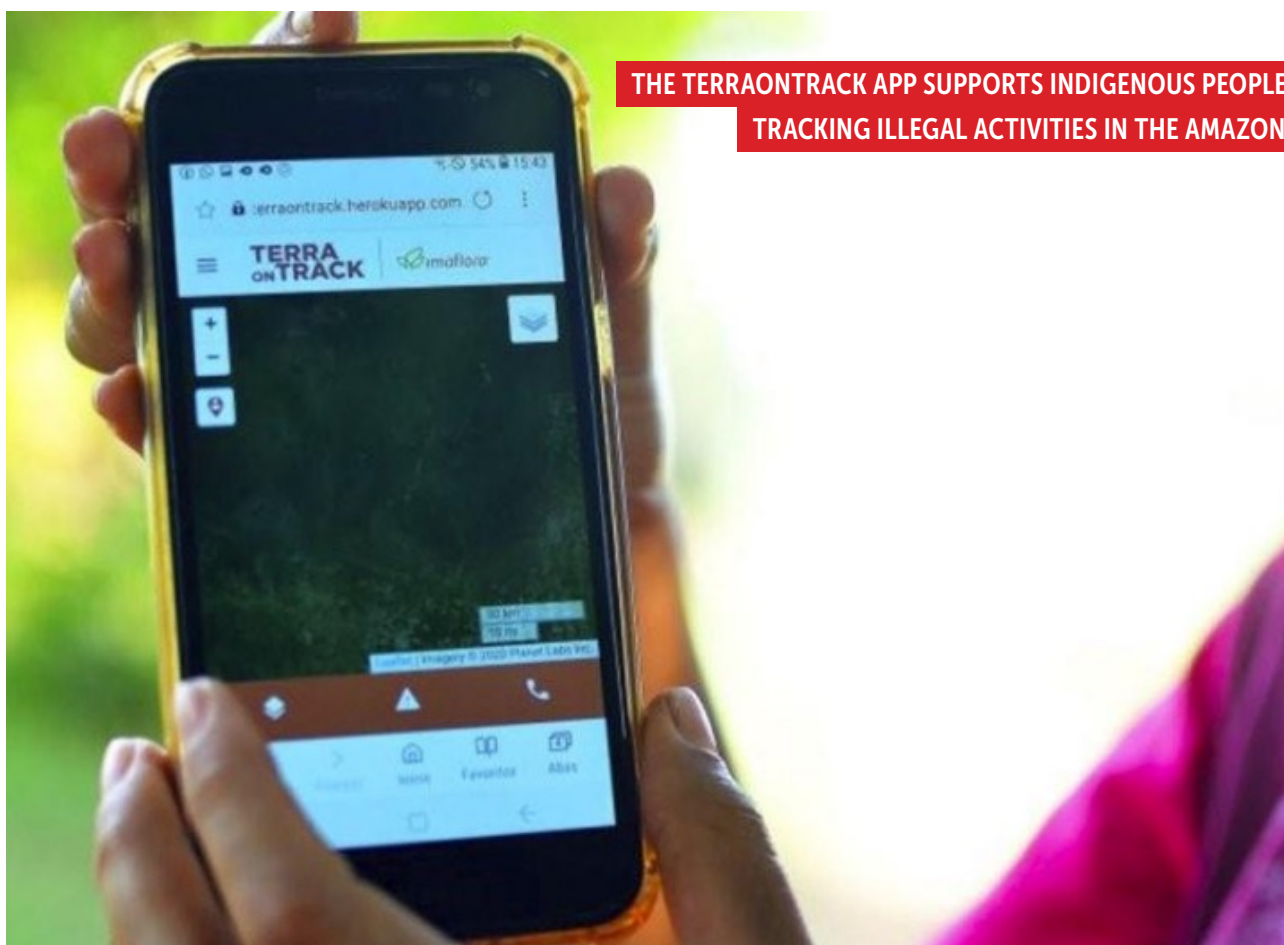


CREDIT: PIRACEMA

AN ONLINE PLATFORM TO HELP URBAN AMAZONIANS DEAL WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

10 Peripheral inhabitants of Amazonian cities face a combination of environmental and climate problems. To avoid reinventing the wheel, the VCA Brazil's Urban Engagement coalition, formed by the organizations Rede Interação and SOMECDH, created a platform for urban communities to share solutions to their climate problems. The platform also serves as a knowledge database that other communities can use to tackle their own climate change related challenges.

Urban inhabitants of the Amazon face such as flooding and landslides. Add to problems common to many urban this deforestation and disorderly urban peripheries in Brazil – precarious housing, lack of sanitation, limited access to public services, and environmental risks expansion. But Rede Interação and SOMECDH wanted to address these challenges.



THE TERRAONTRACK APP SUPPORTS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN TRACKING ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN THE AMAZON

CREDIT: REDE INTERAÇÃO

A NETWORK FOR URBAN PERIPHERIES IN THE AMAZON

With support from Hivos through the Voices for Just Climate Action program, Rede Interação (International Community Action Network) and SOMECHDH (Society, Environment, Education, Citizenship and Human Rights) worked in the peripheries of Belém and Santarém to amplify the voices of vulnerable communities and strengthen local civil society leadership in climate action. “We especially focus on women and young people, because of their transformative role within these territories,” says Andre Franco of Rede. “We believe that empowering them is essential to promoting sustainable change.”

“Climate change is one of the greatest threats to vulnerable communities,” Andre continues. “I’ve seen women transform their roles – within their families, communities, and cities – becoming agents of change and leaders in the fight for social and climate justice.” Through VCA, Rede

Interação and SOMECDH supported and trained women directly, which helped them become leaders, crucial for community strengthening.

A PLATFORM FOR NATURE-BASED INITIATIVES

As part of this project, the coalition launched a platform for Community-Based Nature Solutions (CBNS), which showcases traditional local ways of using and managing natural resources. It aims to help communities find ways to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

“Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) play an important role in sustainable management and use of natural resources in urban development,” says Andre. “However, we needed to incorporate ancestral knowledge to enhance the effects of NBS, which we did by creating Community-Based Nature Solutions (CBNS). Through this initiative, we aim to both highlight the strategic importance of ancestral knowledge found in commu-



CREDIT: REDE INTERAÇÃO

nities and share examples of this knowledge as inspiration for other communities to find ways to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.”

The platform collects and documents local initiatives. From floating bridges that adjust to the height of the river, to monitoring and maintenance of urban trees. And from the use of Açaí seeds (a leftover product) as construction material for buildings to an app that supports Indigenous peoples in tracking illegal activities in the Amazon. “Supporting these initiatives is important because it empowers communities and reduces their dependence on public authorities,” Andre explains. “It

increases their resilience and ensures that social and environmental achievements are sustainable in the long term.”

VCA AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

“Hivos and the Voices for Just Climate Action program connected us with a network of community organizations in the Amazon, which inspired and strengthened our work.” Andre now hopes, in partnership with SOMECDH, to expand their support for community projects throughout Brazil, strengthen partnerships, and advocate for more just and sustainable public policies.

AN ADAPTATION INITIATIVE FOR FLOATING BRIDGES



CREDIT: REDE INTERAÇÃO

ABOUT HIVOS

Hivos is an international development organization guided by humanist values. Together with citizens and their organizations, we aim to contribute towards just, inclusive and life sustaining societies where people have equal access to opportunities, rights, and resources. Our approach is solution driven, and we build wider movements for change by amplifying and connecting voices.

We help build social movements that strive for just, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

Hivos firmly believes in every person's right to live in freedom and dignity, to enjoy equal opportunities, and to influence decisions made regarding the changes they want to see in their lives, communities, and country. We envision a world in which individual differences and backgrounds are respected and used to strengthen communities. A world in which people join forces to challenge the power imbalances that allow environmental degradation and propel climate change; that condone exploitation, oppression, and exclusion; and that perpetuate gender inequalities.

Visit our website: <https://hivos.org/>

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