



Without Indigenous women, **there's no future**

Faces, voices and dreams of the Indigenous women of the Amazon

This Photobook was developed by Hivos within the framework of the All Eyes on the Amazon program, with the support of the People's Postcode Lottery.

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Violeta Irey

Alexandra Narváez

Nemonte Nenquimo

Vanessa Racúa

Telma Taurepang

Edilena Torino

Sandra Tukup

and all the Amazonian Indigenous women for their constant struggle.



Photo: Nay Jinknss, 2021



Photo: Nay Jinkns, 2021

PRESENTATION

This photobook is a compilation of photographs and interviews to Indigenous women from the Amazon Basin with special emphasis on leaders from Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil, carried out by Hivos within the framework of the All Eyes on the Amazon program, during the Indigenous Women's Marches in Brasilia (2019, 2021) and other virtual and face-to-face exchange spaces.

Through these images and quotes, we seek to amplify the voices, perspectives, dreams, and strategies of Indigenous women to respond to the threats faced by Indigenous peoples in the Amazon, revitalize the role of women in the preservation of culture and the care of the territory, and unite between countries, nationalities, and cultures to strengthen the processes of land defense in the Amazon Basin.

Although the perspectives expressed by the women cited in this book merit further analysis and deepening, their words serve as an inspiration to strengthen collective efforts to protect the Amazon and the rights of the Indigenous peoples who call it home.

THREATS

The defense of the human and territorial rights of the Amazonian Indigenous peoples has been a tireless and permanent struggle. But for Indigenous women, the challenge is even greater.

Logging, mining, oil extraction, invasions, land appropriation... The arrival of the extractive industry to indigenous and rural territories brings a series of environmental, economic, and social problems to the communities that live there. Among these problems, it leads to an increase in cases of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other forms of gender violence, with Indigenous women being the most affected. In addition, women, as main providers of water and food for their families, are the first to feel the consequences of the lack of availability of these resources due to the climate and health crisis.

By raising their voices in the face of the destruction of their lands, Indigenous women encounter sexism, discrimination and rejection, both within and outside their communities; however, resilience and struggle of the Indigenous women persists despite the challenges.¹

Melo, K. (2020) "Mulheres indígenas e crise climática, vulnerabilidades e contribuições fundamentais"
<https://toamazonia.org/mulheres-indigenas-e-crisis-climatica-vulnerabilidades-e-contribicoes-fundamentais/?lang=pt-br>



Photo: Nay Jinknss, 2021



"All Indigenous countries live under threat. The threat of oil companies, the threat that they want to come to our land and destroy it. We are not going to allow it as Indigenous women. "

[Ecuador] Nemonte Nenquimo, Indigenous activist and Co-founder of Alianza Ceibo during the first Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2019)

"It has been a very difficult time, very hard [referring to the COVID-19 pandemic], the fact that no one can go out, that people can be infected. Unfortunately, we lost brothers and sisters from the communities."

[Peru] Vanessa Racúa, Leader of the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and Tributaries (FENAMAD) in an interview with Hivos via Zoom, January 7, 2021

"Oil extraction, mining, logging ... for the state, all types of exploitation are development, but for us, the Indigenous peoples, it is genocide."

[Ecuador] Lineth Calapucha, Vice President of the Kichwa nationality of Pastaza during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)



Photo: Nay Jinknss, 2021



"Deforestation affects the climate, it affects our rivers, it is killing nature. For example, now does not rain [in our land], years ago it rained a lot in this season. All the Indigenous peoples who fight for their territory, are saddened when they see their rivers dry, when they see these great companies destroying nature, destroying rivers, and destroying springs. If we, the Indigenous peoples, weren't taking care of the forest, I think the planet would not last long."

[Brazil] Maisa Guajajara, Guardian of the Forest in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 07, 2021



"Governments do not have policies to face climate change. We listen, we see deforestation, logging, invasions within Indigenous lands, and it not only ends with the lives of the Indigenous population but also affects climate change. The climate crisis affects Indigenous life and the planet's life. The Indigenous population continues to suffer these attacks and the Indigenous peoples fight so that this destruction does not reach our territories, but they are getting closer and closer. We are paying a high price for the ambition of the non-Indigenous people."

[Brazil] Telma Taurepang, Coordinator of the Union of Indigenous Women of the Brazilian Amazon (UMIAB) in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 11, 2021



Photo: Nay Jinknss, 2021



Photo: Nay Jinkns, 2021

"Our wealth is our culture, our bank is our land, our nature. We no longer want deforestation or trucks within communities without consulting. They [meaning governments] never call us to a meeting, they use us politically, putting Indigenous peoples' agendas on the back burner."

[Peru] Violeta Irej, Leader of the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and Tributaries (FENAMAD) during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)

"Women and Indigenous peoples, for their experience of more than 1500 years living in this land, know that natural resources must be extracted responsibly because they are necessary to live, but the white man and his capitalist system that seeks more money does not understand that he should not exploit all the resources."

[Brazil] Telma Taurepang, Coordinator of the Union of Indigenous Women of the Brazilian Amazon (UMIAB) in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 11, 2021



Photo: Midia India, 2021

AMAZONIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Being Indigenous, being a woman, and being a land defender means being exposed to various forms of violence. Indigenous women and girls suffer from discrimination, exploitation, sexism, and are also disproportionately affected by climate change.

However, they are warriors. Amazonian Indigenous women have a deep connection with nature (Mother Earth). In fact, the forest itself is perceived by most Amazonian cultures as a fertile and abundant woman, a great mother who welcomes all beings in her arms.

For this reason, they have an ancestral role in the conservation of nature, because they understand that the defense of the Amazon is not limited to the protection of the territory but to the defense of culture and the revitalization of their ancestral knowledge and worldview.

We are many, we are multiple, we are a thousand women, caciques, midwives, witchdoctors, shamans, farmers, teachers, lawyers, nurses, and doctors in the multiple sciences of the Territory and the university. We are anthropologists, parliamentarians, and psychologists. We are many, moving from the ground of the village to the ground of the world.

1

1 Taken from the Manifesto of the Indigenous Women's March (2021). National Articulation of Indigenous Women Warriors of Ancestrality (ANMIGA)
<https://anmiga.org/en/manifesto-2>



Photo: Nay Jinknss, 2021



"Amazonian Indigenous women have a different mentality. We do not look at the forest as a business. For us, the forest is a mother. The river has a living being there."

[Peru] Tabea Casique, Coordinator of Education, Science and Technology at the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 8, 2021

"The forest is our home, our place, our pharmacy. It is our source of life. Women have always been in the communities rescuing our habits, our medicines, and ancestral plants, we are the ones who have the recipes for medicines, we are the ones who make sure that the rivers are clean to feed us, that the mountains are clean."

[Ecuador] Nemo Andy, Director of Women and Health in the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) during the Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)



"All Indigenous women are limited by borders imposed on us by governments that do not know our reality, our ways of life, our customs, our worldview. They do not understand Indigenous peoples and that is why they have separated us with these imposed borders."

[Ecuador] Lineth Calapucha, Vice President of the Kichwa nationality of Pastaza during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)

"Indigenous women can no longer bear to see their mother [referring to Mother Earth] being exploited, they can no longer endure seeing their mother being raped, and that is why we march, that is why we join forces with peasant women, rural women, Indigenous women, urban women because the Earth is the mother of all of us."

[Brazil] Sônia Guajajara, Coordinator of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) during the first Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2019)

"As women, we have a great role to play. We see the work that has to be done in the community according to our life plan."

[Peru] Vanessa Racúa, Leader of the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and Tributaries (FENAMAD) in an interview with Hivos via Zoom, January 7, 2021

"Our job [referring to the warriors of the forest] involves monitoring our territory as well as creating awareness, talking about the importance of the environment and nature, and of our culture, which is the main thing."

[Brazil] Maisa Guajajara, Guardian of the Forest in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 7, 2021



Photo: Nay Jinknss, 2021



#SINANGOEKOFAN
MI CUERPO,
MI TERRITORIO
ECUADOR

"I dream that the voices of Indigenous women are heard and taken into account. When I decided to be part of the guard [of the Kofan Community of Sinangoe] I received a lot of criticism because nobody had seen a woman leading, a woman speaking, a woman walking along with the men. It has been very difficult, but for me, it is very nice because I already see other women who are also entering the guard. After all, they feel that they can. Now women feel freer to speak, to say I also participate, I also have ideas."

[Ecuador] Alexandra Narváez, Guard of the Kofan Community of Sinangoe during the first Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2019)

"For me, telling my story as a Guardian of the Forest is very moving. Because we are mothers, we are women, we are Indigenous women. Because there is a whole prejudice against us, Indigenous peoples. And, being a woman, the prejudice is even greater. But we never give up."

[Brazil] Maisa Guajajara, Guardian of the Forest in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 7, 2021

"I thank older women, leaders, wise women for their knowledge so that the new generations can empower ourselves. For what? For the fight to continue in our territories."

[Ecuador] Lineth Calapucha, Vice President of the Kichwa nationality of Pastaza during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)



Photo: Nay Jenkins, 2021

SISTERHOOD, TOGETHER IN THE FIGHT

Despite the obstacles, more and more Amazonian Indigenous women decide to honor the warrior spirit of their grandmothers and face danger, without backing down in the face of the threat of hunger, rejection, violence, or death. Moved by their deep connection with Mother Earth, they are true guardians from every space of action. They are thus guardians of the home, the territory, and the knowledge, inevitably becoming guardians of the planet.

This greater notoriety of Amazonian Indigenous women has gained even more strength, thanks to the materialization of encounters such as the Indigenous Women's March in Brasilia (IWM), an event that in its second edition (September 2021) brought together more than 5,000 women representing more than 170 peoples from all regions of Brazil, and had the participation of representatives from other Latin American countries.

The March, called "Women: reforesting minds to cure Earth", meant the encounter of women of different nationalities, peoples, and cultures, all with the same conviction that to rescue the Amazon from the consequences of deforestation, mining, logging, and the pandemic, it is not enough to reforest the territories but to unite between peoples and "reforest" the planet with new thoughts and feelings, involving all of us with its care. This second edition is a continuation of "Territory: our body, our spirit", the first IWM (2019), which demanded a paradigm shift to understand that taking care of the territory also means taking care of ourselves.

Thus, the March materializes the symbolic union of Indigenous women and their mission to protect their territories for present and future generations, through the defense of the environment, the common good that guarantees Indigenous ways of life not as a mere physical resource, but as the home of the spirits of the forests, animals, and water, the source of ancestral knowledge¹.

1 Taken from Announcement by ANMIGA, organizer of the Indigenous Women's March



Photo: Ana Mendes, 2021



Photo: Ana Mendes, 2021

"We have to value our customs, our knowledge. Within the Indigenous world, there is a sort of knowledge we cannot lose, and that is what we are fighting for the most. For me, meeting all these Indigenous women is very important, because we have to support each other."

[Ecuador] **Nemonte Nenquimo**, Indigenous activist and Co-founder of Alianza Ceibo during the first Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2019)



"The sisterhood between Indigenous women is very strong, I feel connected to them. The space that we have shared makes us see that we are the same. We may be from different countries but we have the same problems in our territories. And women are always on the front line, fighting for our territories."

[Ecuador] Nemo Andy, Director of Women and Health in the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)

"We are alert and attentive to this March that began in Brazil but we have to continue because it is an opportunity for all women, a possibility, an option. The State does not listen to women, but now, sisters, we are together claiming our rights because we, Indigenous peoples, are autonomous."

[Peru] Violeta Irej, Leader of the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and Tributaries (FENAMAD) during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)



Photo: Ana Mendes, 2021



“We have an enormous responsibility as women, especially at this time, [when it’s challenging] being a woman and being Indigenous in Brazil. Therefore we need to be present in the national movement, in the Indigenous women’s movement, build alliances with others, meet other women, and strengthen ourselves together.”

[Brazil] Edilena Torino, Coordinator of the Coordination of Organizations and Articulations of Indigenous Peoples of Maranhão (COAPIMA) during the first Indigenous Women’s March (Brasilia, 2019)





"I believe that women leaders need to make a work plan to deliver to the state. What do we want? Politically speaking, economically speaking? I see women of great character, capacity, and power, and all the women who are here (including myself) have impressed me, they shocked me. We have to work together, join forces and stay together, among all countries to see what we can achieve."

[Peru] Violeta Irey, Leader of the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and Tributaries (FENAMAD) during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)



Photo: Ana Mendes, 2021



Photo: Ana Mendes, 2021



Photo: Andressa Zumpano, 2019

"We will always work hand in hand, so this fight can be heard around the world and that this achievement can reach our future generations."

[Ecuador] Nemo Andy, Director of Women and Health in the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)

"Our fight is for everyone, not only for Indigenous peoples and our right to live. We fight for the future of humanity."

[Brazil] Telma Taurepang, Coordinator of the Union of Indigenous Women of the Brazilian Amazon (UMIAB) in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 11, 2021

CALL TO ACTION

The work is starting. In addition to recognizing the contribution of women in the care of nature and the preservation of biodiversity, it should not be ignored that they are the most susceptible to the impacts of the climate crisis.

It is important to listen to the voices of Indigenous women, but also, it is essential to ensure the future of the Amazon and, by extension, of humanity, by joining Indigenous peoples in their struggles, respecting their ways of life, valuing their knowledge and practices, and amplifying and positioning their voices in the center of the climate debate.



Photo: Midia India, 2021

"The world is talking about climate change and that's the fight. We have to take care of the world so that there is no more destruction, there is no more pollution, and we must look at more ways to act, to contribute to the world.

But that fight belongs to everyone, not just women. We must assume our role, as men, as children. This is important to me because we are here to protect life. We don't want to die, we want our rivers, our waters clean, and to live freely, too. "

[Ecuador] Nemonte Nenquimo, Indigenous activist and Co-founder of Alianza Ceibo during the first Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2019)



Photo: Ana Mendes, 2021



Photo: Andressa Zumpano, 2019



Photo: Nay Jinkins, 2021

"To all the people in the world: now more than ever we have to be united fighting for our territories, for our children, for the future of the planet too."

[Ecuador] **Nemo Andy**, Director of Women and Health in the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) during the second Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2021)

"For me, hope lays with raising awareness. Each of the world's citizens must give their children another type of education. To teach them not only about money, consumerism, capitalism but about the value of water, land, trees, the value of what you breathe, and how you live. The value we give to nature, there lays hope."

[Ecuador] **Sandra Tukup**, former Territory Leader of CONFENIAE in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 14, 2021

"May the government listen to the voice of women, may we be truly respected. This is the moment to unite among the women of the world to define how we can support all those who are in the same situation, who are fighting for life, for the lives of their children, and the life of the entire planet."

[Ecuador] Nemonte Nenquimo, Indigenous activist and Co-founder of Alianza Ceibo during the first Indigenous Women's March (Brasilia, 2019)

"I believe in a better future in which territory is protected from the perspective of Indigenous women, as part of their identity."

[Brazil] Telma Taurepang, Coordinator of the Union of Indigenous Women of the Brazilian Amazon (UMIAB) in an interview via Zoom with Hivos, January 11, 2021



Photo: Nay Jinkinss, 2021



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