



## **Capacity Building Program on Indigenous Territorial Governance** **An essential tool for Climate Funds in Amazonia**

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### **Capacity Building Program on Indigenous Territorial Governance**

The [Capacity Building Program on Indigenous Territorial Governance](#) (PFGTI by its Spanish acronym) for leaders – men and women – of indigenous organizations, territories and communities of different Amazon Basin countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) is the result of a lengthy process. Starting in 2015, it involved seven indigenous organizations and four universities of the region, led by Forest Trends and WWF.

With the financial support of NIFCI/Norad the program had, in 2017 and 2018, a first round in each of the countries, in Rondonia (Brazil), Putumayo (Colombia), Pastaza (Ecuador) and Ucayali (Peru). A second round is being developed in each country (2019-2020) but with new players and new contributions from climate funds such as ProAmazonia in Ecuador and Vision Amazonia in Colombia.

The program aims at strengthening the governance of indigenous territories, by building capacities required by the indigenous communities and people to exercise governance on their territories. Stemming from a rights perspective, the program is designed to strengthen four dimensions of territorial governance: cultural, political, economic and social.

It is aimed at indigenous men and women living in their territories and who bear a responsibility, an interest and a commitment vis-à-vis their community. The program has brought new voices to territorial governance, basically because it calls on participants who are not typically targeted by educational programs: one of the conditions is that participants must live in their community, in their territory.

From the outset the approach has been to develop a training program encompassing a long term educational proposal with a basic design that may be adjusted according to specific conditions prevailing in each context. It is an educational proposal aimed at strengthening the existing territorial research and governance agendas of the participating indigenous communities and organizations.

### **Territorial Governance, a Key Element**

Latin America is the only region in the world having set up a process aimed at returning ancestral territories to the people who historically lived in them. And this has happened even with a greater emphasis in Amazonia: the territories today demarcated and titled to the Indigenous People in the Amazon Basin speak for themselves to the importance of such territorialization: 18 million Ha in Bolivia, 109 million in Brazil, 36 million in Colombia, 6 million in Ecuador and 12 million in Peru.



However, governments etc. only demarcated, reviewed and titled the land. No policies to assist indigenous organizations were implemented. IPs now had vast lands but no credit, no technical, marketing or rural infrastructure assistance programs, not even organizational or institutional building programs aimed at assisting them in controlling and managing their territories or enhancing their natural resources, thus granting them governability over such wide territories under so complex conditions (considering the number of communities, distances, multi-ethnicity, etc.). The territories, once they had been titled, were on their own, and this in almost all of Amazonia.

Hence the fundamental importance of assisting these people, territories and communities in the field of governance, in managing their territories and communities, in developing their Life Plans, their control and surveillance mechanisms, in harnessing their biodiversity, in improving their life conditions, their infrastructures and communications, in strengthening their world view, their intercultural/bilingual education, their health, in a nutshell, the “*Buen Vivir*” [Good Living], as IPs call it. And in their fight against the numerous threats they face, also their temptation to migrate to cities that have nothing to offer them today.

Only if they are strengthened in their own territorial and community governance will the Amazonian peoples be able to keep conserving their forests, to slow down deforestation and degradation and continue to contribute to the historic role they have played in mitigating climate change.

### **An Innovative Methodology**

The Program unfolds over a period of 17 months: an initial preparatory stage lasting 4 or 5 months, aimed at selecting the teachers, making methodological adjustments, identifying specific topics of interest for the region or territory, preparing materials, identifying the territories or communities to invite, convening and selecting students. For pedagogical reasons each group is made up of 32 participants.

For around 12 months there are six 6-day on-site periods and five off-site periods of approximately two months each.

The training process has been structured based on ten main topics or modules:

- Legal framework and rights
- Territory and Globalization
- Development and “*Buen Vivir*”
- Territorial and community governance
- Gender and generation
- Life Plans and other governance tools
- Administrative and financial management



- Indigenous economy and markets
- State, Public policies and governance
- Climate change

An essential part of the methodological proposal is the number of *training processes or experiences* as a privileged strategy for implementing the teachings. Each group of participants of each community has to design, over that 12-month period, an educational project on a significant governance topic for its community. It is called “educational” practice or experience because the formulation and implementation process entails a series of pedagogical activities to underpin the training process (analysis, synthesis, questioning, communication, etc.).

Another important aspect is that during the off-site periods, when students are back in their communities, they develop *community practices*, as a way of disseminating to the rest of the community what they have learnt during the on-site periods.

### **A Program that Strongly Involves the Communities and Organizations**

The training Program gives a key role to the indigenous organizations. On the one hand to the regional and national organizations that are part of the Local Pedagogical Committee (LPC), and on the other hand the communities themselves to which the participants belong.

Communities are responsible for:

1. Selecting the four participants that will represent them during the [PFGTI](#): at least an elderly wise man or woman, healer or sage (locally known as *page*), acknowledged in his/her community for his/her ancestral knowledge; a young person with the potential to become a good leader; a young or adult woman and a young or adult man (active leader).
2. Defining the governance topic or problem which, as an *educational process or practice*, is to be developed by participants throughout the year.
3. Nominating the *indigenous tutor*, an elderly person, carrier of culture, who underpins and guides participants when they get back to their communities, for them to share what they have learnt in their educational practices with the rest of the community (by means of *community practices*).
4. Generating the spaces for the 4 participants to be able to convey what they have learnt in the 10 modules, connecting them with the community problems, in community meetings or gatherings, in grade schools or high schools.

Likewise, in some cases, when the LPC decides that one of the on-site periods take place in one of the communities, such community will provide food, shelter and the organization of the gatherings aimed at understanding the territorial reality, as well as moments of spirituality.



## **The Training Program as the Outcome of Multiple Strategic Alliances**

In each country the Training Program is set up as the result of a strategic alliance between an indigenous partner and an academic one, typically a second- or third-degree indigenous organization and a local university. Under the name “LPC” this alliance may invite other players to participate, like NGOs, Climate Projects or Funds.

Each partner has a specific task: the indigenous partner is responsible for promoting and supporting the Program in the communities; the academic partner is responsible for involving the various academic departments or units of the university, schools, teachers, researchers. For everything else they make joint decisions, from the inclusion of contents of regional or local interest to the curriculum, identification of teachers for each module, allocation of the budget and for following up and, monitoring the Program.

With this institutional arrangement, one of the goals of the PFGTI is to decentralize the program to a local level, but also to guarantee its continuity or sustainability: the idea is for the “territorial governance” to be adopted as a new (multi) disciplinary approach, that at some point in time the university may turn into a curricular proposal, but also an opportunity for both partners to find, stemming from such dialogue, other common interests.

In turn, the indigenous partner finds in the PFGTI a solid training tool that can be offered to other communities or groups.

Another principle embodied in the Program is that “everybody contributes”, i.e., each of the partners provides resources as a function of his/her possibilities.

The institutional framework thus devised is a good landing strip for a Climate Fund, which will find in the LPC a very low-cost structure for the purposes of capacity building of the indigenous organizations. In Ecuador, for example, ProAmazonia, a UNDP program with more than USD 40 million provided by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) co-finance today the second edition of the PFGTI in Napo (2019-2020).

## **Experiences in Each Country**

### **Putumayo – Colombia**

The [LPC of Putumayo](#) comprises the Zonal Indigenous Organization of Putumayo (OZIP), the Putumayo Technological Institute (ITP) the Organization of Indigenous People of the Colombian Amazonia (OPIAC) and WWF. A second tier of the Program is presently (2019-2020) being developed with the same LPC.



The first generation (2017-2018) was made up of 30 students coming from the following peoples: Inga, Kamentsa, Pasto, Pijao, Quillacinga, Siona and Yanacona. The youngest PFGTI student of this Colombian group was 14 at the time. Of these students, 40% were women.

Spirituality was one of the strands of the Training Program in Colombia. It came out in the Tulpa (figment), the Mambeadero (space) and the drinking of yagé. Such spaces were used for a dialogue between generations and for historical memory. There was a spiritual support provided by Taita Juan Yaiguaje (MHRIP) who used to make a harmonization ceremony for each opening and closure of the on-site periods.

Regarding the educational practices, they properly reflected the complex territorial situation of the Putumayo's indigenous people: the Ingas, because of the protection of the sacred sites located in their territory; the Kamentsas and Yanaconas because of the strengthening of their traditional medicine systems; the Pastos undertook a collective project in their territory and made the decision to inhabit there permanently; the Sionas strengthened their town hall and defined internal procedures; the Pijaos fought to recover a basin of the community and, last but not least, the Quillacingas struggled to strengthen their culture as the pillar of their organization.

### **Ucayali - Peru**

In [Peru, the first round of PFGTI](#) took place between 2017 and 2018, with 32 students from 8 communities, all of them Shipibos. The LPC was composed of the Aidesep Ucayali Regional Community (ORAU), the Federation of native Ucayali communities (FECONAU) and the National Intercultural Amazonia University (UNIA). WWF provided pedagogical and operational support.

Two outstanding aspects of this round of the PFGTI were: the role of community tutors – elderly people who assisted the students of their community during the on-site periods and in the community practices, as well as during the final presentation of their governance projects and closure.

An interesting fact is that five graduates of this Program hold jobs today in their regional federation, FECONAU.

The educational practices covered a wide range of territorial governance topics: four experiences about territorial monitoring, control and surveillance; a community tourism initiative; enhancement of agricultural crops; undertakings to reopen a health post and salvage of traditional medicine knowledge.

### **Rondonia - Brazil**

In [Brazil, the PFGTI](#) developed its activities in a single territory, the Indigenous Rio Branco Territory (IRBT), with participants from different villages (communities) and peoples: Tupari, Kanoe, Campe, Makurap, Arua, Sakarabiat y Jabuti (Djoromitxi). The IRBT is located close to Alta



Floresta, in the State of Rondonia. The LPC was composed of the Federal University of Rondonia (UNIR), the Doa Txato Association, as representative of the IRBT, Forest Trends and Ecopore. This successful first round in 2017-2018 allowed UNIR and Forest Trends to tackle a second round (2019-2020), also in Rondonia, but now in the Sete de Setembro Indigenous Territory, of the Paiter Surui People, close to Cacoal.

Other characteristics of the Training Program carried out by the IRBT was a majority participation of women (75% of participants) and the fact that they kept in touch amongst

themselves during the off-site periods given the short distances between villages. Their experience with the program was marked by a strong political awakening when they saw the large ancestral knowledge that is being lost and the fights of other indigenous people of Amazonia and their decision to guarantee that their children would have a territory that is both preserved and alive.

The on-site moments in the indigenous village of San Luis enabled the group to roam through the territory as a pedagogical strategy. For the wise men and women it was promising to see the youngsters walking the territory because “... *what you don't know, you don't take care of... let alone manage*”.

The narrative about demarcation of the territories, the songs of the elderly in the community, the days of reflection around videos displayed that touched upon the fight of the indigenous movement and the dialogue with indigenous leaders showed the ever growing role played by culture and traditional knowledge on indigenous territorial governance.

### **Pastaza – Ecuador**

Thirty two students of communities belonging to five “nationalities”, as the indigenous people call themselves in Ecuador, took part in the Ecuadorian Training Program (2017-2018). These were the Shuars, Achuars, Waoranis, Kichwas and Saparas. Some came from afar, like those of the Charapacocha community (Achuar) who can only travel out by plane, or the Saparas, who have to walk for two days to reach Puyo, the capital of Pastaza.

In Ecuador, the indigenous and academic partners were, respectively, the Amazon State University (UEA) and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuadorian Amazonia (CONFENIAE), with the administrative support of the local WWF office.

During each on-site period, and by initiative of the “elderly” (wise men and women) spiritual and knowledge sessions, called Guayusopinas, were organized. Starting at three o'clock in the morning, and drinking an infusion called Guayusa, an ancestral plant used by the ancestral Amazonian indigenous people of Ecuador, participants would exchange ideas about the best ways to put in practice in each of the communities the knowledge acquired.



Some of the educational projects developed throughout these 12 months show the importance of the PFGTI to these communities: in the case of the KapiRNA community, they chose the conservation of the forest to prevent the arrival of oil companies and contamination. In the case of the Gareno community, they prepared a community tourism project to generate income aimed at diminishing the impact caused by the oil companies in the Waorani organization. The Achuars, for their part, preferred Cultural Governance projects. In the case of the Wanpuiks they decided to rescue their language, while the Charapacochas endeavored to rescue their ancestral knowledge.

### **The Importance of the Training Program on the Mitigation of Climate Change**

The territorial governance capacity of the indigenous people in Amazonia will be critical, for many reasons, to guarantee both the mitigation of climate change and the adaptation to it. Not only because the deforestation and forest degradation rates are substantially lower in their territories than outside them but also because today they own more than one third of the carbon stocks and their primary forests still sequester enormous quantities of carbon and other greenhouse effect gases every year.

However, governance over these territories is not simple: not only do they pose enormous threats (extractive activities, entailing colonization and invasions, illegal activities like wood logging or drug trafficking, to name only a few) but today indigenous people are left to their fate, faced with ruling over their territories with scarce support from their governments, if any.

The PFGTI has shown to be a successful and strategic tool to strengthen indigenous organizations faced with managing their territories. It should become a complementary tool for all climate funds whenever the beneficiaries are the Amazonian territories and communities.

Currently, there are two Climate Funds who have adopted the program, these are ProAmazonia (Ecuador) who is co-financing a PFGTI in Napo (together with CONFENIAIE, Forest Trends and the IKIAM regional university) and Vision Amazonia (Colombia) who will finance a PFGTI in Guaviare (through OPIAC) in the period 2020-2021.