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Digital Democracy Announces \$525,000 Grant from Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation
Funds to be used to Build Out Mapping Tool for Indigenous Communities

San Francisco, CA: This World GIS Day, US-based nonprofit [Digital Democracy](#) is celebrating a \$525,000 grant from the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation to build-out their innovative mapping tool [Mapeo](#). A preview version of the tool is available for download on their website.

“World GIS Day is a celebration of how GIS technology is applied, and today Digital Democracy celebrates with the public launch of Mapeo thanks to this grant from the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation,” said Emily Jacobi, Digital Democracy Executive Director. “For the past four years we have been working directly with indigenous communities in the Amazon to test and prototype tools for mapping and territorial monitoring. Our vision is for the full Mapeo desktop and mobile suite to be used by communities all over the world.”

Digital Democracy is seeking matching support from other foundations and individual donors for 2018. Over the next few years the organization aims to acquire multi-million dollar investments for the technical development of Mapeo mobile app and desktop suite. They are also seeking support to pilot Mapeo with additional community partners in new regions outside of the Amazon.

“We are thrilled to support Digital Democracy and the development of this technology,” said Justin Winters, Executive Director of the [Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation](#). “Mapeo is a cutting-edge tool that has been built in deep partnership with local and indigenous communities, helping them gather the data and information that is necessary to protect their lands, waters and way of life.”

Working with indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities across the globe, Digital Democracy builds mapping and documentation technology to equip local groups with tools they need to protect their territory from threats including illegal mining and deforestation. Digital

Democracy is currently prototyping tools with partners across the Amazon region, and have specifically piloted Mapeo with partners [Amazon Frontlines](#) and [Alianza Ceibo](#) in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Members of the Waorani Nation working with Alianza Ceibo are using Mapeo to map and defend their ancestral territory of 800,000 hectares (two million acres) of Amazon rainforest.

“With Mapeo we have, for the first time, a tool that we can use to make our own maps, and we can build a strong team of people who can train others to map,” said Opi Nenquimo, the Waorani project lead from Alianza Ceibo. “The mapping project has united many villages to defend and manage their lands together. And it is a process which is leaving a legacy for the future, both the maps and the skills, that our people can use to fight for our livelihoods and our rights.”

Worldwide, there are more than 5,000 indigenous peoples whose traditional territories encompass 80% of the world’s remaining biodiversity. However, only 10% of that land is legally recognized. Mapeo is a critical tool to help these communities map their territory, gain legal title over their land, and protect their biodiverse territories.

“For us, the technology behind Mapeo is not the solution, but rather how it enables communities to collaborate and document the world around them. With Mapeo local communities will be able to manage their own information, create their own maps and use both to stop environmental and human rights abuses,” said Jacobi.

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