

CASE STUDY

Brazil: Digital Mechanism for Traditional Peoples Making Customary Territories Visible

OVERVIEW

Submitting Organization	Department of Traditional Peoples and Communities, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change of Brazil — <i>Public Entity</i>
Type of Grievance Mechanism	State-Based Non-Judicial / Informal
Level of Operation	National
Geographic Scope	Brazil

SYNOPSIS

This case study presents the Traditional Territories Platform (Plataforma Territórios Tradicionais – TTP), a state-based, non-judicial mechanism established in 2018. The platform provides a participatory digital space through which communities can self-map and document the location, characteristics, and conditions of their customary territories, including associated histories, demands, and conflicts. Governed through a multi-actor structure involving public institutions, academic actors, and traditional peoples and communities (Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais – PCT) representatives, and supported by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and GLZ, the platform aims to increase the visibility of traditional territories, support engagement with public authorities, and inform processes related to the recognition of customary lands within existing institutional and resource constraints.¹

BACKGROUND AND MECHANISM

Long-standing land tenure challenges have shaped the context in which the Traditional Territories Platform (*Plataforma Territórios Tradicionais* – TTP) emerged in Brazil. For decades, traditional peoples and communities (*Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais* – PCT) have faced land conflicts, dispossession, tenure insecurity, and pressures from land-based investments that have undermined livelihoods and territorial integrity.

Institutional Gaps in the Recognition of Customary Lands as a Driver for the TTP

The land tenure challenges underlying the creation of the mechanism include the lack of formal recognition of customary lands, overlapping claims, evictions, and the marginalization of certain groups. While Indigenous peoples and *Quilombola* communities in Brazil have established pathways for formal recognition of their customary lands—albeit at a pace

¹ https://www.gov.br/mda/pt-br/assuntos/povos-e-comunidades-tradicionais/repositorio-de-marcos-regulatorios-de-regularizacao-fundiaria-de-povos-e-comunidades-tradicionais/federais/mpf/mpf-2019_regimento-da-plataforma-de-territorios-tradicionais.pdf Portuguese only.

considered insufficient—the remaining twenty-six categories of PCT lack official and regular land recognition mechanisms. This institutional gap constituted a key driver for the establishment of the platform.

Against this backdrop, the Federal Prosecution Office (*Ministério Público Federal* – MPF), in partnership with PCT, developed a web-based platform enabling communities to self-register the location and dimensions of their customary territories. The platform consolidates georeferenced information on traditional territories, including cartographic data, reports, narratives, demands, territorial potential, and records of conflict. By integrating spatial and qualitative data, it aims to support the guarantee of rights, enhance the visibility of traditional territories, identify threats and opportunities, and inform the actions of the MPF and other institutions involved in protecting PCT rights, irrespective of formal land recognition status.

The MPF played a central role in establishing the mechanism. Affected stakeholders were consulted and directly involved in its development, with implementation carried out in partnership with PCT and the and the *Conselho Nacional de Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais* (CNPCT)².

Anchored in Ordinance PGR/MPF 167/2019³, the TTP operates within a formal institutional framework that defines its governance and functioning. Since its establishment in 2018, the mechanism has undergone regular revisions, including the integration of women’s rights and perspectives on land and territory, guided by its established governance structures. In terms of accessibility, the mechanism is open to all PCT, without differentiation among groups within this category.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL PROCESS

The governance and operational arrangements of the TTP are formally defined under Ordinance PGR/MPF 167/2019 and structured around three core bodies

The **Steering Council** is the primary decision-making body. It consists of seven voting members representing PCT and the Federal Prosecution Office, as well as 19 non-voting (voice) members. Its responsibilities include analyzing and validating information submitted from territories, deliberating on data and information security, and ensuring institutional coordination necessary for the operation of the platform.

The **Executive Secretariat of the Steering Council** is housed within the 6th Coordination and Review Chamber of the Federal Prosecution Office. It is responsible for knowledge management, providing advisory support for meetings, monitoring the implementation of Steering Council decisions, and coordinating the platform’s communication with the external public.

The **Technical Committee** comprises 16 representatives drawn from academic institutions, research associations, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations. This committee conducts technical analyses of the information entered into the platform’s records and prepares technical opinions for consideration and deliberation by the Steering Council.

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LERANED

The primary outcome of the mechanism lies in strengthening the position of PCT as actors in negotiation processes related to the recognition of customary lands. By supporting the self-recognition and mapping

² The CNPCT refers to the National Council of Traditional Peoples and Communities.

³ <https://biblioteca.mpf.mp.br/repositorio/items/e867f1ef-83c2-4957-95ed-573f48844ebe> Portugues only.

of customary lands, consolidating georeferenced information, and increasing the visibility of traditional territories, the platform enhances the capacity of PCT to engage with public authorities and other stakeholders on land recognition issues. In this way, the mechanism may contribute to reducing the risk of future grievances and disputes, insofar as this information supports federal and state government efforts toward the official recognition of PCT territories.

The functioning of the TTP is supported by a set of enabling conditions, most notably the partnership among traditional PCT, the CNPCT, the Federal Prosecution Office, and the federal government. This multi-actor collaboration underpins both the establishment and continued operation of the platform. At the same time, the self-recognition and mapping of customary lands involve resource-intensive processes, requiring substantial time, human capacity, financial resources, and sustained mobilization, which present ongoing constraints on the platform's use and expansion. Strengthening the mechanism is therefore closely linked to the availability of additional human and financial resources and the continuation of mobilization efforts.