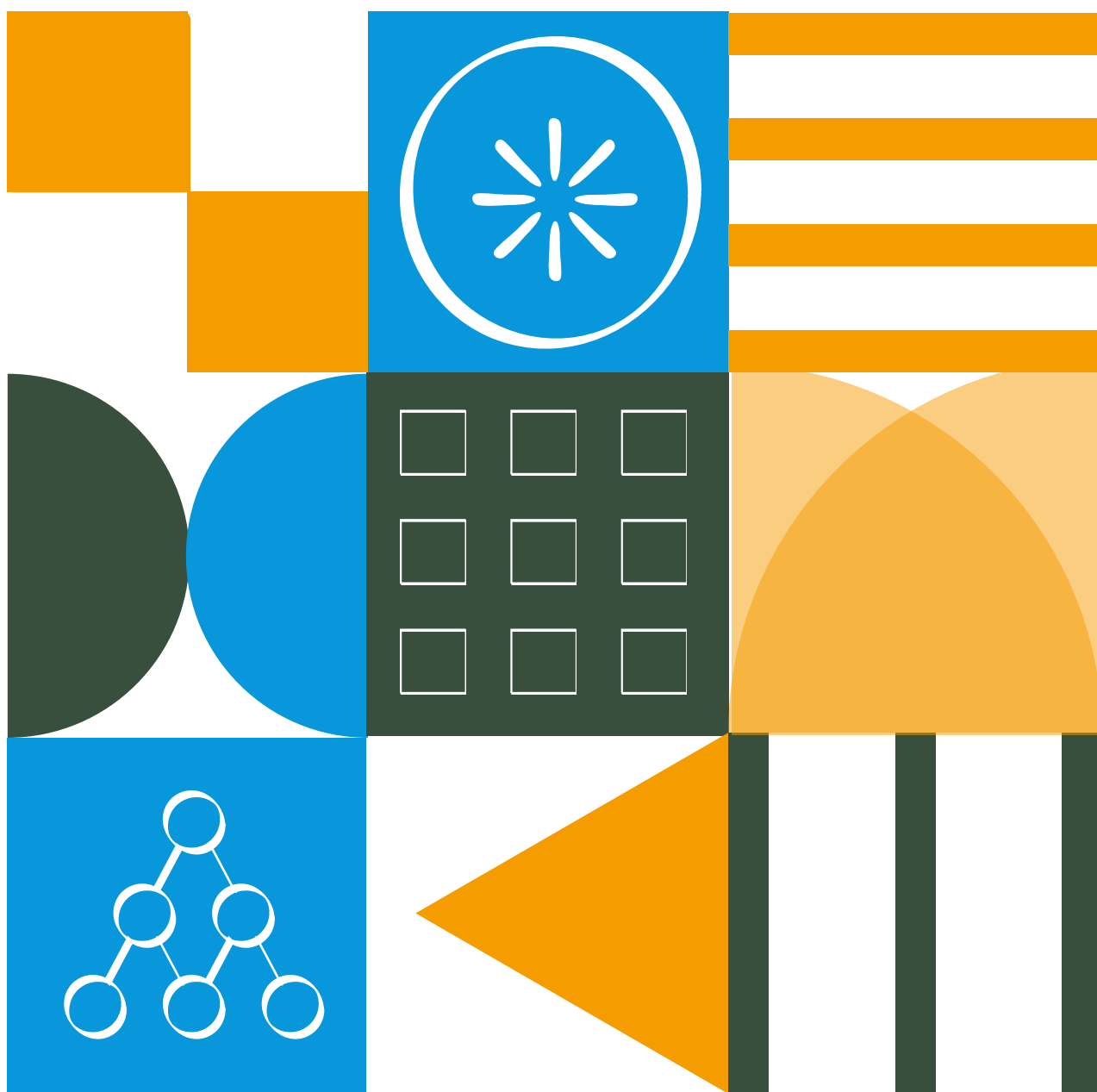


# UNLEASH Amazon Impact Report



2024



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# Executive Summary

The UNLEASH Amazon Innovation Lab marked several milestones: it was UNLEASH's first Innovation Lab in the Americas, the first conducted in a language other than English (Brazilian Portuguese), the first with a majority of participants from Indigenous and Traditional Communities, the first co-created with the UNLEASH Community and regional innovation ecosystem, and the first to implement participatory voting for winning teams and key decisions.

Building on UNLEASH Greenland's success in 2022, this program expanded UNLEASH's commitment to creating regional impact on a global scale, with the support of key partners including The Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA), Chemonics International, Global Commons Alliance Accelerator for Accountability, University of the State of Amazonas (UEA).

The program established a unique platform where participants combined contemporary approaches with traditional knowledge to generate innovative solutions. The focus areas centred on environmental protection and accountability, alongside sustainable economic development and bio-economy.

In October 2024, 150 Talents, Facilitators, and Experts convened in Manaus, Brazil, to engage in UNLEASH's Innovation Methodology.

They leveraged their diverse lived experiences and thematic expertise to understand complex challenges in the Amazon basin and develop innovative solutions.

Key highlights included the development of 26 early-stage solutions across two themes co-designed with local communities and partners. 100% of participants reported feeling equipped to lead sustainable innovation processes after the program.

Bemol provided financial support the implementation of projects after the program. BRL 50.000 were distributed in three grants to winning solutions, using a participatory approach. Five partners offered implementation support opportunities to Talents. The program facilitated networking with key stakeholders from government, industry, and the Amazon's innovation ecosystem. Importantly, it created a lasting community of changemakers committed to transforming the Amazon region, connected to UNLEASH's global network of innovators.

# The Impact

**150**  
Changemakers



**70%**  
Identify as Indigenous

**26**  
Solutions targeting  
the SDGs developed

**50,000  
BRL**  
Distributed to the top three  
winning teams

**29**  
Facilitators trained in the  
UNLEASH Methodology

**95%**  
Plan to use the UNLEASH  
Methodology  
in the future

**98%**  
Feel they can apply the learnings and experiences from  
the program in their daily activities (work, studies,  
volunteering, etc).

**97%**  
Increased confidence to continue  
or start working on an SDG  
solution

# Introduction

In October 2024, UNLEASH launched its first South American Regional Innovation Lab in Manaus, Brazil, focusing on the Amazon Basin - home to the world's largest rainforest and richest biodiversity ecosystem. The program, known as UNLEASH Amazon Innovation Lab, was conceptualized in response to mounting challenges facing the region, including climate change and deforestation, which affect over one billion people who directly depend on the ecosystem for their livelihood, food, energy, and more.

The objective of UNLEASH Amazon was to bring together young changemakers from across the Brazilian Amazon to address critical territorial challenges while emphasizing the voices, rights, and knowledge of Indigenous and Traditional Communities. With Brazil hosting a population of more than 4.5 million Traditional peoples, including 1.7 million Indigenous peoples, the program sought to represent youth from Indigenous, Quilombolas, Riverside, Extractive and many more communities.

The initiative was particularly significant as it was designed to support young Amazonians in driving change ahead of COP-30 discussions that will be hosted in the region in November 2025. As emphasized by Her Excellency Sônia Guajajara, Brazilian Minister of Indigenous Peoples, the program recognized the crucial role of Indigenous peoples in protecting territories and addressing challenges at the intersection of human rights, environment, and climate change.

## Community representation and community-led design

The program brought together 150 participants, including 102 Talents from across all nine states of the Brazilian Amazon, with 71% representing Indigenous and Traditional Communities, and a balanced gender representation of approximately 46% cis-men, 49% cis-women, and 5% non-cis participants, all aged between 18 to 35 years.

102 Talents attended with 71% representing Indigenous and Traditional Communities. 27% identified as indigenous, 19% riverside, 9% extractive, 8% quilombola and 8% from a variety of additional traditional communities. Our indigenous participants represented 24 unique peoples and overall our participants represented 49 unique traditional ethnicities. 42% of attendees were professionals pursuing part-time or full-time employment.

With the support of more than 60 local partners, community members and UNLEASH alumni, UNLEASH co-designed the program from end-to-end. UNLEASH used a participatory approach to select the thematic focus areas, source and select participants, facilitate and execute the program, and finally select the top solutions to win prize money and follow on support.





"It was the most transformative experience I've ever had. I connected with people in a real way and for the first time saw young people representing the whole Legal Amazon together. Despite being from a foreign institution, the organizers made decisions in a deeply respectful manner and committed to listening to people's daily feedback and providing solutions to all the issues raised. When I got home after the event I cried a lot, realizing my sadness at parting with the incredible people I met and learned so much from over the course of a week, and with the feeling that we are strong enough to change the world and have the ancestral knowledge to solve the Amazon's bottlenecks and challenges. I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity!"

Leonan Valente Martins, Brazilian, representing a Riverside community, addressing SDG 14 & 15 within the Sustainable Economic Development and Bio-economy SDG Track.



# SDG Tracks

Talents were organized into two thematic tracks that defined the social and environmental focus areas of the potential solutions. These tracks were developed in collaboration with local partners, experts, and community members, ensuring they effectively reflected Traditional knowledge with innovative approaches and prioritized locally relevant issues.

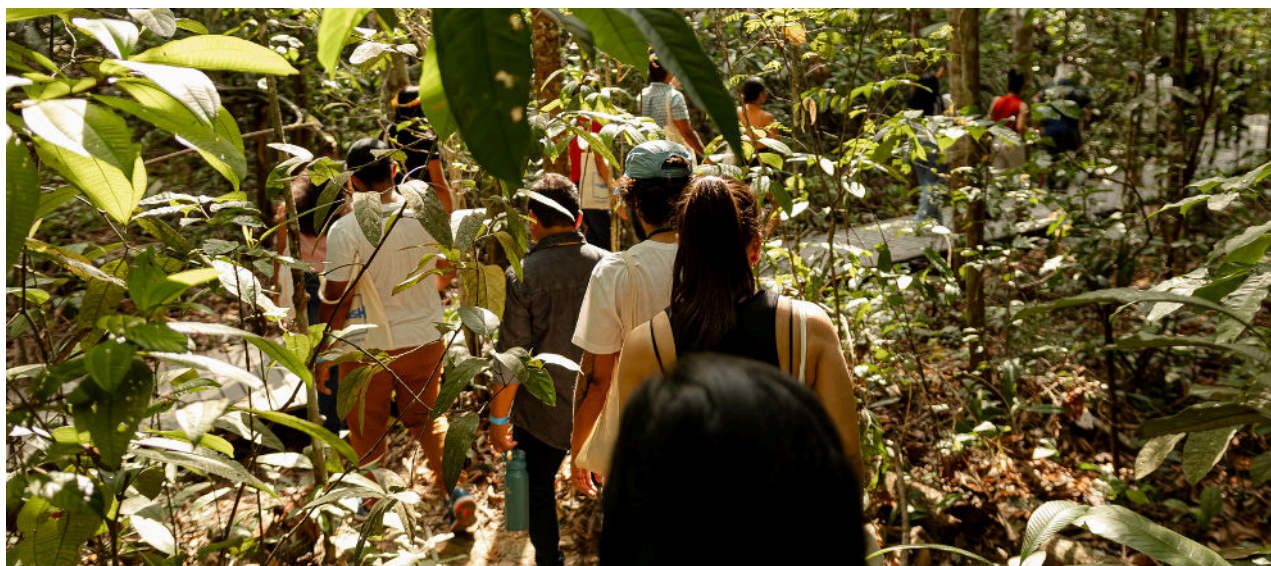
The **Environmental Protection and Accountability** SDG Track focused on SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and tackled the complex challenges of enabling local communities to protect and manage their territories.

Teams worked on developing solutions to pressing issues such as illegal mining on protected lands, the lack of officially recognized land mapping, and insufficient transparency in corporate supply chains.

Their efforts focused on strengthening land rights, enhancing environmental monitoring systems, and fostering meaningful partnerships between communities, governments, and businesses.

The **Sustainable Economic Development and Bio-economy** SDG Track focused on SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). It revolved around creating economic opportunities that harmonized environmental conservation with community prosperity. Teams addressed challenges such as high unemployment rates in the bioeconomy sector, particularly in rural areas, limited market access for sustainable Amazonian products due to transportation constraints, and unsustainable agroforestry practices.

Teams explored innovative approaches to develop sustainable businesses and improve livelihoods while ensuring responsible use of the Amazon's unique resources.



# Opening Ceremony

The week began with an energetic Opening Ceremony at the historic Palacete Provincial in Manaus, where Talents got inspired by prominent figures of the innovation and cultural ecosystem of the region and got to connect with one another.



Débora Holanda from SECTI (Secretariat of Science, Technology, and Innovation of the Government of Amazonas).



Denis Minev, CEO of Bemol.



Izabel Cristine Munduruku, a young Indigenous Activist.



Michelle Guimarães, Chief Governance Officer at Navegam and UNLEASH Alumni.

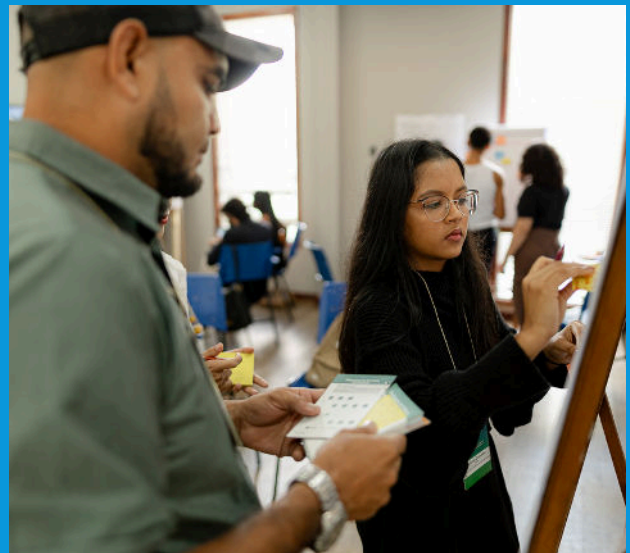


# Innovation Process



The innovation process began with Talents first learning the five stages of the UNLEASH innovation methodology. They were then organized into diverse teams, each supported by dedicated Facilitators. The process transformed strangers from different regions and backgrounds, who shared only their passion for solving similar challenges, into cohesive teams capable of building viable solutions within just 5 days.

Throughout the week, participants worked intensively to frame problems, ideate, prototype solutions, and learn to pitch effectively. In addition to learning innovation skills, they learnt softer skills including how to work across diverse multicultural teams, negotiate, build a case, and tell stories effectively.



Teams moved from one phase of the methodology to the next, by pitching to panels of Facilitators (called 'Gate Checks') who would provide feedback on their readiness to proceed. This allowed teams to experience an intensive and rigorous process of iteration to test and improve their ideas.

# The potential of the Amazon

## A Community story by Felipe Medeiros

Talent at UNLEASH Amazon

Participating in UNLEASH Amazon was a transformative experience. From the very beginning, I felt the vibrant energy of people who wanted to make the world a better place, especially for Amazonian communities. Being alongside young leaders, activists, entrepreneurs, and experts who shared the same purpose was inspiring and invigorating.

The program not only gave me tools and connections to strengthen my projects, but also broadened my vision of the potential of the Amazon as a center for social innovation and sustainability. The activities made me rethink our models, learn from the experiences of others, and step outside my comfort zone.

More than ever, it became clear that we need more people who want to make things happen and come together to put ideas into practice and make a difference.

UNLEASH Amazon created a community of support and encouragement that has already become an essential part of my professional and personal journey.

The Innovation Lab encouraged and empowered us to continue fighting for a better world. I am grateful for the experience!

**“UNLEASH made me rethink our models, learn from the experiences of others, and step outside my comfort zone”.**





# Talent Experience



The week-long residential experience of working in teams with a specific goal, sharing space and learning about new cultures helped to forge deep interpersonal bonds as Talents, Facilitators and Experts, got to know each other. UNLEASH together with Facilitators and Talents organized socializing activities including a

Talent Show where various participants blew the audience away by sharing their talents in the form of creativity, culture and art. Participants also visited MUSA, the Museum of the Amazonas, where they learnt about the biodiversity of the Amazon biome and the crucial role it plays for the region and the world.

**“UNLEASH goes beyond an innovation program, as it can create bonds with totally different people, with the sole aim of developing viable solutions for the forest and the permanence of traditional peoples in their territories. This experience allowed us to connect with each other, gave us hope that we are capable of developing sustainable projects for our Amazonian home, and proved that the union of young people brings about positively impactful changes in the Amazon.”**

Leliane Correa Vieira, Brazilian from an Extractive community, addressing SDG 14 and 15 within the Sustainable Economic Development and Bio-economy SDG Track.

# Pitching



At the end of the program, teams delivered pitches that built the case for why their solutions were innovative, viable, and had immense impact potential.

Based on the pitches, teams received feedback and evaluations from all their peers and experienced Judges, which determined the top eight teams to advance to the Pitching Finals.

This participatory approach aimed to give all participants a direct say in recognizing the most impactful ideas, fostering a sense

This **participatory approach** aimed to give all participants a direct say in recognizing the most impactful ideas, fostering a sense of ownership and collective celebration of success while acknowledging that lived experience is valuable in assessing the viability of solutions in their region. This process was also used to select the winning team for the People's Choice Award.

A panel of Judges including Secretary Jeibi of SECTI (Government of Amazonas), Ashley Valle (Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at Chemonics International), and Marcus Bessa (Co-Founder of Impact Hub Manaus) - chose the winners for each Thematic Track.









# Winning Solutions

Our partner Bemol provided financial grants for the winning teams to implement their solution.

The **Popular Vote Award** (worth 20.000 BRL) went to RORRAM, a team that designed a nursery to prevent the extinction of manioc species in Roraima, tackling food insecurity and malnutrition in the region by focusing on the exchange of ancestral knowledge.



The **Environmental Protection and Accountability Award** (worth 15.000 BRL) went to TURIMPACTO, for addressing the rural exodus of youth in Riverside communities by offering a cultural exchange with tourists while training young locals and preserving their way of life.

The **Sustainable Economic Development and Bioeconomy Award** (worth 15.000 BRL) went to KUNAY MODA COM PROPÓSITO, a training program that supports Indigenous and Traditional Amazonian youth to break stereotypes in the fashion industry, promoting appropriate cultural representation.



# Closing Ceremony

The program concluded with an inspiring Closing Ceremony that celebrated the participants' journey and their future potential. A highlight was the presence of Vanda Witoto, a renowned Indigenous leader, political activist, and founder of the Witoto Institute, who delivered a powerful message about the essential role of Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities in creating a sustainable future for their lands.

Ecosystem partners, including Impact Hub Manaus, Venture Hub, Certi Foundation,

and SEBRAE, presented participants with concrete opportunities for continued support through incubation, mentorship, and networking programs.

Following UNLEASH Amazon, participants gained access to the UNLEASH Innovation Hub, a platform rich with resources for ongoing learning, connection, and collaboration. Moreover, they became part of both a regional network of over 60 partners from the Brazilian Amazon and a global community of more than 9,000 changemakers dedicated to sustainable development.





# Prepared to face a crisis

## A Community story by Camilla Rebello Amui

Talent at UNLEASH India 2022, and recently a Facilitator at UNLEASH Amazon

“UNLEASH made me more prepared to act in the complex situation for the Yanomami people.

In UNLEASH India, I got diverse perspectives beyond Brazil for my work at the Indigenous Health Secretary. My group worked on supporting Yanomami people on accessing water amid illegal gold mining. The following year, the new government declared an emergency in the region, and I was able to improve my contributions in the emergency.”

Camila Rebello Amui was a Talent during UNLEASH India in 2022, where she got the opportunity to work on some of the challenges that a community she knows well, the Yanomami peoples, face every day in the Amazon.

After her experience at UNLEASH, she was ready to step in during an emergency declared by the region a year later, and now her journey with UNLEASH comes a full circle as she joined us in UNLEASH Amazon as a Facilitator!

**“UNLEASH made me more prepared to act in the complex situation for the Yanomami people.”**





# Our partners

Over 60 organizations including community-based groups, government entities, innovation ecosystem supporters, educational institutions, and funders from across Brazil were involved in sourcing participants, enabling their participation, contributing to the execution, and supporting the continuation of their journey in the region. UNLEASH Amazon would not have been possible without the immense support from all our partners.

We are especially grateful to our core financial sponsors:



We are also grateful to all the institutional partners who supported us in co-designing the program, defining themes, connecting with key regional stakeholders, and providing opportunities to our alumni.



**We thank you  
for your  
ongoing support  
of our program!**



**2024**



**THE GLOBAL GOALS**