

RESULTS SUMMARY

When Forests Become the Future: Indigenous Cacao, Agroforestry, and the Renewal of the Movima Territory

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PROJECT	Title:	When Forests Become the Future: Indigenous Cacao, Agroforestry, and the Renewal of the Movima Territory
	Partner:	CEJIS, ORPCM, SPIM, SMIM
	Country:	Bolivia
	Period:	2022-2026, findings in this case relate to the 2025 reporting period

CHANGE	Indigenous communities in the Movima Territory (Bolivia) strengthened their capacity and collective voice to shape their own future by linking sustainable livelihoods, forest protection, and territorial governance. Families strengthened their knowledge and confidence in cacao production, grafting, processing, and agroforestry management, while taking a more active role in territorial decision-making through the Movima Indigenous Peoples’ Subcentral Organisation (SPIM) and Movima Indigenous Women’s Subcentral Organisation (SMIM) governing structures and the Movima Cacao Producers and Collectors Organisation (ORPCM) cooperative. Communities established five new agroforestry systems, produced more than 3,300 cacao seedlings, and grafted 3,000 improved cacao plants, demonstrating growing local capacity and resilience in the face of climate challenges. At the same time, communities strengthened the protection of cacao collection areas through territorial monitoring and collective decision-making, reinforcing local stewardship of forests and natural resources. By adopting agroforestry practices that avoided the use of fire and linking productive activities to territorial protection, communities advanced a shared vision of sustainable livelihoods rooted in Indigenous knowledge, forest stewardship, collective action, and care for their territory.
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CONTEXT	The Movima Territory in the Bolivian Amazon is a remote and sparsely populated Indigenous territory, where communities often depend on long river journeys and limited road access to reach markets and basic services. The territory is highly vulnerable to climate change, with recurrent floods temporarily displacing families, while prolonged droughts and forest fires have severely affected livelihoods, food security, and forest ecosystems. Against this backdrop, the Movima Territory faced increasing challenges related to territorial governance, sustainable livelihoods, and climate vulnerability. Despite recent progress in land titling and territorial recovery, Indigenous organisations need support to strengthen productive and organisational capacities to defend their territories and develop sustainable livelihoods. At the same time, declining wild cacao productivity, weak commercial capacities, forest fires, and the growing impacts of climate change threatened both forest conservation and community resilience. By 2024, prolonged droughts, floods, and climate variability had drastically reduced cacao production, with only 300 cacao pods harvested for seed production instead of commercialisation, while agroforestry systems remained incipient and communities continued to depend heavily on external support. Logistical isolation, fuel shortages, and increasing pressure over Indigenous territories further heightened the urgency to strengthen locally rooted productive systems and community organisation to prevent land encroachment and reinforce territorial control.
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Through Forests of the World's initiative, Indigenous communities in the Movima Territory strengthened their ability to protect their forests, sustain their livelihoods, and lead their own development processes. Through the partnership between Forests of the World, CEJIS, and Indigenous organisations, communities received practical support, training, and spaces for collective learning that connected sustainable cacao production with territorial governance and forest protection. Rather than treating conservation and livelihoods as separate issues, the initiative supported communities to strengthen both at the same time, recognising that forests depend on strong local organisations and sustainable economic opportunities rooted in the territory and its governance.

The initiative also strengthened the leadership and participation of the SPIM, SMIM and ORPCM in decisions related to territorial management and the protection of cacao collection areas. Communities established new agroforestry systems, shared technical knowledge among producers, and advanced collective agreements to prevent forest degradation and land encroachment. While rising international cacao prices created favourable market conditions, the intervention enabled communities to turn these opportunities into long-term processes of forest stewardship, collective organisation, and Indigenous self-determination. At the same time, local organisations built stronger partnerships and attracted new support to continue expanding these community-led efforts in the future.



Caption: Angélica Roca, from the Buen Día community, extracts the cacao pulp on Porvenir Island after harvesting the cacao pods.

Photo Credit: CEJIS



Caption: A cacao tree laden with fruit in the Movima Territory

Photo Credit: CEJIS

See next page for more details □

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITIES

The initiative was implemented through a range of practical and community-led activities aimed at strengthening sustainable livelihoods, forest protection, and Indigenous territorial governance in the Movima Territory. Communities harvested and processed wild cacao, strengthened the Santa Ana nursery, established agroforestry systems, grafted improved cacao plants, and participated in technical training, organisational reflection meetings, and national cacao exchange events. These activities contributed to expanding local knowledge and productive capacities while reinforcing collective organisation and sustainable management of forest resources.

Implementation was led collaboratively by CEJIS, the ORPCM cooperative, SPIM, SMIM, Indigenous monitors, and families from Buen Día, Totaizal, Piraí, Santa María, and Cotoca del Moseruna. The approach prioritised practical field-based learning, community participation, and collective agreements aligned with Indigenous governance processes. A key innovation was the introduction of “slash-and-mulch” agroforestry systems without burning, which generated strong local interest as a sustainable alternative to traditional slash-and-burn agriculture. Forests of the World adapted to local conditions by relocating some agroforestry activities to communities with stronger ownership and implementation readiness, strengthening long-term sustainability and community engagement.

LESSONS

Implementation in the Movima Territory highlighted how deeply local realities shape the pace and outcomes of community-led forest and livelihood initiatives. Flooding, fuel shortages, transport barriers, climate impacts, and uneven levels of community engagement at times slowed activities and required constant adjustment. These experiences showed that strengthening livelihoods and protecting forests is not a linear process, but one that depends on trust, local ownership, and sustained accompaniment over time.

In response, the intervention adapted by focusing efforts on communities with stronger commitment, reinforcing local technical capacities, diversifying production systems, and introducing improved cacao varieties through grafting. These adjustments resulted in more stable and locally driven processes, while also highlighting the importance of building long-term technical autonomy and stronger territorial governance capacities beyond project cycles.

A key lesson is that forest conservation in Indigenous territories becomes far more effective and lasting when it is rooted in people’s own productive systems, cultural identity, and forms of governance - also showing the youth a reason for future investments within the territory. Agroforestry systems proved to be more than an economic activity; they functioned as living spaces for territorial occupation, collective organisation, and the long-term defence of forests, showing that sustainability is ultimately built through community ownership and continuity.

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The evidence of change in the Movima Territory is grounded in both tangible production results and strengthened community organisation around forest and cacao management. Five new agroforestry systems were established, more than 3,300 cacao seedlings were produced, and 3,000 grafted cacao plants were developed, showing a clear expansion of local productive capacity. Communities also harvested 4,600 wild cacao pods and produced 76.3 kg of processed cacao, demonstrating improved use and value of forest resources. Improved wild cacao production and commercialisation generated at least Bs. 5,000 (DKK 4,631) in direct income redistributed among producers. Project support strengthened harvesting, post-harvest and commercialisation capacities, while favourable international market conditions contributed to cacao prices increasing from approximately Bs. 1,400 to Bs. 5,000 (DKK 1,302 to DKK 4,631) per quintal, strengthening forest-based livelihoods and local value chains

These results reflect a clear progression from technical and organisational strengthening to stronger forest stewardship and collective governance. Additional supporting materials include community participation records, nursery and agroforestry monitoring data, documentation of cacao commercialisation processes, and visual records of field implementation. Further evidence can be found in our partner's CEJIS annual report, as well as external documentation such as "[Árboles de cacao silvestre multiplican su producción en la primera cosecha del plan de manejo en la Isla Porvenir](#)" and "[Comunidades del Territorio Movima esperan excelente cosecha de cacao silvestre luego de la inundación](#)" written by the Observatory of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia.

	Development strategy priorities:	Insert strategy priority
	<i>Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability</i>	X
	<i>Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights</i>	-
	<i>Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights</i>	-
	<i>Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights</i>	X
	<i>Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability</i>	X
	<i>Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work</i>	X

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