

# ACCELERATING REFORMS IN FOREST RIGHTS, GOVERNANCE AND MARKETS

5 Years of the Rights and Resources Initiative



# RRI at a Glance

2008 – 2011

**140:** Number of RRI Partner and Collaborator organizations that have worked to secure forest tenure rights in more than 30 countries

**500:** Minimum number of activities RRI has catalyzed and supported since 2008

**60:** Percent of RRI funding directly supporting local level engagement in strategic analysis and action

**20:** Unanticipated, strategic opportunities leveraged to advance reforms in 13 countries (over US\$800,000 committed via RRI's Strategic Response Mechanism)

**11:** Targeted and timely public dialogues on forest rights, governance and climate change convened on 5 continents.

**120:** Policy briefs, reports, tenure trend reports, and brochures distributed in 8 languages.

**360:** Earned media stories across 30 countries in 15 languages.

**103:** Percent increase in monthly traffic to the RRI website since its launch in March 2008 (with an average of 3700+ unique visits a month from 175 countries)

# THE WORLD TODAY AND TOMORROW

## Global Challenges and Opportunities

---

Globally, natural resource systems are under stress and are increasingly contested as a result of rising consumption and unsustainable production practices.

- Rising and increasingly volatile commodity prices are exacerbating the situation of those suffering from hunger and poverty, threatening political stability and local development.
- Global regimes governing finance, trade and investment are all in flux.
- Climate change is dramatically affecting ecosystems worldwide, and increasing the vulnerability of rural communities and the resiliency of natural resource systems.
- The projected \$25 trillion dollars of investment in infrastructure and resource extraction in developing countries in the coming decades will divide the remaining forest areas and risk increasing deforestation.

Despite decades of international development efforts these pressures come at a time when:

- The numbers of rural youth alone will increase by hundreds of millions, while rural economic growth remains stagnant.

- Some 1.2 billion forest dwellers continue to be among the poorest in their own countries and the human rights of hundreds of millions of Indigenous Peoples (IP) and local communities are denied, with women often suffering the burden of abuse.
- The current scale of deforestation and the rapidly increasing rate of resource exploitation and “landgrabbing” have become key causes of local food insecurity, national political instability and conflict, and global climate change.

**The future supply of these natural resources, the globally significant reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from forest areas, and the rights and livelihoods of local people are all intertwined — rendering life in many forest areas increasingly precarious and insecure.**

# Why RRI?

**13 million**

number of hectares of forests in the developing world that continue to be cleared each year. Globally, natural resource systems are under stress and are increasingly contested as a result of rising consumption and unsustainable production practices.

**25 trillion**

total estimated investment in rural infrastructure in developing countries by 2030 (US\$), that risks increasing deforestation without the transformation of local governance.

**1.2 billion**

forest dwellers continue to be among the poorest in their own countries and the human rights of hundreds of millions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are denied, with women often suffering the burden of abuse.

**1000%**

percent increase in “land-grabbing” in 2009. The current scale of deforestation and the rapidly increasing rate of resource exploitation and “land-grabbing” have become key causes of local food insecurity, national political instability and conflict, and global climate change.

# HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

---

While there are many reasons for concern, there are also many for hope. A closer look shows that there has been notable progress in recent years in recognizing rights, setting up systems of governance in forest areas, and reducing forest poverty.

- The spread of democratic practices, the growing role of civil society, and the increased capacity and influence of Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations have enabled local voices to have wider influence.
- Growing global interest in rural resources is creating more opportunities for development, increased access to telecommunications is enabling local people to more equitably engage and connect with markets and actors.
- The existence and sophistication of community and small-scale enterprises, as well as adoption of standards by investors are growing, and the spread of progressive trade agreements demonstrates the possibility of reform.

Over the past two decades 70+ countries have gone from net deforesters to net forest growers — indicating that deforestation can be reversed and restoration can be achieved where there is political will. Brazil and China, for example, have secured hundreds of millions of hectares of forest and reduced deforestation while simultaneously increasing rural incomes.

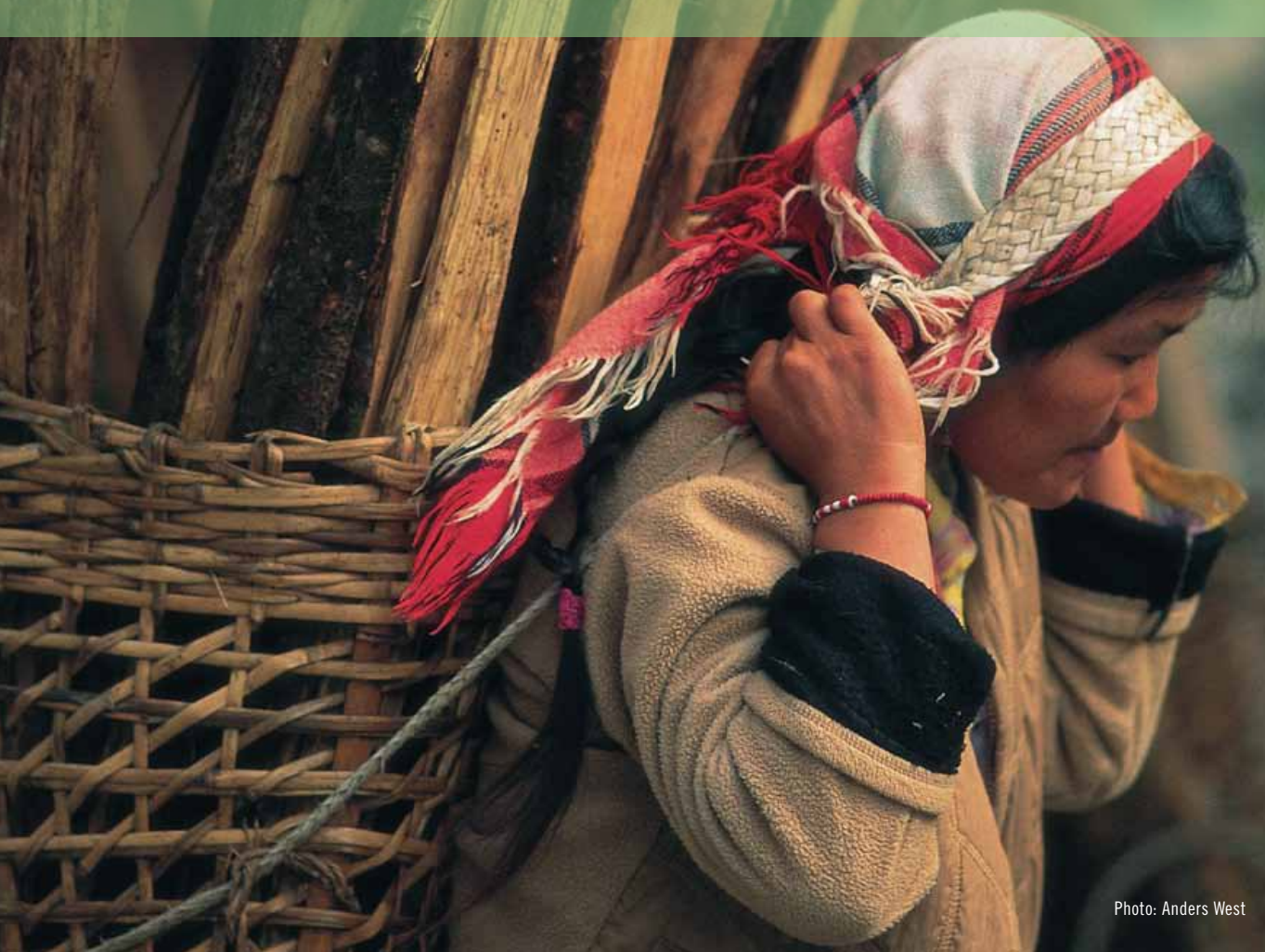
**Global climate change and forest development communities have begun to understand tenure reform as a prerequisite for decreasing deforestation at a globally significant scale, and achieving more equitable social and economic development in forest areas.**

India and Kenya have led the way on overturning colonial land legislation and are recognizing and strengthening local land rights. At the international conference on Forest Tenure, Governance and Enterprise in July 2011, Indonesia announced that it too would begin a forest tenure reform process.

Even with these signs of progress and the increasing recognition of rights, the world will not meet global goals to reduce poverty and protect the environment, or effectively mitigate or adapt to climate change without securing local tenure and governance. Understanding these global factors and forces is essential. The realization of poverty alleviation, equitable development, and sustainable natural resource protection and production depends on our ability to adapt to the growing interconnectedness of our changing world.

“RRI is fulfilling an essential role in fostering rethinking in governments and increasing local people’s rights to forests... without RRI, this agenda would be badly diminished to the detriment of people and forests throughout the world.”

– 2011 Independent Evaluation by The Mountain Institute



# AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE WITH GLOBAL REACH

## 5 years of impact, 5 years of doing development differently

---

RRI is an innovative international development initiative created to address these global challenges by transforming forest governance and economies so that human, civil and political rights are recognized, poverty is alleviated and natural resource management is sustainable. RRI understands the factors at play in the world today and leverages the strategic collaboration and investment of its Partners and Collaborators around the world; working together on research, advocacy and convening strategic actors to dramatically catalyze change on the ground.

### ”Doing development differently”

Many now recognize RRI as an institutional innovation in the arena of forests, rights and development. The Coalition strategically focuses on complementing and adding value to existing organizations and initiatives. The Coalition’s structure and governance ensure that representatives of community and Indigenous Peoples’ organizations play major roles in guiding and governing the Coalition. RRI activities are designed in response to and in support of local people and their communities, with over 60 percent of funding directly supporting local-level engagement in strategic analysis and advocacy.

**RRI has emerged as the world’s largest network raising awareness and catalyzing commitments for forest tenure, governance and market reform.**

Formally established just over five years ago, RRI builds on a long history of collaboration. And though five years is a short time considering the historical transformations we advocate, independent evaluations have confirmed that RRI has been extraordinarily successful in advancing global awareness and action on tenure reform and respecting local peoples’ rights.

### A Growing Need for Recognition, Response and Reform

Forests cover close to 30 percent of the world’s land area, and more than a billion people rely on forests to a significant extent for their food, fuel and income.

“RRI’s participation in the International Tropical Timber Council, for example, has helped ensure that the voices of all stakeholders, especially those of marginalized communities, are heard and that their concerns are addressed.”

— Emanuel Ze Meka, Executive Director, ITTO



Photo: Carolina Cenerini

Historically forests belonged to local communities, but through colonization and conflict, modern states have brought them under their legal domain. Dominant models of forest industry and conservation have often exacerbated poverty and social conflicts and precluded pro-poor economic growth. In the mid 1980's this began to shift, with 27 percent of developing country forests officially recognized as either owned or administered by Indigenous Peoples and other communities by 2008. Today, most local forest communities and Indigenous Peoples continue to live with rules and regulations imposed on them by governments who lay claim to the source of their livelihood – the land and forests around them.

The lack of clear rights to own and use forest land, develop enterprises, and trade in forest products has driven millions of forest dwellers to poverty, encouraged widespread illegal logging and extraction, and resulted in massive forest loss.

Over the past five years, RRI has developed robust collaborative, working relationships with civil society and Indigenous Peoples organizations across the developing world and at the international level, as well as strong, credible relationships with private companies and government agencies in order to accelerate the rate of recognition and securing of land rights that must accompany tenure reform on the ground.

In addition RRI has established a strong analytical basis for the need for increased action on tenure and rights around the world, supplementing the representative systems for strategic planning, monitoring and prioritization of the Coalitions programs and funding.

**“Working single handedly it’s very difficult to make an impact, but in the RRI Coalition where we have so many people pushing up these issues from the grassroots to the national to regional and even to the international levels, I think we have a very big impact.”**

– Samuel Nnah Dobé, Center for Environment and Development

The Coalition, and the many networks programs and activities it supports, are known for strategic analysis, convening key constituencies, and mobilizing the action needed for results both on the books and on the ground.

## **Why RRI? The Impact is Clear**

The impact of RRI’s 14 Partners and 120 plus Collaborators is strong and extensive. The collective RRI ‘fingerprint’ can be seen in major tenure reforms in China and Brazil, stronger tenure advocacy in Nepal and Central America, greater global awareness of tenure in global REDD negotiations, enhancing corporate responsibility standards and policy, growing reform movements, and supporting women’s natural resource rights mobilization in Central and West Africa to name a few.

## **Brazil: Spurring a Progressive Forest Policy Framework**

The Rights and Resources Initiative has influenced policy changes and support to tenure reform programs in Brazil that affect more than a million Brazilians and 200 million hectares of forest

- + In Acre state in July 2007, RRI brought leaders from 40 nations together to meet with forest activists, community leaders and officials in a well-publicized conference that represented a breakthrough in efforts to build political support for forest tenure reform in Brazil
- + Actions by the public and private sector, supported to a large extent by the intellectual framework provided by RRI, have had a remarkable impact, and Brazil is moving rapidly to embrace community forest management
- + In June 2009, with the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva announced the creation of a national community forestry policy that would promote sustainable management of forests used by farmers, settlers, Indigenous Peoples and forest communities

At the country and regional level RRI supports social and political agents of change, advocates for pro-poor policy and market reforms, carries out research and convenes dialogues to generate new legislation and improved implementation of existing policies. These programs constructively engage government policymakers and draw on strategic actors from civil society and communities to work together to shape new approaches to tenure and regulation of forest areas.

Globally, the Coalition responds to emerging strategic opportunities that cross-cut our regional programs and are in need of broader support to advance the RRI mission. A few examples of RRI's global initiatives include:

**Tenure Analysis:** Each year, RRI monitors global progress towards increasing the area of forest under local ownership and management. Rigorous analysis, dedication to developing standardized methods and definitions and constant verification by specialized analysts and experts has made RRI a trusted and leading resource on forest-tenure data.

**RRI Dialogue series on Forests, Governance and Climate Change:** This series of dialogues fosters critical reflection and learning on forest governance, the rights of forest communities and Indigenous Peoples and forest tenure in the context of global action to combat climate change, including Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).

**MegaFlorestais:** An informal network of the largest, forested countries' forest agency leaders, MegaFlorestais

**“RRI has played a critical role. It has been vital that they provided logistical support and an intellectual framework for taking this movement forward. And they brought ideas that we could use as a point of departure, rather than telling us what to do”**

— Luiz Carlos Joels, Serviço Florestal Brasileiro

works to advance international dialogue and exchange on forest governance and public forest agency reforms. Since the first annual meeting in Beijing in 2005, participants have grown to include representatives from Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Finland, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, South Sudan and USA.

Though there is much to celebrate from the first five years of the Rights and Resources Initiative, the world is still far short of meeting its goals of advancing rights, development and conservation in the developing world. The RRI family of institutions remains focused on the tremendous amount of important work that is yet to be done for the world's forests, and the people and communities that call them home.

## **RRI Report’s “Wake-up Call” to Global Paper Giant Protects Local Rights in Hepu County, China**

Targeted and influential research by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) challenged and ultimately altered the unethical practices of one of the world’s largest paper companies. The well-publicized study highlighted the increased risk of global land rights abuses spurred by the growing demand for forest lands and resources and compounded by new funding available under international climate change agreements.

- + RRI’s research became a “wake-up call,” alerting companies that they and their investors need to proactively investigate local land rights claims and ongoing land-related conflicts, rather than assume local rights and interests are being protected.
- + RRI finds that inequitable “land grabs” are indeed a global trend, as documented in a 2010 World Bank Report; however, the solution the World Bank recommends—that relying on corporate social responsibility to ensure good behavior is enough— has proven to be grossly inadequate.
- + CEO of global paper company, Stora Enso, publicly acknowledged “better awareness of the problems” as a result of RRI’s report and committed to rectify existing contracts to ensure “they are based on the free choices of villagers who receive fair compensation (for their land).”

# IMPACTS ON THE GROUND

---

Since RRI began operations in 2006, it has emerged as the world's largest network raising awareness and catalyzing commitments for forest tenure, governance and market reform. Annual independent monitoring and the recently completed Mid-Term Evaluation of RRI's program and activities confirm the Initiative's many major impacts, high level of efficiency and effectiveness, strong financial management record, and notable degree of appropriation and ownership by Partner and Collaborating organizations in developing countries. The independent evaluations have attributed RRI with:

- + Playing a key role in driving major forest tenure reform and governance achievements in China, Brazil and Indonesia (among other countries);
- + Establishing new collaborative networks of strategic players in the originally disconnected development landscape in developing forested countries;
- + Catalyzing the increasingly mainstreamed call for forest tenure reform among international organizations and more informed and strategic action by civil society in advocating for tenure reform in many countries;

**The “Message from the CEO” in Stora Enso’s Sustainability Report 2010 highlighted “better awareness of the problems” as a result of RRI’s report and committed to “rectify contracts an ensure they are based on the free choice of villagers who receive fair compensation.”**

- + Becoming the global point of reference for forest tenure data and expertise
- + Increasing public forest agency consideration and support for reforms in China, Brazil, Indonesia and Cameroon and Peru, via the MegaFlorestais initiative. RRI is increasingly seen by these agencies as a credible source of information and training for global issues in governance, trade and tenure.

**RRI**'s mission is to support local communities' and Indigenous Peoples' struggles against poverty and marginalization by promoting greater global commitment and action towards policy, market and legal reforms that secure their rights to own, control and benefit from natural resources, especially land and forests.



Photo: Ben Powless

# LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Achieving Results: 2013 – 2017

---

In 2011 RRI undertook a “Rethink and Renew” process to critically evaluate our performance, challenge our world view and assess our role in the future. The process, which included brainstorming sessions with major thinkers from the private sector and development organizations, a Mid-Term Evaluation and discussions with Partners and Collaborators across the world, confirmed that opportunities for influence are now far greater than originally anticipated, and that RRI’s opportunistic, strategic and nimble approach has been key to our success and efficiency.

The process also generated two critical lessons:

- + New global challenges require **expanded engagement** with private investors and emerging economies (BRICs) and the creation of new, more effective instruments to support tenure reform and transform forest markets;
  - + **It’s time.** There is global appetite for broad scale tenure reforms and major globally influential constituencies, including financial investors and governments, can be mobilized to support and champion reforms. However, engaging these new constituencies will require sustained commitment, critical learning and adjustment.
- With this in mind, RRI plans to accelerate forest tenure, governance and market reforms in key, forested, developing countries. These reforms will lead to substantial increases in the value of forests benefitting forest-dependent people, a reduction in deforestation and degradation and an increase in forest restoration – leading to a globally significant reduction of carbon emissions from developing country forest areas.
- To achieve these results over the next five years, RRI will:
- + Build on prior progress and expand program support on gender activities
  - + Strengthen and expand the multi-stakeholder platforms for collaboration in developing countries
  - + Increase engagement with the private sector and key emerging economies
  - + Strengthen collaboration with existing NGOs and assist agriculture, food and forestry companies’ shift to sustainable supply chains, leveraging their connections and company commitments to advance tenure and governance reforms
  - + Develop new, innovative mechanisms to leverage and influence the investments that will shape forests and forest livelihoods for decades to come

## PARTNERS



## SUPPORTERS



*The views presented here are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the agencies that have generously supported this work, or all of the Partners of the Coalition.*



1238 Wisconsin Avenue NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20007  
+1 202 470 3900

[www.rightsandresources.org](http://www.rightsandresources.org)