RRI Asia: 2010-2012 Work-Plan Summary

I. Regional Overview

Dates of planning meetings in 2009:

August 11-12:	Kathmandu, Nepal	September 20-21: Pokhara, Nepal (regional)
August 21:	Beijing, China	November 10: Vientiane, Laos
September 10-11:	Bogor, Indonesia	

	Strategic outcomes	Steps/Strategy	Partners
Region	By 2012: • Substantial increase in recognition of indigenous and community rights in forest areas • Substantial strengthening of real rights and ability to exercise rights (regulatory reforms) • Increase in government support for ATEMs as credible schemes; FPIC widely supported by governments and increasingly accepted by private sector • Substantial increase in strength and interconnectedness of indigenous and local community organizations- effectiveness in advocating for policy and market reforms and managing conflict • Increased government recognition of the critical role of secure tenure in climate change response mechanisms	2010: • Activate Asia policy network to strengthen reforms where underway (China, Nepal, India) and encourage new efforts where reforms are not underway (Indonesia) • International forest reform conference held in China • GACF strengthened in the region through exchange and training programs and grassroots mobilization • Strategic work to influence standards and FPIC	FECOFUN, CIFOR, IC, FPP, IUCN, RECOFTC, ICRAF, FPCD
Tier 1			
China	By 2012: • New and improved forest law for forest areas • Tenure reforms of state forest areas underway • Climate investments respect local and customary rights	2010: • Support legal reforms through analysis, draft legal text and initiate dialogue • Analyze regulatory framework to remove barriers to full realization of rights on forests (zoning and harvesting rules in particular) • Support experimentation with alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to provide legal redress to local forest-owners • Analysis of Green Carbon Fund to ensure local and customary rights are respected	RECOFTC, Forest Trends, CIFOR, IUCN, ICRAF Collab.: RDI, PKU, SFA, APFNet
Nepal	By 2012: • Community forest rights are ensured in new constitution of Nepal • Area under community forestry is expanded by 10% • Community rights enhanced in protected areas • Community based forest enterprises established and green jobs created at local level • Community forestry institutions are strengthened • Community rights ensured on carbon trade/fund/CDM schemes and investment of adaptation fund on truly vulnerable communities • Plan of inclusive development applied	2010: • Grassroots mobilization and media campaign • Activation of community groups • Networking with other federations • Engagement with political constituencies • Critical monitoring and engagement with unfolding policy processes • Underpinning activities with robust analysis and documentation	FECOFUN, IUCN, IC, CIFOR, RECOFTC Collab.: HIMWANTI, Forest Action Nepal, ANSAB
Indonesia	By 2012: • Rights agenda is included in climate change policy • Private sector reform is strengthened • Legal and policy reforms, tenure and *adat* rights are recognized • Negotiated settlement of conflicts • Rights are recognized within conservation model • Network strengthened and support provided for social movement	2010: • Increase recognition of community and indigenous peoples' rights in forest areas • Strengthen capacity to implement and exercise rights, shared responsibilities and justice and equity • Increase government support for community forestry options (ATEMS) • Widen support for FPIC by governments and private sector • Strengthen networks and organizations • Government action on rights recognition in climate change response; community engagement in climate change discourses and policy formulation and implementation	CIFOR, FPP, ICRAF, IUCN, RECOFTC Collab.: HuMa, ICEL, MOE

Laos	In 2010: Promote learning on forest tenure rights	2010: • Shared learning workshop • Exchange visit to China • Policy briefs	RECOFTC, FT, CIFOR Collab.: NAFRI, NAFES, NLMA, MAF
Tier 2			
India	By 2012: • Forest Right Acts (FRA) is tracked at implementation level • Communities are empowered through mapping to assert their claims with ministry of tribal affairs • Increased RRI engagement at national level	2010: • Workshop on implementation of FRA with MOTA • Tracking implementation of FRA • Capacity development on mapping	RRG, RRI Fellow
Thailand	By 2012: • Network of community forestry groups and other CSOs is strengthened • Community forestry bill operationalized on the ground with necessary legal instruments	2010: Assessment and workshop on institutional status of community forestry groups and network of CSOs; and opportunities to secure rights	RECOFTC, FECOFUN

II. Planning Teams

2.1 Regional Planning Team

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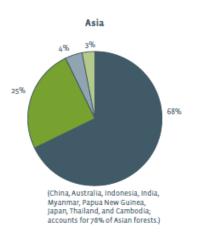*invited but did not attend regional meeting

2.2 Current collaborators in region

Peking University - *China*
Rural Development Institute - *China*
State Forest Administration - *China*
Forest Action *Nepal*
Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMWANTI) - *Nepal*
The Association for Community and Ecology Based Law Reform (HuMa) - *Indonesia*
Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresearches (ANSAB) - *Nepal*

III. Asia- Regional

3.1 Regional Overview

Asia

3%
4%
25%
68%

(China, Australia, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia; accounts for 78% of Asian forests.)

Poverty, tenure and forest emissions in Asia

- There are 625 million rural poor (<$1/day) living in Asia — 71% of the world total.

- 68% of the region's forests claimed by government (see adjacent chart) — 54% of global forest carbon emissions.

- UN-REDD: 3 countries; WB FPCF: 4 countries (two tier 1: Laos & Nepal.)

Sources: Ravaillon & Chen. 2007. *Absolute Poverty Measures for the Developing World, 1981-2004.* World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4211. World Resources Institute. 2008. *GHG Emissions from Land-Use Change & Forestry in 2000.* http://cait.wri.org/

- ■ Administered by government
- ■ Owned by communities & indigenous peoples
- ☐ Designated for use by communities & indigenous peoples
- ☐ Owned by individuals & firms

3.2 RRI Strategy in Asia

Rationale for engagement

In the last two decades, forested countries in South, Southeast and East Asia have undergone major changes in forest cover, social development and forest policy. Natural forests have dramatically decreased in size in countries where state ownership dominates due to state-sponsored deforestation and logging (e.g. Indonesia, Lao). On the other hand, restoration is increasing where tenure is shifting toward communities (e.g. Nepal, China, and Vietnam).   More recently, initiatives to mitigate climate change have produced a major spike in land investments for bio-fuels plantations and alternative energy sources in forest areas, resulting in a reallocation of land use and land-grabbing and conflict. Major shifts to land tenure now threaten many of Asia's forest communities who have inhabited these areas for generations often because systems fail to protect community land tenure and access rights.

Key threats and opportunities

Preliminary RRI scoping exercises under the *Listening, Learning, Sharing Launch (LLSL)*[1] revealed a set of key threats. Landscapes and tenure systems in many forested countries are characterized by land-use classifications that emerged from national planning processes which overlooked realities on the ground. In many cases throughout Asia, indigenous rights are either missing in relevant legislation or given incomplete and unenforced recognition in the law. Furthermore, national or local government regulations often restrict the management and marketing of forest-based products and there is sparse understanding of the relationship between forest ecosystem management practices and poverty. Another recent RRI report entitled, *From Exclusion to Ownership*[2], indicates that although forest tenure worldwide is transitioning toward more community ownership, 68% of the forest estate in Asia remains claimed by governments.

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[1] Colchester, Marcus and Fay, C. *Land, Forest and People: Facing the Challenges in Southeast Asia.* Rights and Resources Initiative, Listening, Learning and Sharing Asia Final Report. September 2007.
[2] Sunderlin, William, et al. *Who Owns the Forests in Asia?: An introduction to the forest tenure transition in Asia, 2002-2008.* December 2008.

Still, some countries in Asia are making globally significant progress. For example, in China, recent government reforms have granted greater decision-making power to members of collectives and have enabled individual households to acquire usage rights to forest plots. In India, the government recently ratified the Forest Rights Act, which legally empowers forest communities to own, manage and protect forest lands on which they have traditionally resided. These divergent country cases create an opportunity for RRI Partners to share lessons and help leverage change within the region. Asia represents a particularly critical area for the RRI because progress made on tenure and policy in the region has the potential to influence global "best practices" on implementation and legal reform. Gradual transitions in forest governance, such as those listed above, provide effective entry points for coalition engagement to advance the RRI goals of more secure tenure and improved livelihoods.

Key Themes

The following two themes of work in Asia are identified:

First, supporting social movements and regional community forest networks to advance rights and regulatory reforms; including going beyond Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF), linking to agrarian reform and indigenous peoples movements and encouraging the emergence of the next generation of leaders.

Second, providing new analysis and policy dialogue confronting three myths: forests are empty and owned by the state, forest industries are making positive contributions to generate revenue and development, and forest agencies are effective.

RRI aims to create a new Asian policy forum for informal rethinking of forests, underpinned by a new forest science in which the real political economy of forests is clarified.

Such a new approach might also look afresh at:

- rights and REDD
- how the poverty issue cross-cuts and persists
- look beyond the forestry box to include agrarian issues and wider sets of institutions
- the energy transition: agro-fuels and extractives, tenure questions related to more than forests: carbon, minerals, etc.
- the threats of new land grabs as the financial crisis eases
- conflicts over natural resources and how to resolve them
- the challenges from migration and mobility, reappraise existing forums like ASEAN, AFP and processes like FLEGT, and
- rethinking the rights and responsibilities implied by a devolution of control of forests from the State to the local communities.

This dialogue would seek to reach not just the grassroots movements, but also government officials and legislators at national level. Tools would include:

- media work
- sharing of experiences between countries
- making comparative assessments which highlight: progress and setbacks; leaders and laggards.

Tier 1 Countries
Four countries in Asia are identified as tier-one countries: China, Nepal, Indonesia and Lao PDR. **China** was selected because it is undertaking globally significant tenure reforms. At the same time, rights are threatened in the name of environmental protection. In addition, China has a very active network of collaborators working on rights and tenure and RRI has good grasp and influence on these issues. **Nepal** is currently undergoing a historic political transition that will determine the future of millions of poor,

especially resource-dependent communities in the coming years. RRI Partners and Collaborators are mobilizing rural communities and activating a number of key constituencies to inform the current policy dialogue on the importance of community forestry practices and land tenure and ensure that the new constitution enshrines the community forest rights. **Indonesia** has the largest land-base, population and forest cover in Southeast Asia. High deforestation rates, social exclusion and land consolidation by agro-business and forest industries continue to be at the center of Indonesia's unsustainable and inequitable development path. A comprehensive review of RRI Partner activities related to rights and resources in Indonesia, suggests that there is no other 'tier one' country where there is such convergence of RRI priority activities and Partners. In **Lao PDR**, a recent stakeholder consultation meeting held at the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture has reiterated government interest and commitment to advance agenda on tenure and rights. Reactivated national level tenure task force under National Land Management Authority (NLMA), headed by the Director General of National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), provides a strategic opportunity for RRI to engage with and support government initiatives on tenure rights

Tier 2 Countries
Tier 2 countries in Asia are those designated for selective strategic engagement and where the coalition encourages incremental change at the national level. To leverage change in the tier 2 countries, RRI has identified countries where political window has just opened and provides the opportunity to deepen networks and engage with key constituencies to ensure progress in tenure reforms. Based on these criteria, RRI Partners in Asia determined that tier 2 countries for 2010 would include **Thailand and India.** Coalition Partners acknowledge that **Thailand,** given the lack of statutory law recognizing community rights requires coordinated action. For this strengthening network of community forestry groups and CSOs in Thailand could be instrumental to bring the rights agenda at policy level. The existence of critical mass of RRI Partners along with RECOFTC working in Thailand is an added value for engagement in Thailand. **India,** with its recently enacted Forest Rights Act, has opened the political space for assertion of land claims by tribal communities who are primarily dependent on forests for their livelihoods. Initial activities in 2008-2009 by RRI confirm a big movement by tribal communities and other institutions for major reforms. Therefore, tracking of the Forest Rights Act is one priority, assistance with mapping to assert community claims is another and engagement with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the third priority.

Outcomes for the region by 2012

1. Substantial increase in recognition of indigenous and community rights in forest areas;
2. Substantial strengthening of real rights and ability to exercise rights (regulatory reforms);
3. Increase in government support for Alternative Tenure and Enterprise Models (ATEMs) as credible schemes;
4. Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) widely supported by governments and increasingly accepted by private sector;
5. Substantial increase in strength and interconnectedness of indigenous and local community organizations and network;
6. Effective advocacy for policy and market reforms and managing conflict;and
7. Increased recognition by governments of the critical role of secure tenure in climate change response mechanisms such as REDD.