

FOCUSING ON THE AMAZON

**RAISG at the service of
the Amazon: conserve
and protect indigenous
peoples and biodiversity**

**Ten milestones, multiple
results: a look at RAISG's
work throughout 2023**

Perspectives for 2024

EDITORIAL

RAISG at the service of the Amazon: conserve and protect indigenous peoples and biodiversity

The Amazon is the largest tropical forest in the world, covering a massive area of 844 million hectares, comparable to the size of China. Its ecosystem plays a crucial role for the planet by storing carbon, preventing its accumulation in the atmosphere and, therefore, regulating global temperature and the water cycle. However, the Amazon faces pressures that threaten not only its ecosystem, social, and cultural connectivity, but also the survival of humanity.

For several years now, climate change has been considered one of the biggest challenges facing the planet and directly affects the Amazon. The risk of ecological collapse intensifies every day due to the expansion of economic activities, which leads to an acceleration in deforestation and increasingly severe and frequent forest fires.

In the last 38 years, more than 80 million hectares of Amazon rainforest have been lost and, on average, each year, forest fires impact 17 million hectares. If economic activities continue to grow without effective conservation efforts, by 2025 the Amazon could have up to 23.7 million hectares deforested, an area of forest similar to the size of Ecuador.

As these pressures increase, the impacts of climate change intensify, with drastic reductions in precipitation leading to extreme droughts and rising temperatures. This increases the vulnerability of local populations, as well as those on the American continent who depend on water flows from the Amazon to receive rainfall. This critical cycle pushes the Amazon to a tipping point.

Given this scenario, for 15 years, the work of the eight organizations¹ that make up the Amazon Network of Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information (RAISG) has exposed the pressures and threats faced by the Amazon and its changes over the years, generating rigorous multifactorial information that allows a comprehensive perspective of the region.

1. Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza (FAN), Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia (IMAZON), Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), Fundación Gaia Amazonas, Fundación Ecuatoriana de Estudios Ecológicos (EcoCiencia), Instituto del Bien Común (IBC), Provita, Grupo de Trabajo Socioambiental para la Amazonia (Wataniba).

RAISG's challenge is to innovate so that its studies are increasingly accessible, understandable, and useful for the various actors who protect the Amazon. Likewise, it seeks to coordinate with other actors to propose solutions based on interculturality and influence the establishment of public policies that minimize negative impacts and guarantee the preservation of biodiversity and Amazonian peoples.

In this newsletter, we share some of our notable milestones for 2023 which have allowed us to address the challenges we face and present our outlook for the current year. We wish you a good read!

Angélica García (*Executive Secretary of RAISG*) and **Members of the Board of Directors**

(*Adriana Ramos, ISA; Bibiana Sucre, Provita; Carlos Souza, Imazon; Carmen Josse, EcoCiencia; María Teresa Quispe, Wataniba; Natalia Calderón, FAN; Renzo Piana, IBC; and Silvia Gómez, GAIA*).

**United for
the Amazon**
in Spanish with
English subtitles →



RAISG's strategic guidelines

RAISG's strategic plan (2023-2027) has four (4) Strategic Objectives (SO) that guide its projects and actions:



SO1: Vision shared among the main actors that considers the region's integrity and connectivity as a conservation strategy for the Amazon.



SO2: National, regional, and international public and private agreements and policies that favor the conservation and sustainable use of Amazon resources.













SO3: Strengthen the main actors in the generation and use of information so that they can implement actions in favor of the protection, conservation, and sustainable use of Amazon resources.



SO4: Reduce knowledge gaps about the state and value of the Amazon, as well as its pressures, threats, and potential.

Ten milestones, multiple results: A look at RAISG's work throughout 2023

-  **1** COP 28 side event “Raising the voices of the Amazon: Challenges and solutions of the voluntary carbon market”
-  **2** Thematic panel “Cooperation models and perspectives for the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI)” at the Amazon Summit
-  **3** Amazon monitoring platform, “AMA”
-  **4** Launch of the “MapBiomias Água”
-  **5** Initiative “MapBiomias Amazônia - Collection 5”
-  **6** Policy brief “The role of indigenous territories in forest carbon conservation: challenges and opportunities”
-  **7** Regional meeting “Sharing satellite monitoring methodologies in Pilot Action Landscapes (PAL)”
-  **8** Map “Stable Forests of the Amazon”
-  **9** Study “Deforestation in the Amazon: Past, Present and Future”
-  **10** MapBiomias platform in countries that are part of RAISG

COP 28 side event “Raising the voices of the Amazon: Challenges and solutions of the voluntary carbon market”

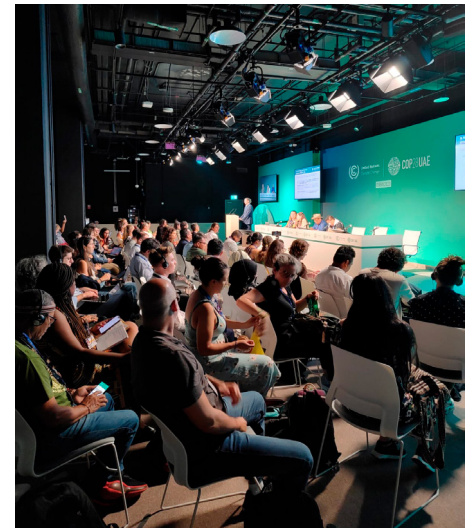
Indigenous peoples and territories play a fundamental role in the fight against deforestation in the Amazon. However, the lack of regulation of the carbon market, from its formulation to its implementation, threatens their rights and puts their livelihoods and knowledge systems at risk.

On December 4, 2023, in Dubai, RAISG and Rainforest Foundation Norway presented the [side event “Raising the voices of the Amazon”](#) within the scope of COP28. The objective was to address the challenges, opportunities, and solutions offered by a regulated carbon market and was attended by indigenous, government, and civil society representatives.

The panel discussion highlighted the need to increase transparency in the contractual details

of negotiations carried out in the carbon market. Likewise, the importance of creating and strengthening mechanisms for the participation of indigenous communities, as well as establishing protocols for prior, free, and informed consent was highlighted. These strategies are essential for the effectiveness of actions to protect the Amazon, in order to avoid the tipping point and situations that violate indigenous rights. Applying social safeguards and regulation and supervision under the REDD+ process was also emphasized, as well as programs to prevent illegal and illicit resource extraction and land grabbing activities within indigenous territories.

During the event, RAISG presented a series of materials that remain available to the various actors interested in the conservation of the Amazon.



Download the event resources



Thematic panel “Cooperation models and perspectives for the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI)” at the Amazon Summit

This meeting was sparked by the acknowledgement of the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI, the acronym in Spanish) and their worrying high vulnerability. It took place on August 5, 2023, within the scope of the “Amazon Dialogues” program, promoted by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) and other partners such as RAISG, within the scope of the Amazon Summit held in Belém, Pará.

As a result of this panel, a document with recommendations for the full protection of PIACI was prepared with the participation of indigenous leaders, representatives of governments and

civil society from the Amazonian countries Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well as representatives of multilateral organizations. This document was shared with authorities with the aim of generating impact during the Summit of Heads of State for the Amazon Region, held on August 8th and 9th, 2023.

It is urgent that the countries of the Amazon Basin recognize the existence of the PIACI and implement coordinated programs and public policies to protect their rights, whether in demarcated territories or not.

In this sense, we recommend that this occur at different intra- and inter-institutional levels in each country and at a regional level, based on cooperation agreements between countries with the presence of PIACI to ensure the allocation of adequate financial, material, and human resources.

Through this document, recommendations were made for the protection of PIACI, under four specific themes: self-determination of the territory; definition, management and regional monitoring of agreements and policies; protection and participation mechanisms; and health.

Recomendaciones para avanzar en la protección de los Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento y Contacto Inicial

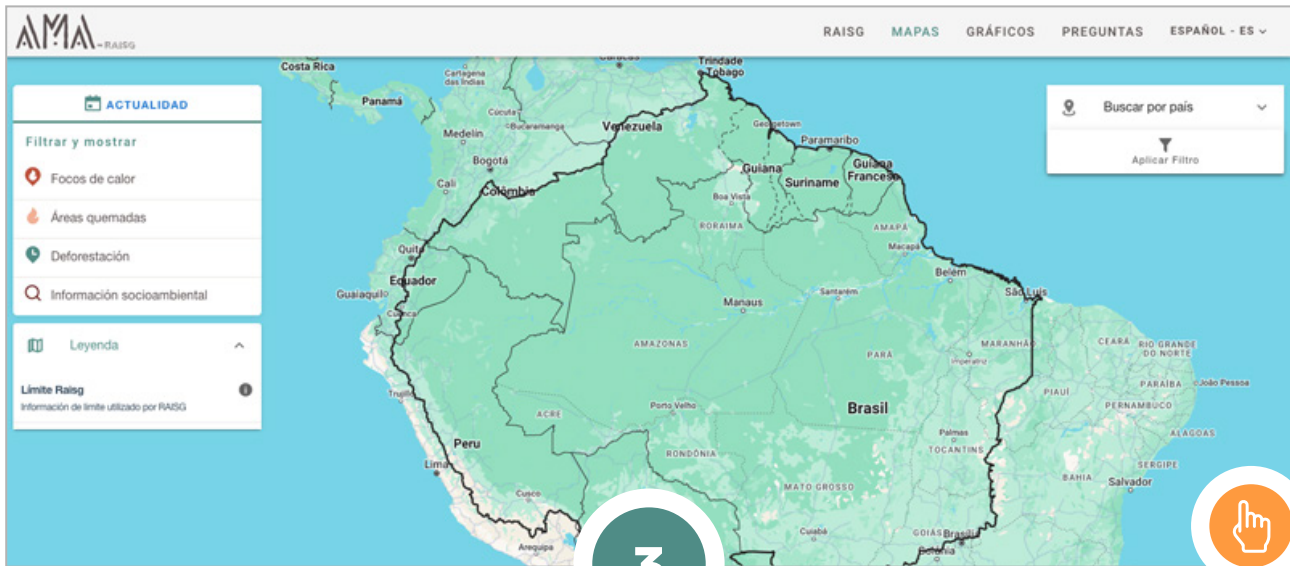
Presentación

El 5 de agosto de 2023 se celebró el panel temático “Modelos de Cooperación y Perspectivas para la Protección de los Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento y Contacto Inicial (PIACI)” dentro del programa Diálogos Amazónicos, organizado por la Organización del Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica - OTCA y el Ministerio de Pueblos Indígenas de Brasil con la colaboración de la Secretaría de Salud de los Pueblos Indígenas (SESAI), la Fundación Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas (FUNAI) y la Coordinación de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Amazonia Brasileña (COIAB). El evento reunió a representantes gubernamentales de los países miembros de la OTCA, líderes indígenas y representantes de la sociedad civil y de organizaciones multilaterales.

Como resultado de esta mesa redonda, se elaboró este documento con recomendaciones para la protección integral del PIACI. El mismo será remitido a la mesa temática sobre Pueblos Indígenas a realizarse el 6 de agosto de 2023 en el marco de los Diálogos Amazónicos, con la intención de contribuir a la Cumbre de Jefes de Estado de la Región Amazónica a realizarse entre el 8 y 9 de agosto de 2023.

Propuestas Generales

Es urgente que los países de la Cuenca Amazónica reconozcan la existencia de pueblos en aislamiento y contacto inicial (PIACI) e implementen programas y políticas públicas articuladas para la protección de sus derechos, sea en territorios demarcados o no demarcados. En este sentido, recomendamos que esto ocurra en diversos niveles intra e interinstitucionales en cada uno de los países y regionalmente, a partir de acuerdos de cooperación entre los países con presencia de PIACI, que garanticen la asignación de recursos financieros, materiales y humanos adecuados.



Amazon monitoring platform, “AMA”

In recent years, specifically in 2019, 2020 and 2021, wildfires in the Amazon exceeded the annual average (170 thousand km²/year) of areas impacted in recent decades. This scenario leads to multiple negative effects, such as the loss of biodiversity, increased greenhouse gas emissions, atmospheric pollution, economic losses, and the displacement of communities, among other factors that are equally serious.

In 2019, wildfires increased 51% above the average. Twenty-twenty was very critical, exceeding 60% and in 2021 they increased by another 2%.

Of the total impacted area, 59% were recorded in new areas and 41% in areas that had previously been affected by fire. Furthermore, 67% occur outside Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) and Indigenous Territories (ITs), and 33% within these regimes.

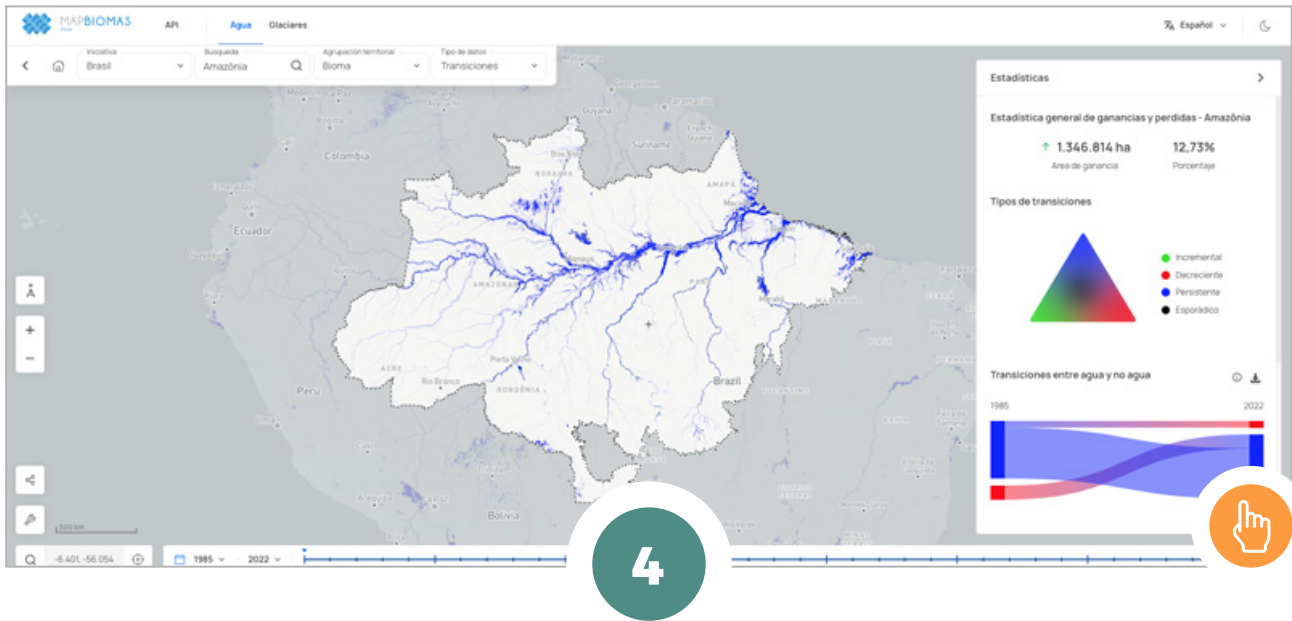
In 2023, thanks to the support of Good Energies/ Porticus and Conservation International (CI), RAISG made the [AMA platform](#) available to the public, a system for monitoring forest fires and deforestation in the Amazon. This platform offers real-time alerts, detecting and reporting

hot spots. AMA, in the Guarani language, means water, one of the most important ecosystem services provided by the Amazon.

AMA’s main objective is to contribute to advocacy, communication, and education processes aimed at public sector leaders, indigenous leaders, journalists, and other actors interested in the conservation of the Amazon. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen environmental governance in the territories and the region.

The information made available by the AMA platform is organized by main themes (hot spots, areas affected by fire, and deforestation) that can be combined with filters such as administrative political limits, limits of protected natural areas, and indigenous territories.





“MapBiomás Agua” Initiative

MapBiomás Agua is a collaborative network formed by experts from Amazon member countries with the aim of contributing to the understanding of the dynamics of surface waters throughout the Amazon territory through the generation of monthly and annual data. This analysis is carried out using satellite images and data on the area occupied by rivers, glaciers, and lakes in Amazonian countries.

In September 2023, RAISG held the event “Water, indicator of life: 23 years of changes in Amazonian countries” with the aim of analyzing, in collaboration with professionals from the region, the dynamics of surface waters in the Amazon and presenting the new platform launched with financial support from Quadrature.

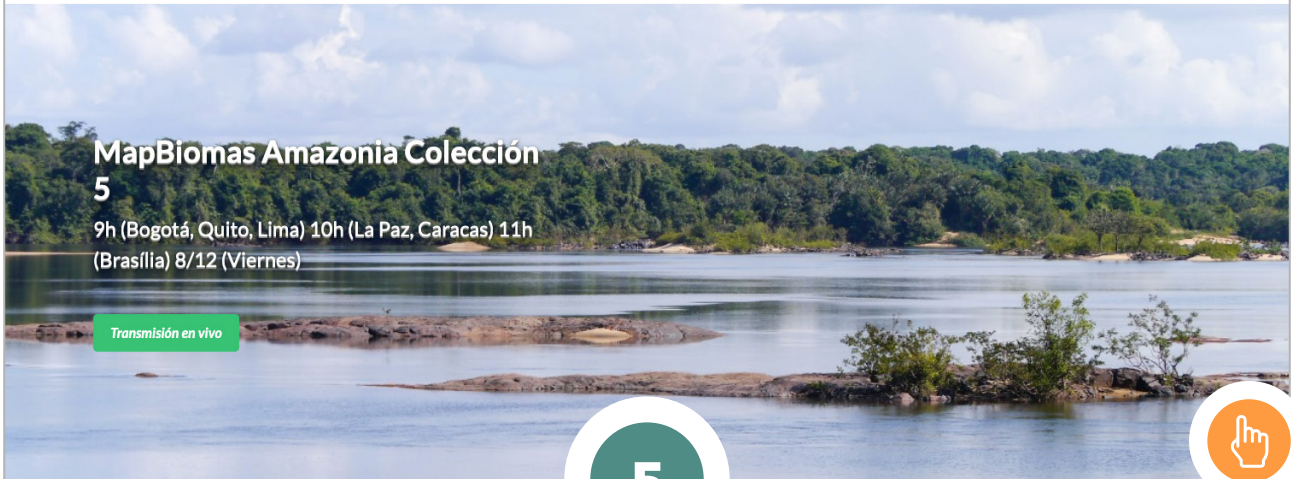
The bodies of liquid water in the nine Amazonian countries cover an area of 26.2 million hectares, a size equivalent to the surface of Ecuador. This number represents at least a fifth of all the water in the planet’s rivers.

The Amazon region lost one million hectares of freshwater surface in ten years. Climate change could be one of the main causes. The consequences mainly affect communities that depend on fishing or agriculture for their subsistence.

Furthermore, since 1985, 56% of tropical Andean glaciers have been lost, equivalent to 184 thousand hectares. Glacial retreat is accompanied by the formation of new lakes that can pose a threat to the population.



video of the presentation



Launch of “MapBiomias Amazônia - Collection 5”

MapBiomias Amazônia is a RAISG initiative that brings together a collaborative network of experts from member countries, dedicated to generating annual maps of land cover and use in the Amazon, using increasingly advanced processing tools.

In December 2023, with financial support from Quadrature, collection 5 of MapBiomias Amazônia was presented, which compiled and analyzed 38 years of data to understand the dynamics of land cover and use in the Amazon territory.

Between 1985 and 2022, 80 million hectares of forest were lost in the Amazon.

The expansion of economic activities is linked to the loss of forests. According to the results, over the last 38 years, these activities have increased by 169%: infrastructure projects reached 642 thousand hectares, mining activity expanded to 593 thousand hectares and agricultural use increased to 84 million hectares.



Policy brief “The role of indigenous territories in forest carbon conservation: challenges and opportunities”

Excess CO₂ in the atmosphere is largely responsible for global warming. Therefore, carbon storage in Amazonian forests constitutes a fundamental ecosystem service to tackle climate change.

The Amazon stores approximately 79 billion metric tons of forest carbon (MtC). Around 58% of these reserves are located on Indigenous Territories (IT) and Protected Natural Areas (PNA). Forests in indigenous territories are the best preserved and therefore attractive for carbon markets due to their high level of conservation and carbon storage.

As part of the implementation of REDD+ and forest carbon markets, companies have approached indigenous territories to propose forest carbon credit projects, without providing transparent information or safeguard measures. However, regulatory frameworks in Amazonian countries do not offer the necessary protection to preserve the ecosystem services of their forests, nor to safeguard the territorial rights and lives of the indigenous peoples who inhabit and manage them.

This public policy document, developed within the scope of the “Indigenous Science and Knowledge in the Amazon” project, analyzes the challenges and opportunities in this context, hoping to influence national, regional, and international public policies so that the contribution of indigenous peoples to protecting the Amazon is included and recognized.

The main constitutional challenge in relation to carbon markets consists of ensuring that indigenous peoples are central spokespersons in decision-making regarding their territories, in the understanding that they are collective subjects with free determination and self-government that cannot be unknown, much less when their knowledge systems and ancestral practices demonstrated a relationship of respect and harmony with their territory.

The “Indigenous Science and Knowledge in the Amazon” project is implemented by RAISG in alliance with the US research organization Woodwell Climate Research Center (WCRC) and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), with funding from the Norwegian International Climate and Forests Initiative (NICFI).



Regional Meeting “Sharing satellite monitoring methodologies in Pilot Action Landscapes (PAL)”

Since 2021, RAISG has been implementing the “Indigenous Science and Knowledge in the Amazon” project in alliance with the Woodwell Climate Research Center (WCRC) and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA, the acronym in Spanish), with financial support from the Norwegian International Climate and Forests Initiative (NICFI).

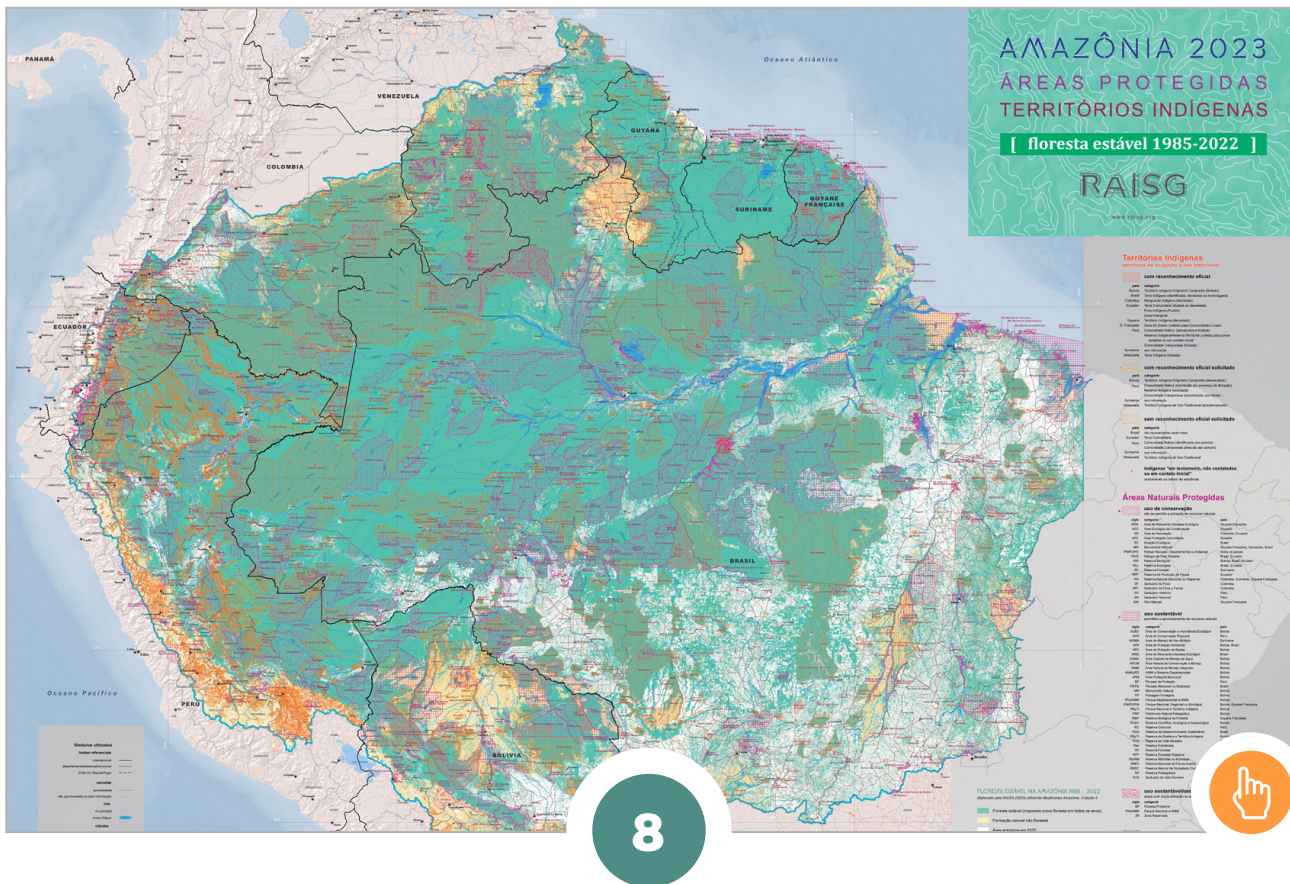
The objective of this initiative is to increase knowledge and understanding about the pressures that threaten forests in the Indigenous Territories and Protected Natural Areas of the Amazon, especially with regard to the dynamics of gain and loss of the carbon they store. Through intercultural dialogues, spatial information is combined with local knowledge to analyze the causes of forest loss in four indigenous territories: Río Mirití (Colombia), Xingu (Brazil), Waorani (Ecuador), and Kakataibo (Peru).



In this context, from August 21 to 24, the regional meeting “Sharing satellite monitoring methodologies in Pilot Action Landscapes (PAL)” was held in Peru to exchange knowledge and experience on spatial models applied in native territories. Representatives of civil society and indigenous organizations from four Amazonian countries participated: Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru.

The project's first results scientifically show that the main loss of biomass in the Amazon occurs outside Indigenous Territories (ITs) and Protected Natural Areas (PNAs). Therefore, IT titling and the creation of a new PNAs constitute an efficient conservation strategy.

Currently, the project is developing a methodology that will allow data to be made available until 2030. Furthermore, a toolbox that will allow replicating this experience with indigenous peoples in other Amazonian landscapes is being developed.



Map “Stable forests of the Amazon”

The so-called “stable forests” are those that have maintained their natural condition with little human intervention during the last 38 years (from 1985 to 2022). Their existence is essential to stop the increase in the planet’s average temperature, since an increase of 1.5°C could trigger a catastrophe for humanity.

Using the [RAISG map “Stable Forests in the Amazon”](#), we note that currently 69.9% of the Amazon’s surface is made up of stable forests. However, there are significant challenges to their protection.

42% of stable forests in the Amazon are not indigenous territories (TI) or protected natural areas (PNA) and may disappear because they do not have a special territorial management regime.

As RAISG pointed out in previous studies, areas that are not protected are more vulnerable and likely to be used for agricultural, oil, mining, and logging activities. Furthermore, 86% of deforestation that occurred between 1985 and 2022 occurred outside protected areas and indigenous territories.

RAISG proposes the implementation of public policies that promote the titling of indigenous territories that have not yet been officially recognized and the creation of new protected natural areas in the region. This strategy is considered effective for conserving stable forests.



Study “Deforestation in the Amazon: past, present, and future”

This study analyzes data from two decades to model three possible deforestation scenarios between 2021 and 2025: optimistic, moderate, and pessimistic. These scenarios clarify what could happen if practices already carried out in the first two decades of the 21st century are repeated.

In just 5 years, the Amazon could lose up to 23.7 million hectares to deforestation, a size equivalent to the territory of Ecuador. This number represents half of what was lost in the last 20 years: 50.4 million hectares.

Furthermore, the study identifies the current causes that could trigger this devastating scenario. While land use and change drivers such

as agricultural activity and the expansion of road infrastructure place greater pressure on the forest and its cities, activities such as illegal gold mining, coca cultivation, and drug and arms trafficking worsen the situation and put the lives of those who defend the Amazon territory at risk.

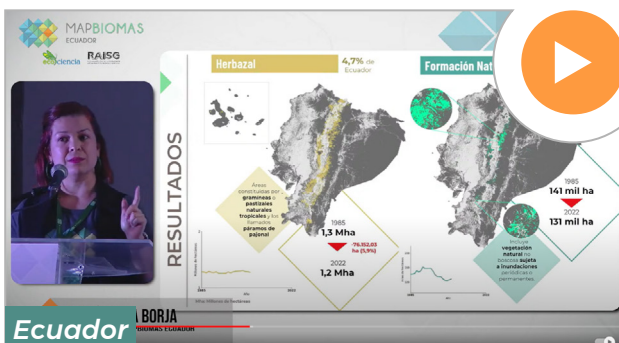
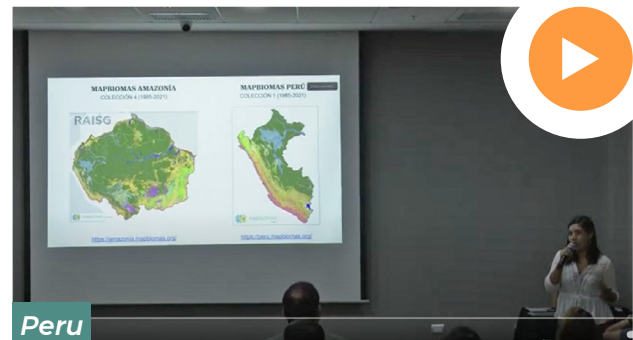
The Amazon’s extensive rainforest is in rapid decline. Every hour the equivalent to 310 football fields is deforested.

This study, carried out by experts from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela from RAISC member organizations, also identifies the specific causes and drivers of deforestation in each Amazonian country.

MapBiomias Platform in countries that are a part of RAISG

MapBiomias aims to promote the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, as well as tackle the challenge of climate change. Through the use of artificial intelligence and the Google Earth Engine platform, this initiative has generated rigorous and reliable maps and information on land cover and use in various parts of the country since 1985.

Based on the experience accumulated in the production of five MapBiomias Amazônia collections, RAISG partner organizations launched platforms designed to collect, store, visualize and analyze data corresponding to 38 annual maps of land cover and use in the Amazon by country, covering the period 1985 to 2022. These initiatives are part of an effort by the MapBiomias network to map and monitor all biomes in South America.



Perspectives for 2024

1

RAISG is committed to water conservation in the Amazon and to comprehensive monitoring of the region

The preservation of Amazonian resources continues to be one of RAISG's main objectives, and this year two new projects for the conservation and protection of water resources join the MapBiomás Água initiative:

- The **Water Vulnerability project**, with the support of the **Swedish Embassy**, will map the processes of degradation and contamination of water resources in the Amazon and will implement advocacy actions to promote the restoration and protection of water resources.
- The **Wetlands project**, with support from the **Moore Foundation**, will improve the mapping of this ecosystem and promote knowledge and understanding of human, economic, and environmental risks to guide conservation and management policies.

In order for RAISG to continue with its commitment to carrying out studies that are increasingly used by those who defend the Amazon, **Porticus** will provide a new financial contribution so that AMA can become a monitoring platform with data not only on deforestation and fires, but also on infrastructure, land use and cover, carbon stock, among others. The creation of an AMA cell phone app will allow all those who defend Amazonian biodiversity and its people to have access to updated and reliable data to support their protection initiatives.

2

Progress in its new governance model

In 2023, RAISG hired an executive secretary, Angélica Garcia, who, in dialogue with collaborators and external consultants, has been supporting processes to review strategies and improve work routines and networking. As part of these efforts, some internal working groups were created, such as the Technical Committee and the Communication and Advocacy Thematic Group, establishing frequent spaces for exchange and collective decision-making.

Over the next two years (2024-2025), **Porticus** will support RAISG in strengthening collaborative work between partner organizations in the Amazon countries network. This will facilitate greater coordination between different partners, working groups, and external allies.

Rainforest Foundation Norway will also continue to fund RAISG over the next four years (2024-2027), supporting the implementation of its governance structure and strategic plan, as well as the development of a regional advocacy strategy through partnerships with key actors.

3

Improvements in RAISG's financial sustainability and expansion of the impacts of its projects

In 2024, RAISG's project portfolio will grow thanks to funders who acknowledge the network's vital work and its important contributions to the conservation of the Amazon. Currently, seven organizations support RAISG with financial resources and valuable exchanges to improve its work: Quadrature, Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), Rainforest Foundation Norway, Moore Foundation, Embassy of Sweden, Porticus/Good Energies, and EarthInsight.

4

Our projects looking at 2024

Within the scope of the project **"Indigenous Science and Knowledge in the Amazon"**, funded by the Norwegian International Climate and Forests Initiative (NICFI) and carried out in partnership with the Woodwell Research Center and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), new regional meetings were held with indigenous communities to jointly build a toolbox with examples of territorial management strategies for the preservation of Amazonian forests, with the possibility of being replicated. Furthermore, an important projection of forest carbon stocks will be carried out until 2030, considering different scenarios.

MapBiomás Agua, which has financial support from Quadrature, will continue to train key actors in the use of the platform and publicize changes in water bodies as new products emerge. As part of the actions of this project, as well as the other two with related themes (Wetlands/Moore and Water Vulnerability/Swedish Embassy), strategic allies will be mapped out with the aim of establishing joint actions, especially on the advocacy front. National and regional public policies and agreements for the conservation of water bodies and wetlands will also be analyzed. Regarding technical activities, these last two projects will advance the analysis of previous correlated studies and define their monitoring methodologies.

As part of the activities of the project supported by Porticus/Good Energies, new layers of data will be updated in **AMA** (land use and cover, infrastructure, carbon stocks, water bodies, among others), which will allow for deeper cross-checked analyzes. In addition, an AMA cell phone app will be launched to facilitate access to fire and deforestation alerts, mainly for indigenous communities.

Just as RAISG has been doing over the last 5 years, a new annual collection of **MapBiomás Amazônia** will be launched with the support of Quadrature, contributing to the understanding of changes in land use and cover and advances in economic activities.

RAISG in communication outlets

NEW RAISG STUDY IN INFOAMAZÔNIA

“Deforestation in the Amazon, past, present and future”



MAPBIOMAS AGUA ON MONGABAY

“The Amazon region lost one million hectares of freshwater surface in ten years”



OPINION PIECE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF RAISG ON VALOR

“Indigenous peoples: guardians of the forest and carbon: why the protection of indigenous rights is key to the future of the planet”

NEWS ABOUT RAISG'S NEW MAP OF STABLE FORESTS ON EFE

“42% of virgin forests in the Amazon have no protection and could disappear”

MAPBIOMAS AMAZÔNIA ON VANGUARDIA

“Three out of every four hectares deforested in the Amazon are used for livestock farming”



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