



INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS

A HOLISTIC AND RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

FRONTIERS
OF CHANGE

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According to the United Nations, Indigenous Peoples make up 6.2% of the global population and occupy, own and manage over a quarter of the Earth's land surface. Indigenous lands hold around 80% of

the world's biodiversity. The forest zones in Indigenous Peoples' lands are equivalent to one-quarter of the total forest zone in the 50 countries monitored. Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) within Indigenous Peoples' lands cover at least 36.2% of the world's IFL area (Fa et al. 2020).

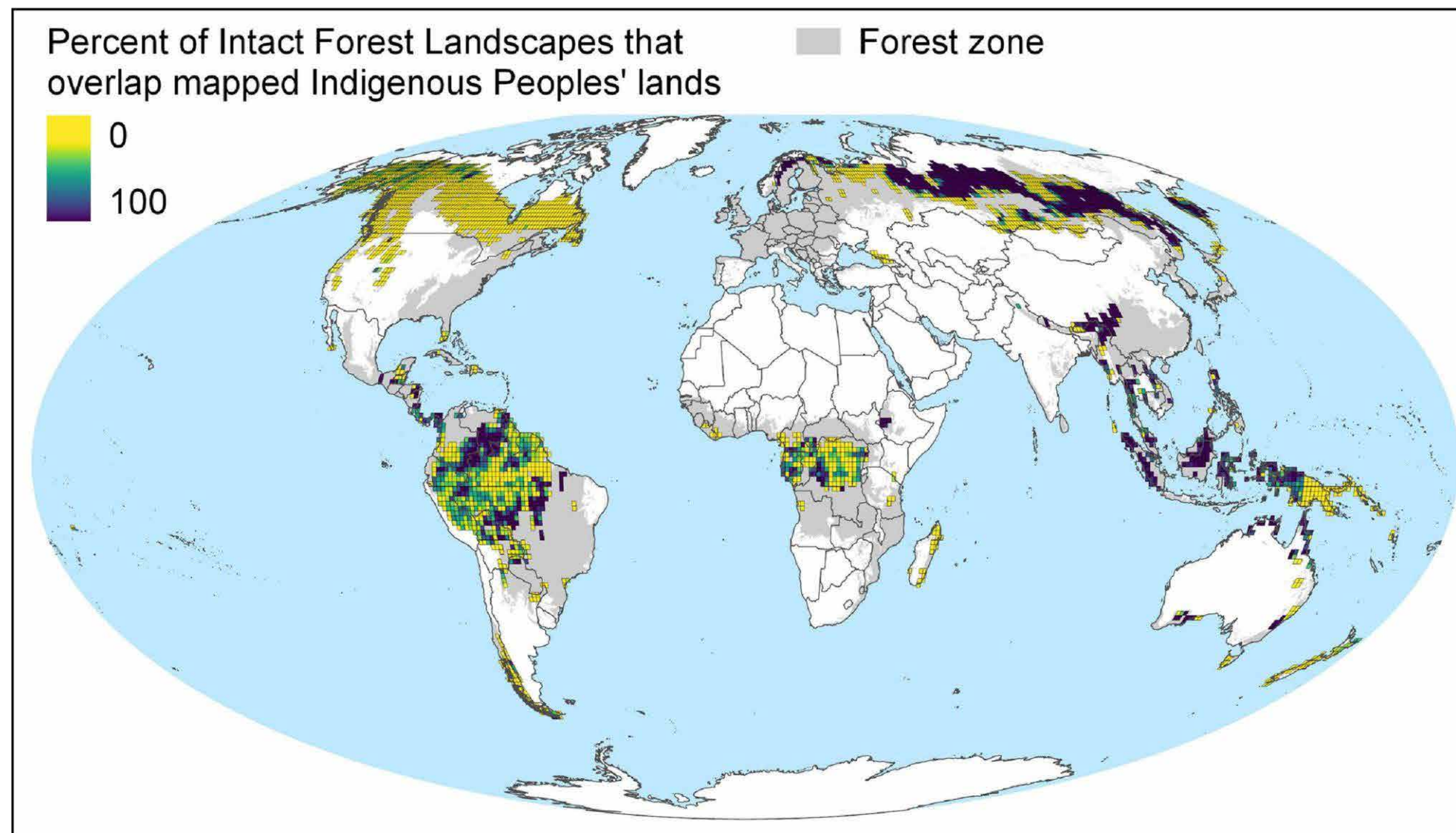


Figure 1. Photo taken from the Importance of Indigenous Peoples' land for the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes Journal. Overlap of global Intact Forest Landscapes and Indigenous Peoples' lands.

“Climate change poses threats and dangers to the survival of Indigenous communities worldwide, even though they contribute the least to greenhouse emissions. In fact, Indigenous Peoples are vital to the many ecosystems in their lands and territories and help enhance the resilience of these ecosystems. In addition, Indigenous Peoples interpret and react to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions that society at large can replicate to counter pending changes.”

H.E. MIGUEL D'ESCOTO
BROCKMANN

Over one-third of lands occupied by Indigenous Peoples that overlap with protected lands could reverse the loss of biodiversity, prevent CO₂ emissions and enhance natural carbon removal (Dinerstein et al. 2020). The collapse of ecosystems due to climate change leads to the collapse of Indigenous Peoples' ways and means of living. Their identities, cosmovision and sciences are intrinsically connected in a reciprocal relation to land, cultures and languages. There is a climate crisis worldwide, and Indigenous Peoples bear the brunt of its consequences. The impact is especially felt by Indigenous women.

Indigenous women on the frontline of climate change impacts and solutions

Responsibility and interconnectedness among all living beings are principles to understand how climate change affects Indigenous Peoples. The responsibility of Indigenous women to pass on their traditional knowledge to new generations is affected by climate change alterations that disrupt the life cycle. Indigenous women, mothers,

sisters and elders in their roles as caretakers and life-givers are responsible for ensuring a healthy diet; providing traditional medicines and healing practices; sustaining household economies; and taking care of the lands, waters and sacred places. The transmission of traditional knowledge and Indigenous practices with the land nurture the lives of all living beings. Indigenous women must adapt to fulfill their roles when climate change disruptions affect the landscapes, food systems, diets, economies, traditional medicines, soils, ceremonies and sacred places. Women must shift to new growing seasons and new economies. Sometimes they even have to relocate to other territories and adopt new ways of life. Such disbalances will affect how Indigenous communities relate to Earth and living beings.

Indigenous women carry millennia-old knowledge as guardians of the land, waters and biodiversity of living things around us. The knowledge passed down from one generation to the next makes Indigenous women original storytellers, keepers of traditions and languages, and the best experts



Cultural Survival's partner – Asociación de Mujeres Ixiles Q'imb'al. Their values align with a holistic approach, seeing the environment and human beings as a whole system. These women center their work on creating family gardens that promote food sovereignty and protection and care of the land. Women exercise a rights-based approach as they claim their participation in the decision-making processes of their Ixil community, promoting their rights to their identity, wearing and weaving their traditional clothing.

of their landscapes. Therefore, climate change solutions must include a holistic rights-based component that upholds land tenure rights and resource Indigenous-managed lands that will help stabilize the areas most affected by climate change. The cultures and knowledge that Indigenous women carry in conservation and resource management are essential to successful conservation and mitigation of climate change.

Practices to reduce carbon emissions and deforestation, and mitigate climate change by Ogoni women (Nigeria)

The Ogoni in the Niger Delta region face threats to their livelihood as the quality of their land depletes and the biodiversity of the local ecosystem deteriorates due to oil and gas extraction on their land. Their farmlands are less fertile, and integral plants are becoming extinct, escalating food insecurity. At the Lokiaka Community Development Centre, volunteers at Lokiaka worked to replenish the land. Women farmers started mangrove and fruit tree nurseries in their territory and paired them with fuel-efficient stoves made out of clay. Lokiaka emphasizes the role of Indigenous women farmers in maintaining the health of the land and ecosystem and their role as stewards of the land. Lokiaka helped Ogoni women utilize their natural resources to improve their living standards, while reducing carbon emissions, deforestation and climate change.



Cultural Survival partner – Lokiaka Community Development Centre. © Cultural Survival



▲ Miskita Women in Waspm, in Nicaragua.
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“Indigenous women need more support to reach their potential. They want to reestablish their harmony [equality] with men. We need harmony within our species to restore harmony with the Earth, animals, plants and water.”

AVEXNIM COJTI (MAYA K'ICHE')

Actions towards food sovereignty Sumo-Mayangna Indigenous Women – *Mayangna* (Nicaragua)

On the north Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, this project focuses on building women's leadership in the Mayangna Indigenous communities in the Sauni Arungka Sauni As territories. Sumo-Mayangna Indigenous women are planting tubers, roots and basic grains like rice and corn in communal plots to ensure food security for local communities. This initiative aims to diversify foods available for this population, whose life is centred around agriculture.

YIMOM Healer Women – Maya Tsotsil (Mexico)

In the community of Nuevo Corral Ch'en el Ángel, Chiapas, YIMOM is creating a network of women agro-ecological producers working towards food sovereignty. They will use backyard farming, shade cloth nurseries, rainwater collection and drip irrigation for crops. Women of the community will exercise their right to access and decide how their land is used, while generating income through solidarity economy activities.

Building resilient communities through a holistic approach

Climate change is a direct threat to the lives of Indigenous people, especially to the lives of Indigenous women. Indigenous women are also leading the fight against climate change and are engaging at the national, regional and international levels to raise their concerns and advocate for resources. We must be ready to roll up our sleeves to support Indigenous women leaders, activists, land defenders, Indigenous-led organizations and others in their quest to restore balance in the environment.

Financial and non-financial support from funders, organizations, governments and the international community is essential to amplify the voices of Indigenous women. The empowering of Indigenous women will help us build safer, peaceful, more resilient communities that will be equipped to fight climate change and protect Indigenous territories. Through this session, we will explore Indigenous women-led solutions to climate change.

Cultural Survival session 2021

A holistic and rights-based approach to forest, food and finance by Indigenous women

The Cultural Survival panel looks at forests, food and finance through a holistic, rights-based lens. Indigenous women panelists will share experiences of offering and implementing solutions to climate change through traditional forest management and thriving food systems. They will also speak about innovative approaches to finance and resourcing their economies related to the well-being and health of Indigenous communities and ecosystems. The panel aims to:

- elevate the voices of Indigenous women on the global stage as leaders in climate change solutions;
- discuss how Indigenous women are on the frontlines of climate change and how climate chaos has impacted their communities and livelihoods;

- demonstrate the essential role of Indigenous women as carriers of traditional knowledge in protecting biodiversity, and share our success stories using a holistic approach in protecting our lands, territories and food systems;
- discuss how to advance and resource Indigenous women's meaningful participation in addressing climate change issues, particularly their leadership and participation in the global new deal and Just Transition (e.g. participation in global conservation initiatives like 30x30 and the transition to electric mobility).

Recommendations

- Recognize Indigenous Peoples' self-determined climate change solutions.
- Stop aggression in Indigenous Peoples' ancestral lands and support Indigenous Peoples' efforts to protect their lands.
- Promote Indigenous women's representation in climate change decision-making policy.
- Preserve, promote and let Indigenous Women use their traditional knowledge for sustainable solutions to forest, food and finance issues.

Useful websites

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/>
<https://www.globalsafetynet.app/>
<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/programs/advocacy/koef>

References

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- Fa JE, Watson JEM, Leiper I, Potapov P, Evans TD, Burgess ND, Molnár Z, Fernández-Llamazares A, Duncan T, Wang S et al. Garnett. 2020. "Importance of Indigenous Peoples' land for the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes." *ESA Journals* 18:3 (April): 135–140. <https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/fee.2148>



#GLFClimate

GLOBAL LANDSCAPES FORUM

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihoods, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter Members: CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, Ecoagriculture Partners, The European Forest Institute, Evergreen Agriculture, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, The International Livestock Research Institute, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, Rights and Resources Initiative, SAN, TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, UNEP, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation part of Wageningen Research, World Farmer Organization, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, World Resources Institute, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL)

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