

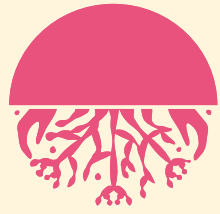
Gender-Responsive Direct Funding

for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:

Lessons from Territorial Funds



**Global
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01

Introduction: why gender matters in direct funding

The call to expand financing for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs and LCs) has become a constant across major international forums. Driven by the persistent political advocacy of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities-based organizations—together with their allies—it is no longer possible to discuss climate and biodiversity finance without acknowledging the urgent need to transform its current architecture. This architecture continues to systematically exclude those who stand at the frontlines of the climate and biodiversity crises, both through insufficient investment in rights-based public policies at the national level and through the limited allocation of resources via direct funding mechanisms.

It was precisely to challenge this imbalance that the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC) created the Shandia Platform—a network of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities-led funds working to strengthen the ecosystem of direct financing while advancing political advocacy for direct funding in global arenas.

As a result of this collective mobilization, some progress has begun to emerge. The widely cited figure from Rainforest Foundation Norway—which, in 2021, showed that less than 1% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for climate mitigation and adaptation over the previous decade reached IPs and LCs in tropical countries¹—has improved slightly. Initiatives such as the Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG), which launched a USD 1.7 billion pledge in 2021 and renewed its commitment with a new pledge of USD 1.8 billion in 2025, have contributed to shifting the landscape. New multilateral mechanisms have also begun to incorporate minimum allocations for IPs and LCs, including the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) and the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF), the latter explicitly allocating a minimum 20% for direct funding. Additional initiatives, such as the Heart of Conservation Initiative under GEF-8, have opened opportunities for territorial mechanisms to access funding directly in multilateral spaces.

However, this progress remains limited. Under the FTFG Pledge, direct funding rates between

2021 and 2024 fluctuated between 2% and 10%, averaging below 8%. While philanthropic donors showed a positive trend—rising from 3.8% in 2021 to 34% in 2024—bilateral contributions declined significantly, from 4% in 2023 to 1.6% in 2024². Similarly, although the Global Environment Facility (GEF) reported that up to 30% of its funding was “targeted” toward IPs and LCs at the design stage, much of this support did not translate into direct financial flows to communities. Evidence suggests that IPs and LCs often remain indirect beneficiaries, with limited resources reaching the territorial level³. In other words, if direct funding has become an undeniable necessity, its effective implementation remains far from achieved.

This situation is even more critical when considering historically marginalized groups within IPs and LCs, which is the case of IPs and LCs women. On one hand, IPs and LCs women are central to ecosystem management, cultural reproduction, and the continuity of sociobiodiversity. They are seed keepers, forest monitors and defenders, healers, and educators who transmit their ancestral

YET THE GAP PERSISTS

↓ <8%

Average direct direct funding rate under the FTFG Pledge, 2021-2024

↓ 1.6%

Bilateral direct contributions in 2024, down from 4% in 2023

↑ 34%

Philanthropic direct funding in 2024, up from 3.8% in 2021

¹Rainforest Norway Foundation, 2021. *Falling Short*.

²Data are available at FTFG Report 2024. See *Shandia Report 2024* for further analysis.

³<https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2025-05/22637iied.pdf>

knowledge across generations. Across regions, their leadership sustains both livelihoods and ecosystems: in the Amazon, women supported by funds such as **Podáali** lead initiatives that combine food sovereignty, reforestation, and river restoration; in Mesoamerica, women within the **Fondo Territorial Mesoamericano (FTM)** manage agroforestry systems that link biodiversity protection with local economies; in Central Africa, women from **REPALEAC** coordinate mangrove restoration and medicinal gardens; and in Indonesia, the **Nusantara Fund** supports women's cooperatives protecting peatlands and water systems.

On the other hand, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women face even more fragile conditions than their male counterparts. Legal and institutional frameworks often fail to protect their rights: a global study found that **only 3% of legal frameworks adequately protect women's community-level voting rights, 5% their leadership rights, and 10% their inheritance rights**⁴. To face those inequalities, robust, solid and gender responsive investment must be done on the ground.

Unfortunately, that's also not the case.

Between 2010 and 2013, only 0.7% of global human rights funding reached Indigenous Peoples women⁵. An OECD study shows that of the USD 10 billion directed toward gender justice in 2016, only 8% was allocated to the Global South⁶. Even within climate finance targeting IPs and LCs,

gender remains largely secondary: only 14% of projects explicitly referenced gender inclusion, often without prioritizing women as central actors⁷. Within the FTFG Pledge, projects focused on Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-descendant women represented only 14% of investments. In many cases, it is not even possible to accurately track how much funding reaches IPs and LCs women. Gender indicators remain weak, inconsistently applied, and often limited to projected beneficiaries rather than actual outcomes⁸.

Expanding direct funding for IPs and LCs women is therefore urgent. Through IPs and LCs women leadership, the territory is perceived as a living space where environmental, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions are inseparable. Strengthening their access to finance means reinforcing the foundations of climate resilience, territorial governance, food security, and biodiversity conservation. Yet current financing mechanisms rarely align with these realities or respond to the priorities defined by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women themselves.

This report seeks to contribute to addressing this gap. It presents, first, the structural barriers identified by IPs and LCs women leaders within the GATC and by territorial funds of the Shandia Platform in accessing direct funding. It then outlines key principles for gender-responsive territorial finance, followed by operational practices and

lessons emerging from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities-led funds. Finally, it offers recommendations to transform financing systems in ways that are more equitable, effective, and grounded in territorial and women's realities.

Ultimately, this policy paper aims to support the integration of gender-responsive and culturally grounded criteria into climate and biodiversity finance, recognizing IPs and LCs women as essential guardians of forests, life, and the climate.

FRAGILE LEGAL GROUND

3%

of legal frameworks adequately protect women's community voting rights

5%

protect their leadership rights

10%

protect their inheritance rights

FINANCE THAT BYPASSES THEM

0.7%

of global human rights funding reached Indigenous Peoples women, 2010-13

8%

of 2016 gender-justice funding went to the Global South

14%

of IPs and LCs climate projects even reference gender inclusion

METHODOLOGY

This paper was built based on research conducted in five complementary stages combining documentary analysis, comparative assessment, and direct consultation with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women leaders engaged in GATC and in territorial funds under the Shandia Platform. The approach integrated both technical and cultural dimensions of access to funding, aligning with the principles of equity, participation, and autonomy that guide this note.

Phase 1- Literature review

Phase 2 - Semi-Structured Interviews

Phase 3 - Comparative Analysis of Funds

Phase 4 - Systematization

Phase 5- Validation with GATC's Women Movements and Territorial Funds representatives.

⁴ <https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Power-Potential-Summary-Findings-Recommendations-May-2017-RRI.pdf>

⁵ International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP), International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIMI), and AWID. *The Status of Funding for Indigenous Women* (2014).

⁶ Espen, E. (2016). *Donors Thinking Big: Beyond Gender Equality Funds*, OpenDemocracy, based on OECD-DAC data.

⁷ PATH 2 Scale

⁸ *Its the case, for example, of the GEF data, accordingly to* <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2025-05/22637iied.pdf>

02

While the previous section established the structural underfunding of IPs and LCs women, this section examines how this exclusion is operationalized in practice, based on GATC's Women's Movement leaders interviews. The barriers identified are not isolated constraints but interrelated dimensions of a financial system that was not designed to reach IPs and LCs women and their territories.

Structural barriers on funding Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women



2.1 Administrative and Procedural Overload

One of the most immediate and pervasive barriers identified by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women is the administrative burden associated with accessing funding.

Funding is largely allocated through calls for proposals, complex application forms, and multi-layered reporting systems. These processes require specialized knowledge—ranging from proposal writing to financial management and monitoring frameworks—that is often disconnected from the lived realities and priorities of IPs and LCs, and even more so from women-led organizations.

As a result, women leaders report that their organizations must divert time and energy away from territorial work to comply with bureaucratic

requirements—creating a contradiction, as climate and biodiversity finance is intended precisely to strengthen these on-the-ground initiatives.

Interviewees also highlighted the need to repeatedly adapt proposals to unclear or shifting guidelines, as well as the reliance on multiple intermediaries to navigate administrative processes. This generates inefficiencies, increases transaction costs, and further distances resources from the territories.

While these challenges affect many IPs and LCs organizations, they are particularly acute for women-led groups, which often operate with fewer financial resources, less institutional infrastructure, and limited access to technical support.



LESSONS FROM THE GROUND



REPALEAC Fund (Central Africa)

piloted a “reverse call” approach, identifying initiatives directly in the territories and **allocating USD 30,000 to each of nine women’s organizations** based on simplified criteria, combined with technical accompaniment.



Podáali Fund (Brazil)

created the Indigenous Peoples Science Prize (2025), which rewards community-led initiatives without requiring formal proposals or detailed reporting on the use of funds.



2.2 Legal Recognition and Institutional

Gatekeeping

GATC's women leaders mention that many funders condition access to funds on legal status, accreditation, and formal organizational structures. However, many IPs and LCs women's collectives operate through informal or community-based systems that do not align with these requirements. This creates a structural bottleneck, with women's customary type of organization not being able

to receive funds directly and so forced to rely on intermediaries. In addition, broader gaps in the recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities territorial governance further restrict eligibility, reinforcing dependence on external actors. The result is a paradox: those closest to the territories and most capable of delivering impact are often the ones with less direct access to finance.



LESSONS FROM THE GROUND



Fondo Territorial Mesoamericano (Mesoamerica)

established a commitment to allocate at least 30% of its portfolio to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women and women's organizations and, in partnership with Coordinator of Territorial Women Leaders of Mesoamerica (CMLT), identified women-led groups to design targeted calls for interest. The fund also enabled access for organizations without legal status by allowing collective financial management arrangements between groups.



2.3 Technical, Linguistic, and Educational Barriers

The fact that funding systems assume familiarity with technical and institutional languages that are not universally accessible nor culturally adapted is pointed as a crucial factor of exclusion for IPs and LCs women. As highlighted both by the GATC's women leaders and territorial funds representatives, Indigenous Peoples languages are rarely accommodated in communications with potential donors and literacy levels in communities vary significantly across regions, with potential lower rates between women due to gender inequalities.

The same happens when talking about access to educational and training opportunities in which women usually face additional barriers.

These conditions transform what is often framed as a “capacity gap” into a structural exclusion mechanism, with women's organizations not having the tools to respond to technical terminology and project design frameworks; standardized indicators and reporting tools or digital and administrative systems.



LESSONS FROM THE GROUND

Podáali

Fundo Indígena da Amazônia Brasileira

Podáali Fund (Brazil)

prioritized Indigenous Peoples education and vocational training in **two thirds of the projects supported under its second call for proposals, including initiatives led by women's associations.**



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF ASIA SOLIDARITY FUND

IPAS (Asia)

implemented community-based accountability systems that rely on existing local governance structures, such as collective assemblies, as primary mechanisms for financial monitoring and reporting, **avoiding externally imposed technical frameworks being then more accessible to women.**

2.4 Lack of Sustained Technical Support and Institutional Investment

Closely linked to the barriers above is the absence of sustained investment in institutional strengthening. Most funding mechanisms prioritize short-term, project-based financing, while offering limited support for organizational development, financial management capacities and long-term leadership building. Without this kind of support, IPs and LCs women's organizations are expected to meet high compliance standards without the necessary resources to do so.

LESSONS FROM THE GROUND



PEREMPUAN AMAN

Perempuan AMAN (Indonesia) secured dedicated core funding to support long-term institutional strengthening, enabling sustained investment in organizational development and women's leadership initiatives such as the Participatory Gender Maps.

2.5 Dependence on Unpaid Labor

GATC's women leaders mention that their movements usually rely on unpaid or underpaid labor. Since women leaders usually carry multiple responsibilities simultaneously - related to territorial governance, environmental protection, community care - adding another layer of responsibilities as required for accessing funds, such as administrative and fundraising tasks, tends to be overwhelming. For the leaders, this often results in overextension of leadership, limited institutional consolidation and sustainability challenges for their organizations. Rather than being supported as professionals and decision-makers, IPs and LCs women are often expected to sustain climate action through voluntary work.

LESSONS FROM THE GROUND



Rutî Indigenous Fund (Brazil) provides direct support to families, communities, and regional organizations through simplified allocation mechanisms that do not require complex proposal writing or extensive administrative processes, reducing the additional unpaid workload often assumed by Indigenous Peoples women to access and manage funding.

2.6 Gendered Power Relations in IPs and LCs

governance

Beyond institutional and procedural constraints, access to climate finance for IPs and LCs women is deeply shaped by gendered power relations within territories, organizations, and governance systems.

The interviews with GATC's women leaders point out that decision-making over land, natural resources, and funding allocation remains largely male-dominated. While women actively contribute to territorial management, their participation in formal decision-making spaces is often limited in influence. In many cases, women depend—formally or informally—on male authorization to access resources or assume leadership roles.

These dynamics are reinforced by entrenched gender norms that assign women to lower-recognition or lower-value activities, while strategic decisions regarding land use, forest management, and resource allocation remain concentrated among male leaders. As a result, even when funding reaches

communities, women's ability to influence its allocation and priorities may be restricted.

Control over land and territory further intensifies these barriers. In many contexts, land tenure and forest governance systems are not only shaped by external legal frameworks but also by internal power structures that limit women's decision-making authority. This creates tensions when women engage in climate finance processes that require territorial data, planning, or reporting. For example, requests for information on forest areas or land use—often required by donors—maybe perceived as challenges to established power relations, generating resistance from male leadership.

At the same time, broader structural factors—such as the lack of full recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities territorial rights in national legal systems—compound these dynamics, reinforcing both external and internal constraints on women's leadership.



LESSONS FROM THE GROUND



IPAS (Asia)

established governance rules requiring gender-balanced representation on its board and defined gender sensitivity as a core institutional principle guiding its operations.



Rutî Indigenous Fund (Brazil)

integrated gender equity as a selection criterion in its first call for proposals and ensured that half of its technical team is composed of Indigenous Peoples women.



Fondo Territorial Mesoamericano (Mesoamerica)

developed the AMECLA system, which includes gender-disaggregated data collection to monitor participation and power dynamics within funded initiatives.



Fundo Indígena do Rio Negro – FIRN (Brazil)

created a permanent seat for its Indigenous Peoples women's department on its Executive Committee and established strengthening the socioeconomic and political participation of women and youth as a core institutional objective.



Podáali Fund (Brazil)

ensured high levels of women's participation in funded initiatives, with 85% of supported projects including women in coordination roles.



2.7 Structural Violence and Risk Exposure

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women's engagement in territorial defense and climate action often takes place in contexts marked by conflict, dispossession, and structural violence. In territories affected by extractive activities and large-scale infrastructure expansion, violence is experienced by entire communities. However, women face additional and differentiated risks due to intersecting forms of gender, racial, and economic discrimination. These include gender-based violence and harassment, economic exploitation, and political intimidation and retaliation.

In many cases, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women are incorporated into precarious and poorly paid labor arrangements linked to these economies, where they are exposed to unsafe working conditions, abuse, and limited protections. At the same time, power imbalances and fear of retaliation constrain their ability to report violence or challenge existing structures. These risks are compounded by weak or absent protection mechanisms, both at the state and institutional levels, leaving IPs and LCs women leaders exposed while carrying key responsibilities in territorial defense and climate action.



LESSONS FROM THE GROUND



PEREMPUAN AMAN

Perempuan AMAN (Indonesia)

applies qualitative monitoring tools to document Indigenous Peoples women's daily territorial practices, including forest monitoring and domestic work, as political and economic contributions, while integrating gender-based violence prevention into strategies for women's economic autonomy.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF ASIA SOLIDARITY FUND

IPAS (Asia)

established a Zero Tolerance for Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, defining prohibited behaviors and implementing clear procedures and sanctions to address cases of harassment and discrimination within its structures.

Taken together, these barriers reveal a consistent pattern: climate and biodiversity finance systems continue to reproduce — rather than dismantle — gendered exclusion of IPs and LCs women. Addressing this requires not incremental adjustments, but a structural reconfiguration of how funding is designed, governed, and delivered, so it aligns with territorial realities and recognizes women as leaders and decision-makers.

At the same time, territorial funds are already confronting these barriers in practice. The next section presents the best practices of the Shandia Platform funds, demonstrating the more equitable and effective gender-responsive practices are already being implemented in the territories.



03

Gender-responsive direct funding: lessons from territorial funds





a) Scaled and flexible funds with explicit gender allocation, thematic lines and selection criteria:

The proximity of territorial funds to Indigenous Peoples women’s organizations has enabled the development of funding methodologies that are adapted to territorial realities and to the conditions under which women organize and operate. These approaches expand access not only in general terms, but specifically for women-led organizations that are often excluded by standard funding requirements.

FTM, for example, progressively strengthened its commitment to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women based on field experience. Initially, a 10% quota within projects was allocated to women-related activities. However, this approach proved insufficient, as dispersed resources limited women’s ability to consolidate leadership and organizational capacity. In response, **FTM** shifted to a more structural approach, committing to invest at least 30% of its portfolio directly in Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women and women’s -led organizations.

In addition, **FTM** developed differentiated funding scales according to organizational capacity. Smaller grants (Us\$ 10,000–Us\$15,000) are directed to organizations with limited administrative experience—many of which are women-led—while larger grants (Us\$200,000–Us\$1 million) support more consolidated structures. This tiered approach allows women’s organizations to access funding

without being excluded by institutional requirements, while progressively strengthening their capacity over time. The fund also offers agile funds to respond to climate-related emergencies, which is particularly relevant for women, who are often responsible for immediate community responses in crisis situations.

Similarly, alongside the Coordinator of Territorial Women Leaders of Mesoamerica (CMLT), **FTM** developed targeted calls for Indigenous Peoples women’s organizations in the agroecological sector. These calls were designed based on the identification of women’s organizations and their specific conditions, incorporating criteria such as organizational size, participation levels, and collective structures. This approach enabled the inclusion of organizations that would otherwise be excluded, including those without formal legal status, which were able to access funding through collective financial management arrangements.

In Brazil, similar approaches reinforce that expanding women’s access requires intentional allocation strategies combined with explicit gender-responsive priorities embedded in funding design. The **Podáali** Fund integrates gender not only as a cross-cutting concern, but as a defined thematic line of action—“Gender, generations, and Indigenous Peoples with disabilities”—ensuring that

“When gender is treated as a dedicated funding line — rather than a secondary objective — resources effectively reach women-led initiatives and strengthen their leadership.”

30%

FTM portfolio committed directly to women & women-led organisations

60%

Podáali first-call projects led by women’s organisations

85%

Podáali initiatives including women in design & implementation

women’s agendas are structurally incorporated into funding priorities. This is reflected in practice: in its first call, 60% of selected projects were directly led by women’s organizations, and overall, 85% of supported initiatives include women’s participation in project design and implementation.

This demonstrates that when gender is treated as a dedicated funding line—rather than a secondary objective—resources effectively reach women-led initiatives and strengthen their leadership.

A similar approach is observed in the **Rutí Indigenous Fund**, where supporting the economic roles of women and youth is established as a core funding

priority. Gender equity is explicitly included as a selection criterion, increasing the likelihood that women-led projects are funded and recognized.

Together, these experiences show that moving beyond general commitments to gender equality requires concrete design choices: **earmarked allocations, explicit thematic lines, and selection criteria that actively prioritize women**. These elements transform gender from a principle into an operational driver of funding decisions, ensuring that resources not only reach Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women, but contribute to strengthening their roles as economic, political, and territorial leaders.

b) Long-term and core funding enabling women's leadership

Flexibility in funding modalities also includes the provision of long-term and core resources, which are essential for women's organizations to move beyond project-based survival and build sustained leadership.

Perempuan AMAN provides a clear example of this approach. Through negotiated core funding, the organization secured long-term resources dedicated to institutional strengthening. This type of funding enables Indigenous Peoples women not only to implement activities, but to consolidate their organizations, develop political strategies, and engage in decision-making spaces.

One concrete outcome of this investment is the Participatory Gender Maps initiative, through which Indigenous Peoples women document their

daily contributions to ecosystem management and articulate their priorities in dialogue with institutions. This process strengthens women's visibility, but also their capacity to influence territorial planning and policy decisions.

Importantly, this type of funding recognizes that women's leadership requires time, continuity, and autonomy—conditions that are rarely met by short-term project-based financing.

In Brazil, **Podáli** reinforced this approach by combining resource allocation with institutional strengthening strategies, including training processes and support for organizational development. This contributes to shifting women's roles from project participants to leaders capable of sustaining long-term territorial and political processes.



c) Simplified access and collective allocation mechanisms

Simplified funding criteria and allocation processes are critical to reducing barriers that disproportionately affect Indigenous Peoples women.

The experience of **REPALEAC Fund** illustrates how simplified mechanisms can expand access while reinforcing collective approaches. As part of the implementation of the Central African Women's Forum roadmap, each of the nine Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women's organizations within the network received USD 30,000 through a simplified process based on concept notes and basic budgets, combined with technical support. With the support of Clarify, this funding modality was called *reverse proposals*, an active search for territorial initiatives adequate for fund allocation, instead of a call of proposal. Rather than competing for limited resources, organizations collectively negotiated access to funding, ensuring that resources reached multiple groups across different countries. This approach not only reduced administrative burdens, but also strengthened solidarity and collective organizing among women's organizations.

Such mechanisms are particularly relevant for Indigenous Peoples women, whose organizations often operate through collective structures and may lack the formalization required by standard funding systems.

In Brazil, complementary approaches address both access and workload. **The Rutî Indigenous Fund** reduces procedural barriers by simplifying selection processes and incorporating gender equity as a scoring criterion, increasing the likelihood that women-led initiatives are funded. At the same time, the fund assumes responsibility for financial execution, which significantly reduces the administrative burden placed on communities. This is particularly relevant for women, who are often already managing multiple responsibilities and would otherwise absorb unpaid administrative work associated with funding compliance. Seven of the 25 projects that were selected on the first Call, in 2025, are led by Indigenous Peoples women.

Creating innovative ways of distributing resources is also part of **Podáali's** practice. The Indigenous Peoples Science Prize (2025) represents a simplified funding modality that rewards community-led initiatives without requiring formal project proposals or detailed reporting systems. By reducing bureaucratic requirements, this approach lowers one of the key barriers identified for IPs and LCs women—limited access to technical tools and time for proposal writing—allowing a wider range of grassroots initiatives to be recognized and supported.

“Simplified selection processes can expand access to funding, particularly for women-led initiatives that operate through informal or community-based structures and are often excluded from conventional funding mechanisms.”

7 OF 25

Projects selected in the first call, in 2025, are led by Indigenous Peoples women.

The prize awarded initiatives across three categories, including local collectives such as women's groups, teachers, artisans, and territorial monitors, with grants ranging from US\$4,000 to US\$10,000. Of the 68 selected initiatives, 22% were led by women's organizations. This modality demonstrates how simplified selection processes can expand access to funding, particularly for women-led initiatives that operate through informal or community-based structures and are often excluded from conventional funding mechanisms.



d) Accountability systems grounded in territorial practices

Accountability is often perceived as a barrier to access due to externally imposed reporting requirements. However, territorial funds are developing alternative accountability models that align with community governance systems and reduce the administrative burden placed on women.

IPAS, for example, has implemented accountability processes based on existing community practices, such as collective assemblies where financial decisions and expenditures are shared publicly. These systems rely on social accountability and transparency within the community, rather than on complex external reporting formats.

This approach is particularly relevant for IPs and LCs women, as it reduces the need for technical reporting skills that are often inaccessible, while recognizing and strengthening their roles within community governance structures.

In Brazil, similar logics are reflected in funding practices that prioritize accompaniment and trust-based relationships. **Podáali**, for instance, combines formal procedures with technical support and ongoing dialogue with communities, reducing asymmetries in access to information and reporting capacities. These approaches enable women-led initiatives to engage with funding processes without the disproportionate burden of highly technical accountability systems.

e) Ongoing technical support and decentralized governance

Ongoing technical support is a critical enabling factor for women's access to funding, particularly when combined with decentralized governance structures.

IPAS invested in understanding territorial contexts through a baseline study prior to its operations, allowing it to design a flexible and decentralized system operating across 13 countries. Its Community Steering Committees ensure representation at the local level, including minimum participation of Indigenous Peoples women, and serve as a bridge between communities and central coordination.

These structures enable continuous communication, learning, and adaptation, while also creating spaces for women to influence funding priorities. For example, community-level feedback led to the allocation of dedicated resources for capacity-building in governance structures.

In Brazil, the **Podáali Fund** has invested in educational support as one of their main worklines, prioritized Indigenous Peoples education and vocational training in two thirds of the projects supported under its second call for proposals, including initiatives led by women's associations.



f) Gender-responsive data and knowledge systems

The lack of gender-disaggregated data has historically obscured the contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities women. Territorial funds are addressing this gap by developing monitoring systems that make women's participation visible and measurable.

FTM's AMECLA system, for example, collects disaggregated data by gender and age, allowing the fund to track participation patterns, identify gaps, and adjust funding strategies accordingly. This includes understanding whether women are accessing funds for the first time, and how their participation evolves over time.

At the same time, both **FTM** and **Perempuan AMAN** emphasize the importance of qualitative approach-

es. While quantitative data provides important indicators, qualitative tools allow a deeper understanding of women's roles, experiences, and leadership within territories.

In Brazil, evidence from territorial funds further reinforces the importance of this approach. Data from **Podáali** indicates high levels of women's participation in funded initiatives, while **FIRN's** experience shows that women-led projects often generate multidimensional impacts. These include initiatives that combine environmental management, income generation, health, and cultural practices—demonstrating that **when women access resources, the scope of climate and biodiversity action expands.**

3%

countries reached by **IPAS** decentralised, women-inclusive governance model

2/3

of **Podáali's** second-call projects centred on Indigenous Peoples education & training

g) Gender-balanced governance and institutional policies

Finally, territorial funds are advancing gender-responsive governance structures and institutional policies that directly address power imbalances.

IPAS provides a strong example through its decentralized governance model and gender policies. Its boards and committees ensure balanced representation of men and women, while its gender policy promotes the integration of gender perspectives across planning, management, and recruitment processes.

In addition, **IPAS** has established a Zero Tolerance for Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, which defines prohibited behaviors and sets out procedures and sanctions. These policies apply not only internally, but also to partner organizations and funding relationships.

In Brazil, funds reinforce these efforts by embedding gender considerations into both governance and funding criteria. **Rutí** incorporates gender equity as a formal selection criterion, while maintaining a gender-balanced team and women's leadership in coordination roles. **Podáali Fund** includes Indigenous Peoples women's representation within its highest decision-making bodies, ensuring that women's priorities directly influence funding strategies.

Similarly, **FIRN** institutionalizes women's participation through a permanent seat for the Indigenous Peoples Women's Department in its Executive Committee, embedding gender perspectives into funding decisions and territorial planning processes. These governance arrangements contribute to shifting women's roles from beneficiaries to actors with authority over resource allocation.

IPAS · ASIA

Gender-balanced boards · cross-cutting gender policy · zero-tolerance anti-harassment standards extended to partners.

RUTÍ · BRAZIL

Gender equity as a formal scoring criterion · gender-balanced team · women in coordination roles.

PODÁALI · BRAZIL

Indigenous Peoples women seated within the fund's highest decision-making bodies, shaping strategy directly.

FIRN · BRAZIL

A permanent Executive-Committee seat for the Indigenous Peoples Women's Department, embedding gender in every decision.

04

Recommendations for donors and territorial funds to increase gender responsive direct funding

The recommendations below build on a central finding of this report: while structural barriers continue to limit IPs and LCs women's access to climate and biodiversity finance, viable and tested solutions are already being implemented through territorial funds. The Shandia Platform brings together a nascent but rapidly consolidating ecosystem of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities-led financial mechanisms that have demonstrated the ability to channel resources directly to territories in ways that are more accessible, culturally grounded, and responsive to women's leadership. Evidence from these funds shows that direct financing can reach women-led initiatives at scale when design, governance, and allocation criteria are aligned with territorial realities. This represents a concrete opportunity to shift climate finance—moving from fragmented, intermediary-heavy systems toward models that are already operational, replicable, and capable of delivering impact on the ground.



4.1 Governance & Decision-Making

Recommendations for Donors

- Ensure decision-making power for IPs and LCs, including women's representation, within governance structures (not only consultative roles).
- Establish co-decision mechanisms with IPs and LCs organizations in fund design, allocation, and oversight.
- Require gender-balanced governance structures in funded mechanisms, including voting power.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Institutionalize women's representation in decision-making bodies (boards, committees, councils), with clear roles and influence over allocation.
- Create dedicated spaces (e.g., women's councils or departments) linked to core governance, not parallel structures.
- Ensure transparency in allocation decisions to mitigate internal power imbalances.

4.2 Access, Procedures & Workload

Recommendations for Donors

- Replace complex proposal-based systems with diversified access modalities (e.g., direct selection, awards, reverse calls).
- Reduce reporting and compliance requirements to essential elements, allowing alternative formats aligned with territorial realities.
- Enable direct access for organizations without formal legal status through adapted fiduciary arrangements.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Maintain simplified selection processes explicitly directed for IPs and LCs (short formats, concept notes, oral or community-based submissions).
- Reduce administrative burdens on recipients, including assuming financial management when needed.
- Combine simplified access with accompaniment to ensure inclusion without overloading women-led organizations.



4.3 Gender Allocation & Funding Design

Recommendations for Donors

- Move from gender mainstreaming to explicit allocation: earmark minimum percentages for IPs and LCs women.
- Require gender as an operational criterion in funding design (selection, evaluation, and monitoring).
- Fund dedicated worklines focused on women's leadership, not only gender components within broader projects.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Establish explicit gender allocation targets within portfolios.
- Include gender equity as a selection criterion to prioritize women-led initiatives.
- Define specific thematic lines (e.g., women's economic roles, leadership, territorial governance) to structure funding flows.

4.4 Technical Support & Institutional Strengthening

Recommendations for Donors

- Provide long-term, flexible funding for institutional development, not only project delivery, specially for women's organizations.
- Fund technical support as an integral component of financing (proposal development, financial management, monitoring).

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Combine funding with ongoing technical accompaniment (before, during, and after allocation).
- Invest in internal technical capacities (financial systems, monitoring, governance).
- Prioritize the support of women-led organizations to progressively strengthen their institutional capacity.

4.5 Cultural Relevance & Knowledge Systems

Recommendations for Donors

- Accept non-standardized formats of knowledge, reporting, and impact (oral, collective, narrative-based).
- Adapt timelines and evaluation frameworks to IPs and LCs temporalities and decision-making processes.
- Recognize territorial knowledge as valid evidence for funding decisions.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Use community-based accountability systems grounded in existing governance practices.
- Integrate traditional knowledge into project design, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Support initiatives that reflect women's roles in linking environmental, social, and cultural dimensions.



4.6 Addressing Unpaid Labor & Structural Inequalities

Recommendations for Donors

- Recognize and cover the real costs of participation, including administrative work, coordination, and care responsibilities.
- Avoid transferring compliance burdens to recipient organizations without corresponding resources.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Reduce administrative requirements at community level wherever possible.
- Design funding processes that account for women's time constraints and multiple responsibilities.
- Prioritize modalities that allow women to engage without additional unpaid workload.

4.8 Financial Architecture & Long-Term Sustainability

Recommendations for Donors

- Invest in IPs and LCs-led financial mechanisms as core components of climate finance architecture, prioritizing women initiatives
- Move from short-term project funding to multi-year partnerships with territorial funds and women organizations.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Strengthen financial autonomy through diversified funding sources.
- Build long-term strategies (reserve funds, endowments, institutional sustainability).
- Strengthen alliances across territorial funds to scale influence and coordination, in platforms like Shandia.

4.7 Risk, Protection & Enabling Conditions

Recommendations for Donors

- Integrate risk and protection measures into funding design, including safeguards against gender-based violence.
- Fund initiatives that strengthen protection of defenders and women leaders.
- Avoid exposing women's organizations to additional risks through visibility or reporting requirements.

Recommendations for Territorial Funds

- Develop internal policies on discrimination, harassment, and protection.
- Integrate prevention of gender-based violence into funded initiatives where relevant.
- Create safe participation conditions for women within governance and implementation processes.
- Create emergency funds for protecting women leaders in risky situations (criminalization, political persecution and gender-based violence)



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