AUGUST 2026

Savimbo, Colombia

INNOVATIVE FINANCING CASE STUDIES

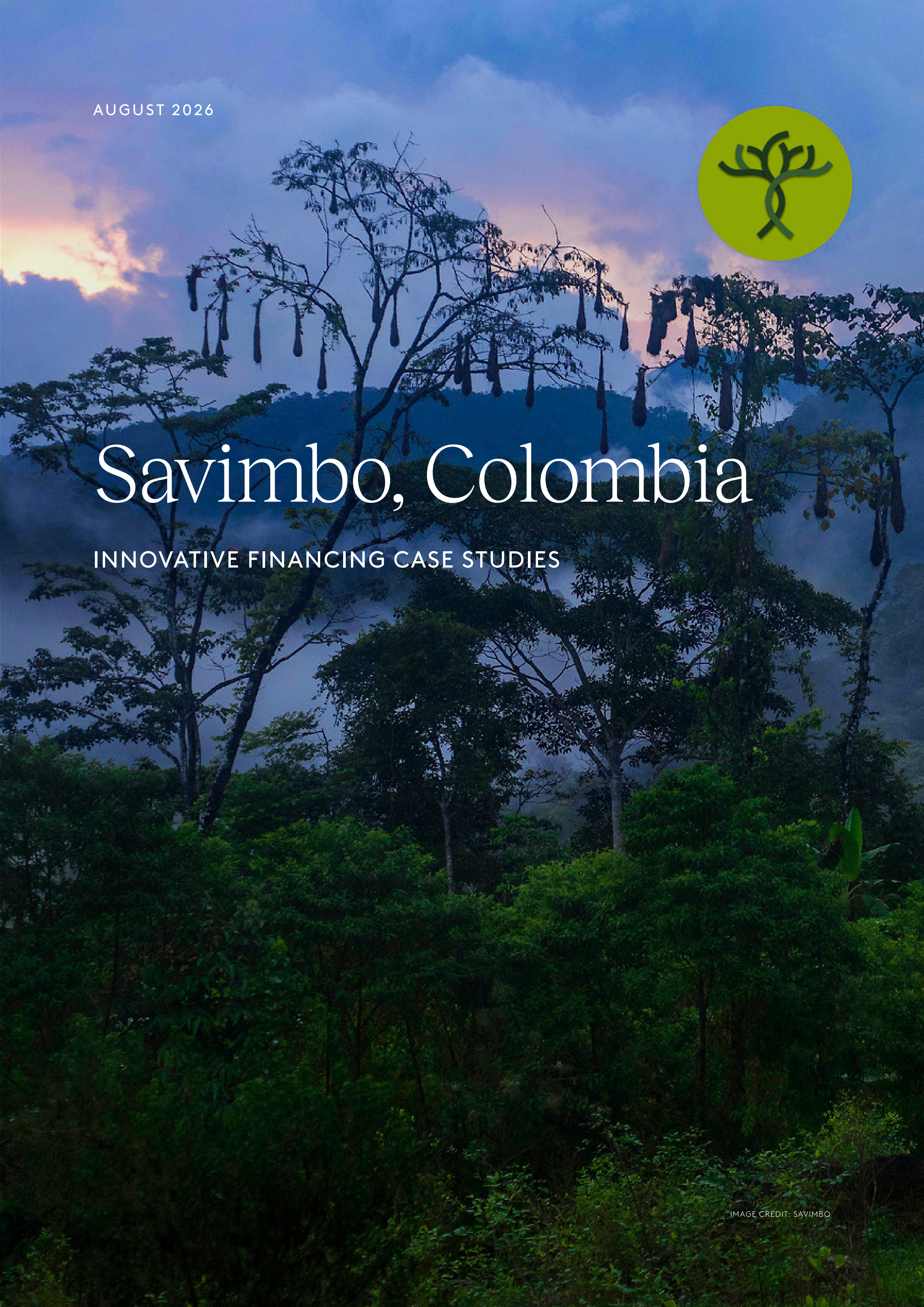


IMAGE CREDIT: SAVIMBO

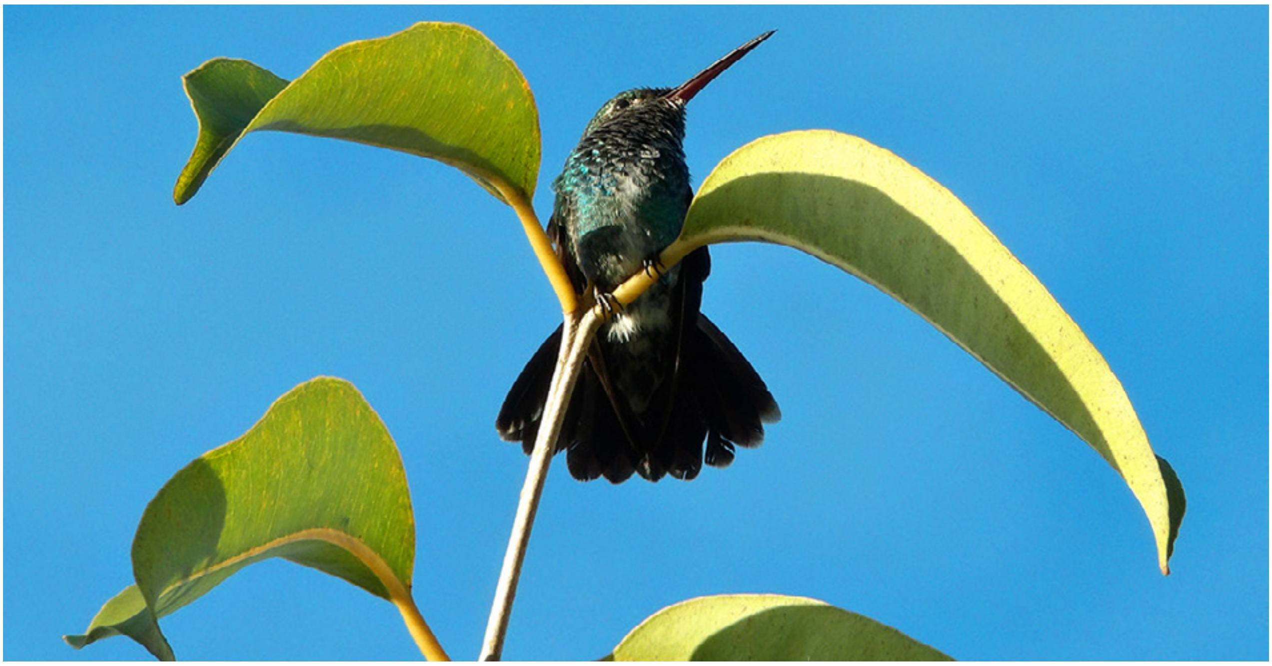
Contents

CASE STUDY IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Innovative Financing Case Studies

Each of the case studies in this series describes a conservation finance mechanism in action. Before diving into a case study, look for the **Key Readiness Factors** - these are conditions or resources you should ideally have in place to successfully implement that model - and the **Best Fit Contexts** suggesting where or when the model is most appropriate. Use these pointers to gauge if a mechanism aligns with your community's situation.

The intent of sharing these financing case studies is to offer an in-depth look into the essential but often unseen inner workings – the "engine room" – of community-led conservation finance mechanisms. While other resources typically highlight funding sources or the ultimate distribution of funds, this series illuminates the critical governance, administration, and management processes at the heart of conservation financing. The case studies demonstrate how robust internal structures can prevent conflict, streamline administration, and ultimately drive enduring environmental and community outcomes.



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CASE STUDY

Savimbo, Colombia

BIODIVERSITY CREDITS

LOCATION
Colombian Amazon, Panama, Ecuador, Mexico

Savimbo is a social enterprise created "by, and for" Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It helps communities get paid for protecting forests and wildlife by selling nature services directly to buyers. Savimbo works across multiple project sites (including in the Colombian Amazon, Panama, Ecuador, Mexico, Nepal and Kenya) and supports project design, monitoring, sales, and transparent payments.

This case study focuses on Savimbo's biodiversity credit approach. A biodiversity credit is a "unit" that shows nature protection happened in a specific place for a set time. In Savimbo's system, 1 biodiversity credit = 1 hectare (about 2.5 acres) of fully conserved biodiversity for 1 month, backed by photo or video proof of integrity (often from camera traps). These voluntary biodiversity credits are contributions, not "offsets," so buying them should not be used to claim that damage to nature somewhere else has been cancelled out.

Key Readiness Factors

- Clear land rights (title, tenure, or recognized customary rights) and/or permission to manage the area.
- Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC): people in the community understand the plan and agree to it.
- Local capacity to collect data (camera traps, photos, GPS points) and keep records.
- A trusted group that can manage payments fairly (community committee, cooperative, or similar).
- A way to receive and share payments (bank account or mobile money; or happy to use a tool like Savimbo's app Kapital).
- Access to third-party verification (independent checks) and a registry to record credits (also provided through Savimbo).

Best Fit Contexts

- Primary or well-recovered forests, ocean, or wetlands with rare or threatened wildlife.
- Places where people face pressure to extract for farming, fishing, or other income, so "pay to protect" is a livelihood option.
- Areas where monitoring is practical (safe enough access; ability to maintain cameras).
- Communities that want access to nature markets (not rely on grants) and are willing to learn basic data collection and reporting.
- Groups that want community control over benefit-sharing and are comfortable sharing some outcomes data with buyers (photos/video).

Mechanism Overview

Savimbo helps Indigenous Peoples and local communities create and sell biodiversity credits across multiple project sites. Credits represent an intact ecosystem and are linked to a specific place and time, and backed by data such as photos, videos, or audio recordings (for example from camera traps).

Savimbo's approach uses "indicator species" – species that do well only when an ecosystem is healthy – so communities can monitor wildlife with simple, non-invasive tools. A project must first help build a full list of potential indicator species for the ecosystem, and the species must fit one of eight qualifying categories: sentinel, rare, endangered, umbrella, trafficked, keystone, emblematic, or endemic. Monitored species should have a clear link to the project's biodiversity objectives, and the project must provide public research from a reputable source to justify the species. There are also extra rules for some categories: an "endangered" species only qualifies on threat status alone if it is Critically Endangered or Endangered at subnational, national, or international level, and a "trafficked" species must appear on the CITES list. These species are then reviewed by Cercarbono's Independent Experts Panel (IEP).

For the evidence itself, indicator-species observations must be backed by raw data such as a tagged audio file, video, or photograph, plus a date-time stamp and geocode. For rare, threatened, trafficked, or endangered species, Savimbo allows public geocodes to be masked, with private review by the IEP. The same protections apply to identities of people who are considered environmental defenders.

For ongoing monitoring, projects are expected to gather data from as many qualifying species as possible, but to standardize operations they must monitor at least 3 species from 2 different kingdoms. Monitoring should balance scientific value with practicality for Indigenous and local community monitors.

For crediting calculations, Savimbo uses the presence of a qualified indicator species plus its integrity score to determine whether an ecosystem area counts as conserved. The credited area depends on the overlapping home ranges of observed qualifying species within the crediting area. After an independent certification program checks the project and monitoring results, credits are issued and recorded on a registry (such as EcoRegistry) so buyers can trace them.

How It Works

1. Choose the site: The community or landholders choose the ecosystem area they want to protect and map the boundaries. The project confirms land rights and who will be responsible for stewardship, although there are also cases where Savimbo has negotiated with "title holders" to allow communities without clear land rights to participate.

2. Get consent (FPIC): People in the community discuss the plan and agree before anything starts. Consent should be documented, including benefit-sharing rules and a simple way to handle complaints (a grievance process).

3. Pick indicator species: The community and technical team negotiate the indicator species (often culturally important wildlife or plants) that show the ecosystem is healthy. The species list must match the certification scientific rules, but also make common sense to the community.

4. Collect evidence: Local teams use camera traps, photos/video, audio, and GPS mapping to show the indicator species are present and the forest is still intact. Data needs clear file names, safe storage, and backups. Communities always own the data and can retrieve it at any time before it reaches third parties.

5. Independent check: A third party checks the project design and the monitoring data against the certification program rules (validation and verification).

6. Credits are issued: After approval, biodiversity credits are issued and recorded in a registry (like EcoRegistry) so they can be tracked and not counted twice. Credits may have different grades (for example Gold or Platinum) depending on the unit rules.

7. Sell credits and pay stewards: Buyers purchase credits as a contribution to nature protection (not offsets). Money is shared according to project rules. Savimbo has developed a free app called Kapital that can manage collective payments, to distribute money transparently to community members and to community funds. Community revenue share is gross, that means it comes from the sale first, before expenses. Revenue share is renegotiated annually based on performance of both parties.

8. Keep protecting and keep proving: Community based monitoring of the area continues and the project is verified again over set periods of time, so credits can keep being issued. Communities can adjust the monitoring plan and spending rules based on what they learn.

Money Flow Schematic

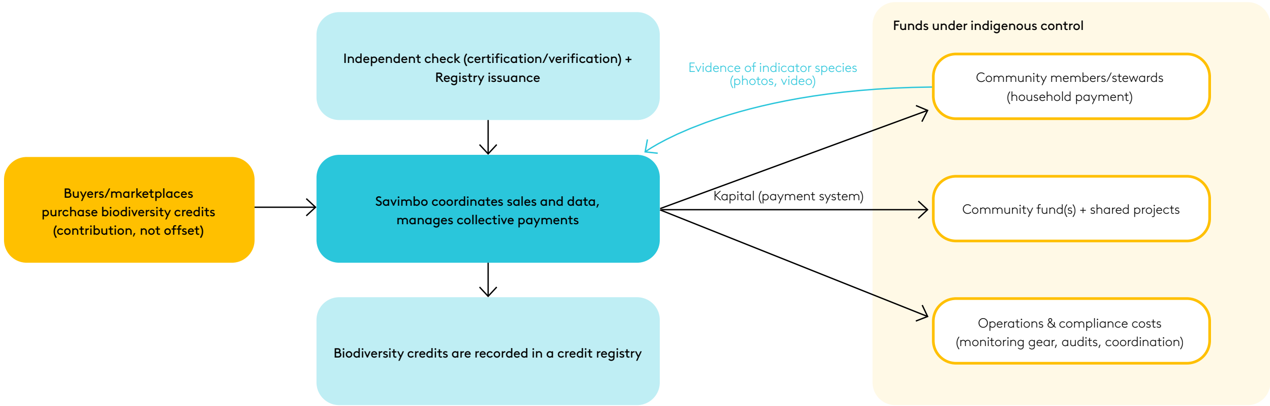


IMAGE CREDIT: SAVIMBO

Timeline & Key Dates

The timeline is flexible, and often depends on FPIC and forward financing. .

Months 0–3 — Site and rights. The community selects the area to protect, maps its boundaries, and confirms land rights, governance, and who holds stewardship responsibility. Faster where collective title or recognized tenure already exists.

M**onths 1–3 — Consent (FPIC) for pilot.** The community discusses the plan and documents its agreement, including benefit-sharing rules and a grievance process. No data collection or payments are issued without pilot agreement that complies with governance protocols. Consent is treated as ongoing, not a one-time signature.

Months 2–4 — Indicator species and baseline. The community and technical team build the candidate species list, justify each species against the methodology, and set up monitoring (camera traps, audio, GPS). Species are reviewed by an Independent Experts Panel.

Months 3–6 — Monitoring and evidence. Local teams collect dated, geolocated photo, video, and audio showing indicator species present and the forest intact. Because the model credits standing biodiversity, usable evidence accumulates in months, not years.

Months 4-7 — Consent (FPIC) for commercial contract. The community discusses the option to proceed to commercial sales and documents its agreement, including revenue-sharing rules and a grievance process. No credits are issued without commercial contract that complies with governance protocols. Consent is treated as ongoing, not a one-time signature. Presales can commence at this point.

Months 9-12 — Independent validation and verification. A third party checks the project design and monitoring data against the certification program. Usually the longest single step.

Months 6–10 — Issuance and registry. Approved credits are issued and recorded on a registry (EcoRegistry) so they can be traced and not double-counted. Certified sales can occur at this point.

Within 60 days of each sale — First payments. Once credits sell, at least 50% of revenue reaches rightsholders within 60 days, distributed transparently — including via Kapital for collective payments.

Ongoing — Re-verification and learning. Monitoring continues and the project is re-verified over set periods, so credits keep being issued. Communities adjust monitoring and spending rules based on what they learn.

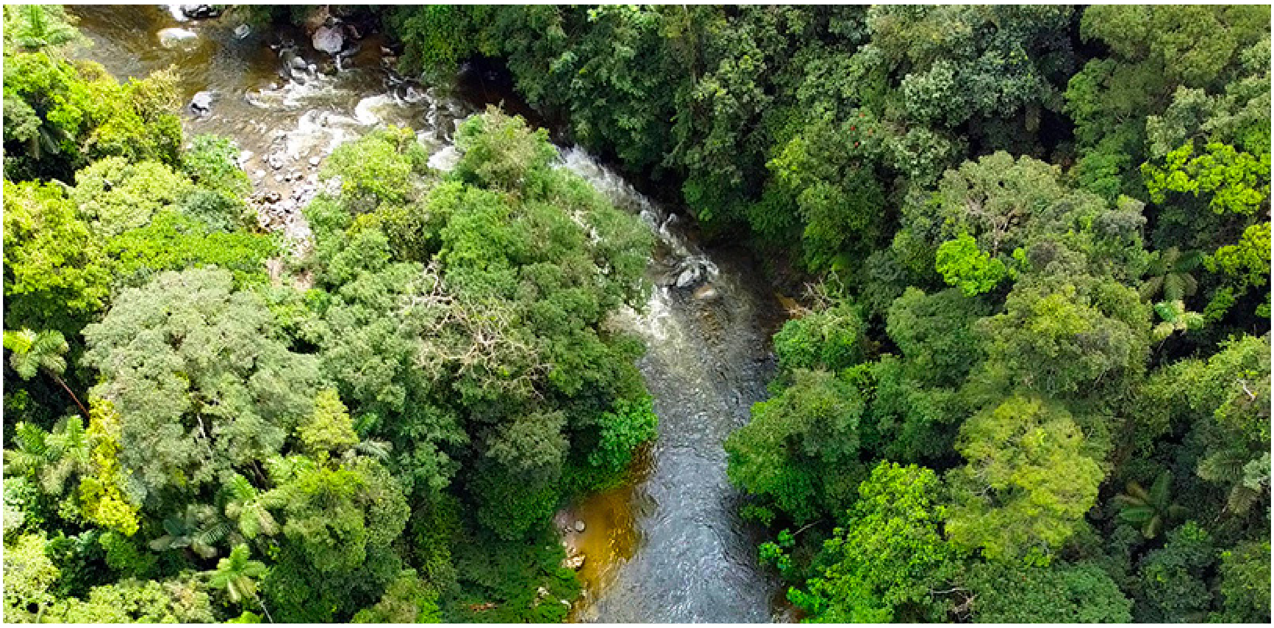


IMAGE CREDIT: SAVIMBO

Partners/Beneficiaries

- **Savimbo Inc.:** supports project design, data systems, sales, and coordination.
- **Indigenous communities and local land stewards:** Hold rights to data, land, and all assets. Protect ecosystems, manage hunting or fishing sustainably, collect data, report data and receive benefits, negotiate for themselves if desired on global markets.
- **Certification program (Cercarbono CBCP):** sets rules and oversees validation and verification.
- **Registry (EcoRegistry):** records credits so buyers can track them.
- **Buyers and marketplaces:** purchase credits.

Impacts and Outcomes

Many funders have their own impacts and outcomes, which are usually about economic development and community well-being, green economies or stopping deforestation or overhunting. But Savimbo is co-owned by the communities it serves and is most interested in community impact and outcomes.

- **Control.** Most communities want greater control over how they participate in Savimbo. Their priorities include employing community members as Savimbo staff, receiving regular internal updates, co-owning the organisation, forming temporary 'pop-up' panels for global negotiating, co-developing Savimbo's software, press and publicity, and managing their funds autonomously. Overall, they want to be more firmly in the driver's seat than they have been in other climate-market initiatives.
- **Independent revenue streams.** While many communities have attracted grant capital through Savimbo pilots, up to 24 months running, they also get recurring revenue that is completely independent from the pilots. Lowering intermediation on financing, and establishing longitudinal funding when institutional grants run out.
- **Technical skills.** Many community leaders are the most interested in retaining talented youth within the community with job opportunities, technical training, and access to computer equipment they would not otherwise have had outside the city.
- **Community banking.** It's very common that grassroots communities can't get a bank account. A side effect of the projects is that Savimbo sets communities up with a bank account in Kapital that can receive and transparently administer collective funding from multiple sources and this has been of strongest interest to communities as a tangible outcome.

Three main measures are provided through the Savimbo dashboard as indicators of impact, including land protected, ecological credits generated, and revenue delivered to communities. Savimbo projects are helping local landowners to protect more than 479,000 hectares of land across Latin America, and over US$140,000 in revenue has been directed to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Projects have generated 992,385 Interoperable Biodiversity Units (IBUs), which measures documented biodiversity protection across both land and time. However, this figure should not be read as 992,385 credits sold: significant volume represents estimated credit generation and credits against which deposits have been made, rather than units that have completed certification, been serialized and sold. Biodiversity credits remain a frontier market with limited realized sales globally. Against this background, Savimbo is among the nine highest-selling biodiversity credit projects globally by reported sales, while continuing to build the pipeline from estimated units through certification and sale.

Community Readiness Questions

- Do we have clear land rights and agreed boundaries for the forest area?
- Do we want to do just a monitoring pilot with a grant, or proceed to credit and free market transactions?
- Do we have a strong and fair decision-making group (committee/co-op) that everyone trusts?
- Can we keep good records (photos, GPS points, camera trap files), store and share them safely?
- Do we understand what buyers can and cannot claim (credits are contributions, not offsets)?
- Do we have a plan for conflicts (a grievance process) if someone disagrees?

Key Risks

RISK	MITIGATION / WHAT TO PLAN
Market and buyer risk	Use more than one buyer channel; build long-term relationships; create diverse pool of buyers. Share high quality communications and reports.
Trust and integrity concerns	Use strong third-party verification; publish clear data; follow high-integrity principles and rights safeguards.
Data quality	Train local teams; keep simple checklists; back up data; do spot-checks.
Greenwashing	Set clear buyer rules and monitor public statements.
Safeguards and rights risk	Check for land conflicts; ensure FPIC implemented where relevant; provide a safe way to raise grievances / complaints.

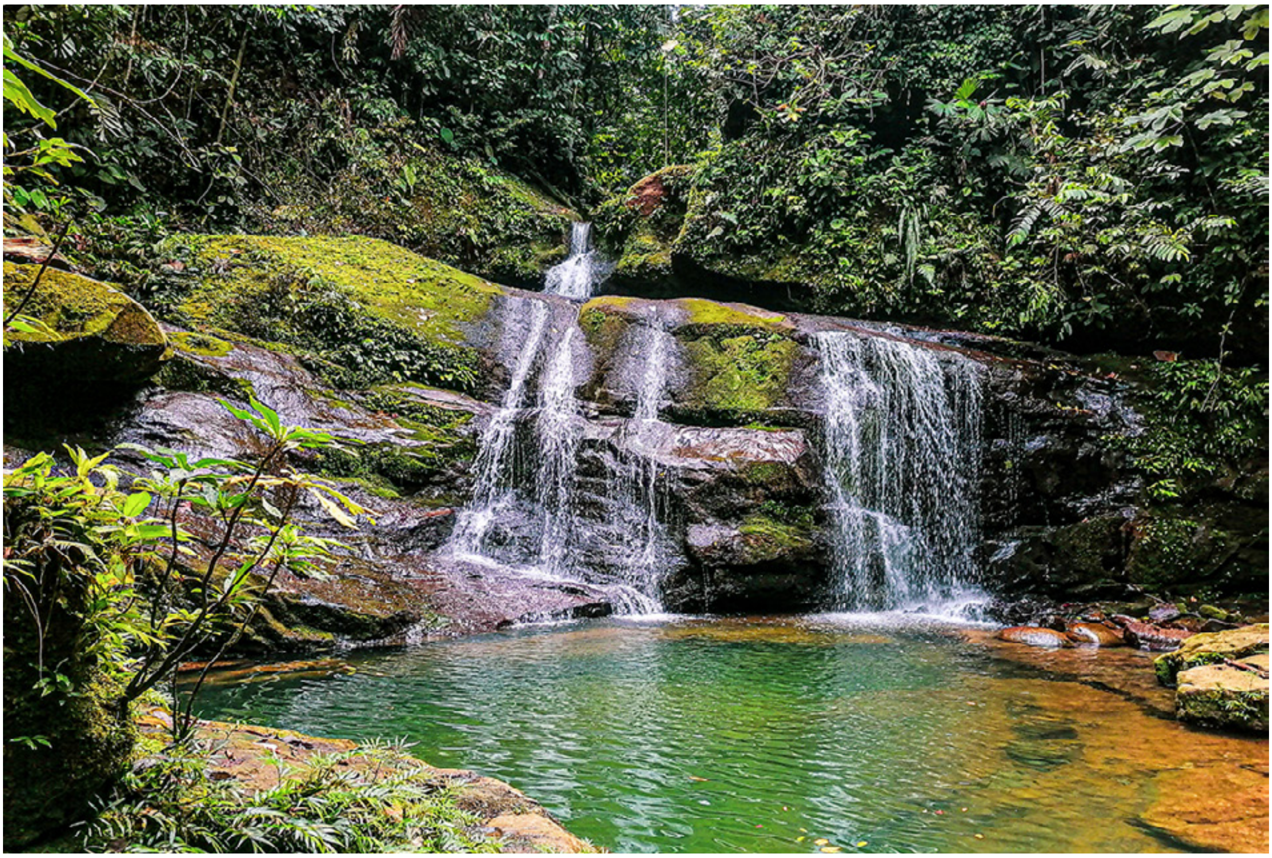
Checklist

- ○ **Purpose:** Agree the main goal (protect wildlife, jobs, income, or all three).
- ○ **Governance:** Write down who decides, who signs, and how money is shared.
- ○ **Rights**: Check land rights and beneficiary list. Ensure there are simple, readable agreements, in local languages where needed.
- ○ **Consent:** Run FPIC meetings and keep clear records of decisions.
- ○ **Finance:** Ensure funding plan covers payments and operating costs (checking results, staff, tech). Set up clear payment schedule and records.
- ○ **Monitoring plan:** Agree on a starting point (baseline) and indicator species. Decide what data to collect and how often.
- ○ **Certification:** Choose the standard (gold/platinum) and create budget line for audits and registry fees.
- ○ **Buyer claims:** Write rules for what buyers can say publicly.
- ○ **Payments:** Set a simple payment schedule and transparent reporting for the community.
- ○ **Learning:** Review results every year and adjust what is not working.

IMAGE CREDIT: SAVIMBO

Further Reading

- Savimbo home page – https://www.savimbo.com/
- Interactive methodology and practice guide - https://isbm.savimbo.com/
- Savimbo impact dashboard - https://www.savimbo.com/impact
- Kapital payments system - https://www.savimbo.com/kapital
- Cercarbono 'Indicator Species Biodiversity Methodology (ISBM v1.2)': https://www.cercarbono.com/wp-content/uploads/Savimbo-Biodiversity-Methodology-V-1.2.pdf
- EcoRegistry - https://www.ecoregistry.io/
- Savimbo interactive bot Chiron https://ask.savimbo.com/



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COAST FUNDS

POLLINATION Foundation