

The Rights and Resources Initiative

**An Independent Monitoring
Report on 2009 Activities**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2009, the Rights and Resources Group (RRG) engaged Kevin Murray Strategic Consulting (KMSC) to conduct a review of the quality and scope of 2009 implementation by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), the coalition coordinated by RRG. KMSC's work with RRI also included analysis of the alignment of 2009 activities with the overall goals and planned pace of implementation of the project. This required a review of implementation of the RRI's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system (MEL). KMSC assembled a Monitoring Team made up of four researchers, including a Project Coordinator (see "Acknowledgements").

In order to gather primary data on RRI implementation at the country and regional level, the review included field visits to Cameroon, Guatemala and Nepal, as well as attendance at the Africa Regional Planning Meeting in Ghana. The KMSC Project Coordinator also attended RRI's Global Program planning meeting in Washington, DC, and presented a draft of this report to RRI donors and coalition partners gathered at the coalition's annual meetings at Osprey Point, MD. The current report is the product of that entire monitoring process.

RRI was conceived as an ambitious, forward-looking project to connect and coordinate the efforts of organizations and individuals working to advance the tenure rights of forest-dependent communities around the world. Not content to simply connect people working on tenure, RRI would provide resources, organizing support and groundbreaking tenure trend analysis to strengthen tenure rights advocacy networks. Where tenure reforms already existed, RRI would support effective implementation of reform and the development of alternative enterprise models to enhance the economic viability of household and community production in the forest.

Even as this remarkable effort began to get off the ground, the world turned its eyes toward the forests in entirely new ways that could not have been imagined when the ideas that led to RRI began percolating. As the world's awareness of the threat posed by climate change increased, policymakers and corporate leaders began to see the forests as a major arena (and potential profit center) in the effort to minimize the effects of climate change.

Between 2006, the year of RRI's formation, and 2009, the year under study in this report, this re-definition of the forest in the public mind was well on its way to transforming the forest sector, including RRI and the community forest sector it has been constructed to serve.

In 2009, RRI faced some serious short-term resource challenges, but still managed an impressive set of accomplishments. For example, it:

- Contributed to demonstrable progress on its national tenure reform agenda in five priority country programs;
- Released and distributed nearly five dozen briefs, reports, and newsletters providing its unique analysis of social dynamics and tenure trends in the forest;
- Played an active role in establishing the intimate relationship between forest tenure and climate change, and helped put the issue of tenure on the implementation agenda of the UN Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD);
- Gained visibility through its publications, outreach and public events, such as the two Chatham House climate change dialogues;
- Sponsored an important regional conference addressing forest tenure issues in Central and West Africa, and participated in a variety of other international gatherings;
- Provided indispensable logistical and organizing support to four forest-sector networks positioned to influence forest policy in favor of community tenure rights; and
- Coordinated and managed these and hundreds of other activities out of a small, but efficient, secretariat based in Washington, DC.

Charged with monitoring the quality of RRI's 2009 implementation and its alignment with the project's overall intended outcomes, our Monitoring Team can validate RRG's assertion that the 2009 Strategic Priorities were, in large part, delivered at or in excess of expectations. Some of the highlights of that implementation are listed above. The full report investigates activities in more detail.

The Monitoring Team's engagement with the RRI process also surfaced a number of key issues that we believe impacted RRI implementation in 2009. From our perspective, they deserve special attention as the coalition builds on the experience of this past year. These issues include:

Strategic Analysis: Strategic Analysis is a core competency of RRG and is the area of work for which the coalition is most recognized. That said, some areas of analysis have been slow to gel. The areas of Realizing Rights and Alternative Tenure and Enterprise Models (ATEMs) produced impressive work in 2009, but also postponed delivery of some important activities. This could well be a product of unrealistic expectations, given the level and diversity of demands on key RRG staff. In any event, these areas of analysis deserve more attention in 2010, especially if RRI wishes to avoid the pitfall of allowing its analysis to acquire a one dimensional focus on Rights and Climate Change.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning: In its Framework Proposal (Revised, 2009), RRI showed a highly nuanced understanding of the importance of an effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system to this project. RRG has coordinated

implementation of the Independent Monitoring component of the MEL commitment in both 2008 and 2009, but the internal monitoring system remains a work in progress. While Independent Monitoring has occurred, it has yet to result in the establishment of clear global measures of success or a system to gather the information necessary to track those measures. Since getting the MEL system up and running for 2009 was a board-approved Strategic Priority for the year, this is an implementation issue. The absence of a monitoring system may also be affecting other aspects of implementation in ways that are not readily visible. We have devoted a section of this report to a discussion of RRI's MEL system.

The current, partially-developed condition of RRI's MEL system complicates the second part of the charge of the Monitoring Team, to ensure that 2009 outcomes are aligned with the overall project outcomes included in the RRI Log Frame. One does not need elaborate indicators (or evaluators) to determine that there is close alignment between each of the outcomes listed above and RRI's global objectives. For example, all of the implementation by the Country Programs in Cameroon, Guatemala and Nepal is related to Goal/Result #2 on the establishment of more equitable tenure, governance and business systems in priority regions. In the absence of hard data to track measurements, and benchmarks that project progress over time, it is very difficult to say if RRI is making *enough* progress toward attainment of its goals over the projected time period. This line of inquiry leads directly to the question of the concrete connection between what RRI has identified as its Goals/Outputs and the global targets associated with the overall objective of the project, i.e., doubling of forest area under local ownership by 2015 and halving poverty in forested areas by the same year.

Internal Communication: In a large coalition working on issues as complex as those being addressed by RRI, fluid internal communication is a crucial element of optimal implementation. Analysis of 2009 implementation turned up a small number of cases in which inadequate communication between RRG and RRI partners and/or collaborators resulted in implementation problems. Some partners suggest that, when information on RRG activities arrives, it often arrives too late for the partner to effectively react. The Monitoring Team could confirm only a relatively small number of such instances, given the volume of interactions that take place. In the context of these and other considerations, a review of internal communications procedures is in order.

Facilitating Partner Collaboration: Related to, but still distinct from, the task of internal communication is that of maximizing the synergy among the missions of RRI coalition partners. The uniqueness of RRI resides in the coalition's ability to bring together a diverse group of national and global organizations around a rights-based, forest tenure reform agenda. RRG's role in the coalition includes the critical task of enhancing collaboration among RRI partners at all levels. Given the diverse missions, structures and operating principles of the partner organizations, building synergy among partner efforts can be a demanding task, but one that sits at the center of the coalition's value proposition. The Monitoring Team's research suggests that, in 2009, RRG had more

success facilitating partner collaboration at the national and regional levels than it did in the global advocacy context. Full realization of RRI's ambitious objectives will require unleashing the potential of productive collaboration among RRI partners and their networks at all levels. The challenge of increasing the engagement of RRI's global partners with the coalition's Global Program is one that deserves the close attention of everyone involved with RRI.

Country Program Prioritization: Some countries that offered clear opportunities for advances on tenure issues when RRI made country choices no longer present the same degree of opportunity. This greatly impacts the possibilities of successful RRI implementation in those countries. A core cultural trait of RRI concerns its ability to move with agility in response to opportunity, but the model now in place limits that agility at the level of country programs. RRI is aware of this dilemma, but has been slow to address it.

Contracting Cycle: National partners uniformly hold RRI in high esteem and value their participation in the project. Many of them, however, view the RRI contracting cycle as lengthy and inefficient to the point that it affects the quality and timing of their implementation and delivery. This may reflect reactions to a particularly difficult cycle in 2009, in which a good part of RRI funds remained uncertain until mid-year, but the issue is still worthy of attention.

All of the points raised above point to critical issues that should be addressed at the strategic level. These points, however, cannot obscure the fact that RRI has made extraordinary progress in a short period of time. Even if its brand is not solidly established, its publications and analysis have already had a demonstrable effect on the increasingly widespread and urgent public debates on forest tenure. There is no better barometer of RRI's impact than Chatham House's acceptance of its proposal to convene a series of public dialogues on climate change.

By all accounts, the demand for the type of analysis and support offered by RRI is growing exponentially, as the question of forest tenure emerges from the trees. RRI has come along with a good idea at a better time, and the possibilities for the network's impact are beyond what anyone could have expected when the conversations that led to RRI began. These impressive opportunities exist alongside their own challenges. The contours of the opportunities and the challenges facing RRI became evident in our review of the coalition's 2009 implementation, and are considered in the "Conclusions" section of this report.

Recommendations

Based on its assessment of the strengths and the challenges of 2009 implementation, the Monitoring Team makes many recommendations for adjustments to RRI and RRG

strategies and operating procedures throughout this report. Those judged to be of highest priority are summarized here:

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System: Consistent with the coalition's foundational commitments, RRI must complete the work of putting in place a fully functional MEL system (during the first half of 2010). At a minimum, that requires a revision of the indicators in the existing log-frame and the establishment of information gathering systems consistent with the needs of monitoring progress on those indicators. The 2010 Independent Monitoring Exercise must be able to use the updated indicators and the information that supports them. The establishment of a working MEL system should also include an analysis of the extent to which these log-frame indicators fully meet RRI's learning needs, and, as necessary, the consideration of alternative MEL approaches that might complement log-frame analysis in maximizing RRI's learning about what works and what doesn't work in its strategic approach. A decision to embrace complementary approaches would also imply additional work to integrate all approaches into a single, coherent system.

Coalition Strengthening: RRI should review existing internal communications procedures with the goal of establishing fluid communications that deepen the relationships among coalition members, while keeping those members fully informed of relevant coalition activities. In addition, RRG should carefully analyze its efforts to maximize synergies among partner actions, especially at the global program level. Articulation between Country and Regional Initiatives and RRI Global Programs is certainly important, but the integration of partners into the design, planning and execution of RRI Global Program is a separate, and equally important, issue. Where existing capacity is insufficient to achieve such integration, RRG should consider developing that capacity.

Country Priorities: RRI should establish a method to annually review its choices regarding priority countries for Country and Regional Initiatives with an eye toward consistently targeting interventions in locations of maximum opportunity for progress on tenure reform. Given that RRI cannot infinitely expand the number of countries in which it is working, agility and responsiveness will require more discussion of the issue of program transition away from countries that no longer offer real possibilities for the sorts of tenure reform sought by the coalition.

Contracting System: In light of partner comments on the impact of RRG's contracting system on implementation, RRI should review that system with an eye toward capturing efficiencies, identifying potential bottlenecks and shortening the overall length of the process. This recommendation is closely linked to the one on operational capacity described below.

Communications Capacity: RRG should seriously consider adding a dedicated communications staff position to be filled by a communications professional with skills

and experiences consistent with RRI's communications strategy. That strategy should be reviewed with an eye toward expanding the network of users of RRI's publications and analysis and exploring the use of new media to expand public awareness of RRI's perspective and use of RRI materials. A carefully-designed survey of current users of RRI communications products would provide indispensable grounding for any review of communications strategy, as would an effort to activate the impressive communications capabilities of many RRI partners behind the coalition's communications objectives.

Operational Capacity: RRG should assess its operational capacity based on projected needs over the next three years and make a plan to create operational capacity in line with those needs. Contracting additional permanent staff is only one way to build such capacity. In the short-term, however, an additional financial/administrative person to focus attention on the contracting process and related activities seems like an urgent necessity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) is a diverse coalition of organizations that has come together behind a mission of promoting greater global commitment to forest policy and market reforms that increase local household and community ownership, control, and benefits from forests and trees. In addition to the twelve coalition members (partners), RRI also relies upon the active participation of a large number of organizational and individual collaborators as well as a core group of committed and knowledgeable donors.

Although discussions leading to the formation of RRI began in 2002, the coalition did not formally initiate operations until 2006. At that time, the twelve coalition partners resolved to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that established a “framework of cooperation” among the partners. Coalition members formally executed the MOU in June 2007.

In addition to the MOU, RRI partners have established a set of “Institutional and Business Arrangements.” These arrangements (IBA) were put in place in July 2008, and are now included as an annex to the MOU. They present the coalition’s core value proposition that “with a limited incremental investment in improved coherence and coordination, existing organizations can dramatically increase their contribution to the rights, dignity and development of forest dependent people globally as well as to forest conservation and more equitable economic and social development.”

The IBA further establish an RRI Secretariat, The Rights and Resources Group (RRG). RRG is a nonprofit organization based in Washington DC with the dual functions of coordinating coalition operations and carrying out value-added activities in the name of RRI. In establishing RRG, the IBA outlines its functions and establishes its relationship with RRI.

As a 501c3 organization, RRG has a Board of Directors made up of a combination of partner representatives and independent directors who assume overall governance responsibility for RRG. The IBA outlines the authority and responsibility of the RRG Board of Directors.

Whereas the MOU establishes the general contours of the collaboration at the basis of RRI, the IBA contains the operational details that guide coalition practice. RRI reviews its founding MOU through a fairly formal process occurring every two years, but the IBA can be modified at any time by a vote of the RRG Board of Directors. This combination of a relatively stable common expression of principles and a more flexible operational framework has served the coalition well.

In 2008, as a critical step in the formation of the coalition, in 2008 members of the eventual core leadership of RRG created a “Framework Proposal” (FP) as a public presentation of RRI’s mission, strategic goals and operational approach. In addition to serving as an important internal reference, the proposal has been used as a tool to facilitate discussions with potential financial supporters of the project. By all accounts, it has served this purpose very well.

In this document that RRI’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) commitments are first made explicit. According to the FP, RRG would establish both an internal monitoring information system and engage an Independent Monitoring Team to work over the course of the project to monitor progress and eventually evaluate the program. The clearest statement of the role of the Independent Monitoring Team is that, “In collaboration with RRI, the monitoring agency will develop a set of indicators and measurements to monitor the progress and ensure learning by all involved.”

In late 2008, RRG contracted Philanthropy Support Services, Inc. to act as RRI’s Independent Monitor for the duration of the five-year period of the Framework Proposal. In February 2009, Philanthropy Support Services, Inc. (PSS) presented the first Independent Monitoring Report of RRI activities. Given time and resource constraints, it was decided that the first monitoring exercise would be a desk review, based on analysis of key internal and external documents and interviews with selected stakeholders. PSS was to conduct a more rigorous monitoring exercise in 2009, including monitoring visits to countries in which RRI was involved in country-level work.

During the preparation period for the 2009 independent monitoring exercise, it became clear that internal conditions within PSS would make it impossible for the organization to monitor the coalition’s 2009 activities. In October 2009, RRG contracted Kevin Murray Strategic Consulting (KMSC) to act as the independent monitor of RRI’s 2009 activities. The project terms of reference summarize the primary tasks of the Independent Monitor as follows:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the RRI model and its outcomes, including constituencies for engagement
- Inform the coalition on how strategic activities are being implemented and make recommendations for adjustments and modifications in processes, structure and work programs
- Validate the RRI-generated information from the internal impact assessment and regular reporting
- Collect feedback from multiple sets of actors and constituents
- Assess that RRI is providing additionally to the on-going initiatives of partners and to the actions of other sets of development players in this and related sectors and political spaces

- Evaluate that the Initiative is cost-effective and synergistic, and avoiding duplication and free riders in the coalition
- Make an assessment of the impact of RRI work to date.

The current report is the primary product of that engagement.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Terms of Reference agreed to by RRG and KMSC establish the outlines of an ambitious monitoring exercise to take place over a period of two months at the end of 2009. Given the nature of the 2008 monitoring exercise, RRG designed the 2009 effort to focus on determining whether or not RRI is having the impact necessary to reach its ambitious goals. Simultaneous to the KMSC engagement, a separate team was reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding in preparation for a discussion of the document by coalition members in January 2010. KMSC was not asked to review the MOU or the actual internal functioning of the coalition.

In keeping with its expressed intent to gain a better sense of the impact of its activities, RRG structured a monitoring exercise that expanded the desk review of documents and observational activities undertaken in 2008 to include monitoring field visits to four countries in which the coalition is active. These visits included three Tier One countries (Cameroon, Guatemala and Nepal) and one Tier Two country (Ghana). All visits occurred during a three-week period spanning late October and early November 2009. The visit to Ghana was planned to coincide with the 2009 Regional Planning meeting there and was intended more as an opportunity for the monitoring team to observe that meeting than it was a trip to review country-level activities in Ghana.

In that context, KMSC designed the 2009 Independent monitoring exercise to include the following data collection activities:

- Review of all relevant RRI and RRG internal documents
- Review of a wide range of coalition publications and other communications products
- Preliminary interviews with RRG Senior Management
- Monitoring trips, as described above
- Attendance/observation at selected RRI 2009 planning activities (See above)
- In-depth interviews with selected RRG staff, partners, collaborators and donors (See Appendix I)
- In-depth interviews with selected external actors who, while independent from RRI, are in a position to offer a perspective on its accomplishments. (See Appendix I).

KMSC evaluated and analyzed the database resulting from its investigation using the insights of a number of evaluation methods including Logical Framework Analysis, the Composite Logic Model¹, Outcome Mapping², Participatory Learning³ and Capacity-Building Systems. In practice, however, the most useful methodological input came from a review of Real Time Evaluation (RTE) methodology, as employed by UNDP and a variety of other governmental and nongovernmental actors.⁴ RTE challenges the traditional view of monitoring as simply an information-gathering activity to provide the basis for an evaluation to take place at a later stage. RTE methodology suggests that it is possible, in a very compressed timeframe, to both monitor performance on short-term outcomes and identify “bottlenecks” and “red flags” that threaten future implementation. While stopping short of a general assessment of the effectiveness of core strategies or progress against global outcomes, RTE can provide useful information concerning progress toward annual outcomes and the efficacy of strategies used to achieve them. Most importantly, RTE recommendations can provide board and management with the basis for mid-term course corrections that can dramatically improve global outcomes. To date, RTE has been used primarily in the review of humanitarian operations, but its insights can also be applied with positive result to the rapid assessment of longer-term operations.

Given that 2009 was only the second year of RRG’s implementation under its Framework Proposal, the fact that the coalition’s internal monitoring framework remains a work in progress did not come as a surprise for KMSC. It is typical that the first external monitoring exercises within a new structure take place against the backdrop of an incomplete monitoring system. In the latter part of 2009, RRG made a number of efforts to collect information regarding coalition accomplishments. These included a senior management reflection on key coalition outcomes, as well as requests to both coalition partners and financial supporters to share their sense of the coalition’s primary impacts. While not a substitute for a system to collect information regarding progress toward intended outcomes, these reflections became important resources to the monitoring team.

According to the RRI Framework Proposal, the project’s overall monitoring and evaluation framework operates at three levels:

1. At the level of the RRI’s overall goal and the two global targets established to measure progress toward them;

¹ See http://www.innonet.org/index.php?section_id=6&content_id=637 for an application of the Composite Logic Model to the challenges of evaluating advocacy projects.

² For a short summary of the Outcome Mapping Approach, see <https://www.comminit.com/en/node/306114>

³ This article deals with a variety of approaches under the rubric of participatory learning evaluation. <http://learningforsustainability.net/evaluation/approaches.php>

⁴ For a review of the value of RTE in the assessment and strengthening of humanitarian operations, see <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2772> .

2. At the level of project outputs, as projected in the RRI Logical Framework, and the measureable indicators established for those outputs; and
3. At the level of activities carried out by partner organizations and the criteria that indicate whether or not those activities are moving the project toward desired outputs.

As a short-term exercise organized quickly to focus on implementation during a single year, the KMSC monitoring effort has had to be extremely selective in choosing its own analytical focus within this overall framework.

Using the data gathered through the activities listed above, KMSC provides the following reporting on RRI's 2009 implementation:

- A summary of implementation highlights in each program area, triangulating management reporting with information gained from other sources;
- Where possible, commentary on the alignment of the 2009 work with longer-term plans within the program area;
- Observations on the primary contextual factors (internal and external) affecting implementation in 2009;
- An analysis of the current state of RRG's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system; and
- Conclusion and Recommendations.

One contextual factor influenced RRI's 2009 implementation from the planning process onward to such an extent that it is mentioned here by way of introduction. This will avoid the need to refer to it repeatedly in each programmatic section.

RRI Finances: All planning processes for 2009 took place in the context of what turned out to be a highly optimistic sense of resource availability for the year. Between the time of the conclusion of the planning process and Board review of budget proposals, it became clear that RRI could support less than half of proposed activities. The real financial condition of the organization required that plans be scaled back in all program areas. Ultimately, actual implementation in 2009 represented a significant increase over 2008 levels, but the process of scaling back planned activities still conditioned RRI's work in 2009.

The timeline of this exercise made it extremely important that KMSC have unencumbered access to large amounts of information, including many internal documents. Deborah Barry, Director of Country Programs and the Project Manager for this engagement, and Pilar Siman, Manager for Coalition and Communications, worked wonders to make this information available, and to address any issue that arose for the monitoring team. They both did this while attending to a wide range of other activities. The rest of the members of RRG's Senior Management team made themselves fully available to the monitoring team, as did the other members of the RRG staff. Partners

and collaborators cooperated fully with KMSC field researchers and, where field visits coincided with important local planning activities, coordinators of those activities invited the active observation of KMSC researchers, without limitation. Finally, external actors almost always responded enthusiastically to an opportunity to talk about RRI. They shared freely their excitement about the work of the coalition as well as their sense of the challenges before it. The willingness of external stakeholders to reflect on the organization and the enthusiasm with which they offered their opinions provide important “intangible” data to any monitoring process.

III. RRI 2009 IMPLEMENTATION: INTRODUCTION

RRI’s Institutional and Business Arrangements stipulate four main areas of programmatic intervention:

1. Mobilizing a global commitment to policy and tenure reforms;
2. Generating new global strategic research on key policy and market transitions that affect livelihoods and sustainable forest use;
3. Supporting domestic policy reforms; and
4. Helping community networks to engage more effectively and leverage change in key regional and global dialogues and institutions.

The coalition has organized its program work to achieve success in each of these areas of intervention.

RRI has constructed two major program areas: **Global Programs** and **Country and Regional Initiatives**. Global Programs encompass work in areas of intervention 1,2 and 4, above, while Country and Regional Initiatives include the coalition’s work to achieve progress in area of intervention #3. Each of the two program areas is structured and planned in distinct ways.

Country and Regional Initiatives are organized and managed on a geographic basis, with regional programs in Africa, Asia and Latin America and country programs in each of the 20 countries where the coalition is active. RRG has created posts for a Director and a Coordinator for each region, based in Washington, as well as a Facilitator for each region, based in that region. Those positions have not yet been fully staffed. In early 2009, RRG expanded the role of Deborah Barry to include overall direction of the area of Country and Regional Initiatives.

In all aspects of its review of RRI Country and Regional Initiatives, KMSC needed to keep in mind the essential fact that RRI began at very different places in its different geographies of intervention. Specifically, the organizations that eventually became the RRI partners initiated their long history of close collaboration around work in Asia. From there, the collaborative thrust shifted to Africa and only much more recently has begun to take shape in Latin America. As a result, despite the fact that RRG staff has a great

deal of experience in Latin America and deep knowledge of the region, the collaborative impulse that is the lifeblood of RRI is much less developed there. This has required that RRG do significantly more foundational work building relationships with and among Latin American partners than was necessary in the other regions. The nature of RRI implementation is, therefore, quite different in that context and a learning-oriented monitoring process must take those differences into consideration.

RRI organizes and manages its Global Programs on a thematic basis. Washington-based RRG staff members drive the planning of the Global Programs and manage their implementation, although, during 2009, RRG intensified efforts to increase the involvement of partners in Global Program planning and to better articulate Global Programs with partner and collaborator initiatives at local and regional levels. Activities may be implemented by RRG staff, RRI Partner Organizations, external consultants or any combination of the three. In general, RRI is branded through its Global Programs, while Country and Regional Initiatives most often take place in the name of the implementing partners.

RRI Global Programs include:

Strategic Analysis: RRI is committed to producing several crisp analytical pieces each year in response to the global demand for quality analysis of sensitive issues related to rights and equity in the forest sector.

Network Support: In order to more effectively influence policy at all levels, indigenous communities and other representative bodies for forest communities must develop stronger networking and coordination capabilities. RRI actively supports the formation of such networks and their joint work to influence key policy bodies.

Communications: RRI is cognizant of the fact that its ability to package and disseminate its perspective through all available technologies is as important to its success as the content of the message, itself. The coalition, therefore, devotes special attention to strategies of dissemination.

Operations: A complex global coalition requires structures of operational coordination and governance. RRG is responsible for the overall coordination of the activities of the coalition and for supporting the governance role of the Board of Directors. Coordination also includes the management of a strategic response mechanism that provides the coalition with the ability to respond to unforeseen opportunities.

IV. COUNTRY AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Implementation of RRI Country and Regional Initiatives takes place on the basis of decisions made in a highly structured planning process undertaken in the countries and regions in which the coalition operates. Given the geographic reach of RRI country

programs, this planning requires a huge investment, in both human and financial resources by RRG, as well as RRI partners and collaborators. Each region has developed a plan for the period, 2009-2012 that orients annual planning in each individual year. These regional plans list desired outcomes for each region and strategic approaches to be taken in pursuit of these outcomes, but do not provide measures of success related to outcomes. This absence of clear indicators complicates the monitoring of progress by program area, and makes such monitoring less precise.

Each annual plan proposes a range of country and regional activities designed to move the coalition toward the goals of the five-year regional plans. In practice, while Partners do provide funding for some Country and Regional Initiatives projects, many of the activities proposed in the annual plan become requests for funding from RRG to carry out the activity. Financial support for these activities is subject to approval by the RRG Board of Directors, based on overall budgetary considerations. Proposed activities that RRI is unwilling or unable to fund generally fall out of the country and regional annual plans and are not implemented. The monitoring team is not aware of the extent to which the annual planning process includes a partner assessment of funding strategies other than the proposal to RRI.⁵ The country and regional planning cycle was fully implemented in late 2008 and again, with some significant improvements, in late 2009. The level of commitment to the RRI annual planning process is unprecedented in the experience of the Monitoring Team.

RRG staff members play an important facilitation role in the country and regional planning process, and, in 2009, invested more time in preparing themselves to bring an overall coalition perspective to national-level planning. That said, the planning process is designed so that, in theory, RRI partners drive program choices based on their own sense of what will best advance forest tenure rights in the regional context. Again, given that activities not funded by RRG are not implemented, the ultimate decisions regarding program choice reside in the RRG Board, which approves the final budget.

KMSC received and reviewed information on the full range of RRI's Country and Regional Initiatives. It is, however, best positioned to validate that information in relation to those countries in which it conducted field visits. KMSC field researchers observed local events and interviewed a range of local actors in Cameroon, Guatemala and Nepal. In addition, the same researcher that visited Cameroon attended the RRI Regional Planning Meeting in Ghana, but that visit was focused more on observation of the RRI regional gathering than it was on gathering and validating information related to RRI work in that country.

⁵ Such considerations did not play an important role within the 2010 country planning meeting in Cameroon.

A. Cameroon

RRG reports important advances in Cameroon during 2009, despite the resource shortfalls leading to the non-delivery of several planned activities. The Program Summary report points to progress in the areas of:

- Government reclassification of certain key forested areas and consultation of affected communities in regards to possible reclassification;
- Engagement with the government Working Group examining a possible revision of the 1994 Forestry Law and research of tenure options related to that legislation;
- Research on options for recognition of customary forest rights in both Permanent and non-Permanent Forest Estates; and
- Mapping of rights recognition in four regions and analysis of lessons learned from tenure reform.

Most importantly, RRI's strategic analysis capability injected new and important knowledge into the debate on the forest law.

This progress assessment is consistent with partner input and other sources of information. Coalition partners place particular emphasis on the role of RRI analysis in the debate on the forest law.

The Country Planning Team revised its plan based on the February 2009 decision by the government to consider revising the Forestry Law. The CPT met, revised the plan and resources were reallocated, regionally, to allow RRI partners to respond to this important opportunity by introducing the concept of customary communal tenure rights into the legislative discussion.

Among the most significant RRI activities taking place in Cameroon during 2009 was a regional activity—the Regional Conference on Forest Governance, Tenure and Enterprise held in Yaoundé in May. Despite the budgetary problems, RRI prioritized the allocation of resources for this event, and the investment proved to be a good one. The conference review noted that the event showed a surprising degree of consensus around the importance of community rights and the community enterprise agenda, two of RRI's core principles. The conference also provided a unique opportunity to educate government officials—through relatively open dialogue—regarding community tenure rights. Finally, the conference marked the emergence of AWNCMF as an important regional women's network promoting a gender perspective on forest tenure rights in Africa.

The emergence of AWNCMF represented the maturation of a process that has been developing within the RRI process in Central and West Africa since its initiation, and within the African community forestry sector, as a whole. An increasingly active and

visible group of women community leaders have been encouraging the community forestry sector to address more holistically the role of women in tenure reform and, in turn, the actual and potential effects of reform on women. They suggest that a reform agenda focused on timber and the rights to harvest timber may not fully and equally address the needs, the aspirations and the rights of all members of forest communities. This work has begun to have more visible effects within forest peoples' organizations, including RRI partner organizations.

The fact that the African Women's Network was formally established at an RRI-sponsored regional event suggests that these women see the RRI process as one that may hold promise for the emergence of their perspective. RRI and many of its partners have worked closely with these women and supported the development of their perspective, but the coalition has yet to develop a coherent perspective of its own on how to address gender issues within the reform movement. That remained an important element of unfinished business at the end of 2009. For 2010, RRI has committed itself to a "scoping" effort to clarify how its partners and collaborators are addressing the complex issues related to gender and tenure reform. The monitoring team hopes that this analysis process will provide the basis for an informed internal discussion about how RRI might support the efforts of partner organizations to fully integrate these concerns into their work, and how RRI might do the same at the global level.

The Yaoundé conference went significantly over budget and suffered from a variety of organizational obstacles, but was generally seen as a notable step forward for the positioning of community tenure rights within the continental debate on forest management across Central and West Africa.

Challenges

One challenge facing the work in Cameroon concerns the definition of the "community rights" for which RRI is advocating. In the absence of a clear definition of the rights being sought, some sense the presence of a "hidden agenda" of promoting a Western notion of individual property rights. RRI's focus on national legal reform assumes the existence of a functioning legal system, open to influence. This is certainly an open question in the case of Cameroon. In addition, the focus on national legal reform also has an opportunity cost: It diverts the coalition's attention from community issues, on the one hand, and livelihood concerns (RRI's ATEMs agenda, for example). Efforts to promote maximum coordination at the national level among RRI partners active in Cameroon have also shown uneven results. Coordination among RRI partners and collaborators improved in 2009, but this remains an area in which there is room for improvement. Finally, the initiative of African women to raise the issue of the gender content of forest tenure reform presents RRI and its partners with both a challenge and an important opportunity.

Areas for Possible Reinforcement

- While there is great appreciation for RRG's facilitation of the process in Cameroon, it might be possible to take steps to increase the responsibility of RRI partners and collaborators for the RRI process in Cameroon and extend the scope of their control over it. Occasional self-convening of partners and collaborators that did not rely on RRG facilitation might be one way to achieve this. Strengthening the local coalition in this way might also help address the obstacles to partner coordination at the national level.
- The work would benefit from more strategic analysis related to ATEMs, especially technical analysis of alternative tenure and marketing experiences.
- RRI should support existing efforts to develop a gender perspective on tenure reform in Cameroon and thereby encourage the full participation of women in all aspects of the coalition's work.
- Given the growing importance of the private sector in Cameroonian forestry, RRI needs a strategy for engagement with that sector.
- The process of contracting and disbursement should be reviewed. Efficiencies that shortened this cycle would increase the effectiveness of the coalition's financial support.

Conclusion

After the tumultuous 2009 planning process was complete, the Government of Cameroon let it be known that it was considering a revision of the Forestry Law, creating an important new opportunity for RRI and its partners. The coalition was able to come together to adjust its annual plan, reallocate and repurpose resources and implement activities in response to the opportunity. Also, when the process of re-classifying certain forested areas moved ahead, RRI found resources through its Strategic Response Mechanism to ensure that indigenous communities living on or near the reclassified tracts were consulted regarding the reclassification plans. Both of these adaptations by RRI are good examples of the agility and responsiveness that RRI holds as a cultural value. This is true regardless of whether or not the apparent political will to make positive change in the legal framework of forest governance in Cameroon turns out to be a reality,

As was the case in the other countries visited as part of this project, Cameroon participants in RRI see great value in the project. As a general rule, the closer those participants are to grassroots communities, the more they value the type of support and relationships offered by RRI. In particular, local actors see great value in the analysis provided by RRI and would like to find ways to disseminate the analysis more broadly within their country.

The highlight of RRI activities in Cameroon during 2009 was the international conference held there in May. While not without its shortcomings from an organizational

perspective, the event strengthened RRI and provided an extraordinary opportunity for direct dialogue with public officials in an environment that facilitated their participation. Given the participation of Cameroonian officials, the conference had a particularly powerful effect within the host country. At least in terms of its organizational value, the Yaoundé conference was a model of the sort of international event that RRI wants to be associated with.

Given the nature of the forest sector in Cameroon and RRI's history of relationships there, the country was a natural choice to be a Tier One priority country for RRI. The potential to change the Forestry Law in favor of communal tenure rights only further supports the wisdom of that choice.

B. Guatemala

As suggested above, RRI's work in Latin America is generally less developed than that taking place in other regions. Guatemala was chosen as a Tier One country largely out of a sense that there was an opportunity to build on the important experience of the community concessions movement led by ACOFOP in the northern Department of Petén. In addition, RRI saw the possibility to broaden the recognition of communal tenure rights implied by those community concessions. While some individuals within RRI have long experience with the community concessions movement, RRI's work in Guatemala dates only to the period after the formation of RRG in 2008. By comparison to budgetary commitments in other regions, RRI funding in Guatemala is quite modest, with \$80,000 approved to support work in the Highlands and in Petén during 2009.

According to RRI's own reporting, work in Guatemala during 2009 focused on the following themes:

- Assessment of the challenges to the community concessions model in Petén, and planning for integrated community tourism as an alternative economic opportunity in concessions areas;
- Building unprecedented cooperation between lowland and highland organizations and strengthening the advocacy capacity of indigenous organizations to influence the national tenure debate; and
- Analyzing the pilot areas chosen for the current land registry process, educating communities concerning the implications of the process and creating an advocacy network to achieve recognition of communal tenure in registration procedures.

The RRI report is consistent with information from documentary sources and in-country interviews. Important progress was made in each of these areas during 2009, although some of the work advanced slowly and a significant portion of the work has been re-programmed for completion in 2010.

Over the course of 2009, networking between highland and lowland organizations (Utz Che and ACOFOP) emerged from a series of meetings and internal consultations in each organization. While the coming together of the two organizations was at their own initiative, RRI played an important facilitating role and the coalition's presence created an indispensable enabling environment for the development of the key relationships that made this coordination possible. Once the basis for an ongoing relationship was established, those organizations formed the core of a newly-created National Forest Alliance (NFA) being promoted by the Global Forest Partnership. RRI was also active in the formation of the NFA, which is an important coordination of forest communities.

The networking experience between ACOFOP and Utz Che is still in its infancy and faces many future challenges, but its significance is undeniable. In the context of the extreme fragmentation of Guatemalan forest communities, the emergence of a strong, resilient national community forestry perspective could dramatically change the national advocacy environment on forest tenure issues. In addition to connecting forest communities to each other, RRI is also providing a bridge to a global movement of organizations that share a concern with forest tenure.

In Guatemala, as in Cameroon, RRI is quickly becoming recognized as a source of thoughtful analysis on both general forest tenure issues and REDD-related programs. RRI is also seen as having a "long-term, big picture perspective" that goes well beyond the effort to secure resources for forest communities.

Perhaps surprisingly, the work to influence the land registration process is moving forward more quickly than efforts to advocate for concessions policies more favorable to communal forest tenure. The ability of RRI collaborators to convene a broad range of community organizations allowed the coalition to play a key role in creating a space for fruitful dialogue with the both the Guatemalan government and the World Bank.

Challenges

The lack of openness to communal tenure options in key sectors of government forms a powerful obstacle to RRI's interest in changes in national concessions policy. This reflects a centuries old pattern of isolation of rural communities—especially indigenous communities—from access to the national political discourse and, therefore, the denial of the basic rights of those communities. Important changes in this regard have occurred since the end of Guatemala's internal armed conflict in the mid-1990s, but those changes have yet to have structural effect. Prospects for fundamental changes in the government perspective are not promising, at least in the short term.

Illegal loggers and drug traffickers have a powerful and growing presence in Guatemala's forested areas, including the so-called protected areas and in the areas of community concessions. The power—and, in some cases, predominance—of these illicit interests presents special challenges to efforts to achieve recognition of community

tenure rights and to the exercise of those rights, where they have been established. Even though RRI has made impressive progress in networking forest community organizations, the sector remains highly fragmented, which makes leveraging national policy influence difficult. Finally, in Guatemala, RRI faces the particular challenge of operating in a forestry sector populated by hundreds of local associations as well as many international actors. While those international actors include several organizations with which RRI has good relationships, none of RRI's international partner organizations is active in the country. Given RRI's overall approach of building its own country programs on the presence and visibility of its coalition members, the lack of such partners in Guatemala presents an important challenge to RRI's work.

Areas for Possible Reinforcement

1. There is demand for RRI's technical expertise on ATEMs in Guatemala, especially in the community concession areas. When the capacity exists to extend the geographical reach of the ATEMs work, Guatemala is an excellent candidate for that expansion;
2. When an issue is identified as a priority by collaborators, RRI should consider bringing collaborators together in issue-based work teams to strengthen accountability and implementation;
3. There is need for RRI to consider additional capacity-building work with collaborators, especially in strategic planning.
4. RRI could strengthen its country-level work in Guatemala by further developing the gender component of tenure rights perspective more fully and incorporate gender awareness into program planning; and
5. Once community forest networks are better consolidated, it will be necessary to help focus network attention on medium to long-term advocacy strategy.

Conclusion

Given resource limitations and the starting place of RRI's work in Guatemala, the coalition achieved important progress in 2009, even though several important activities were re-programmed for completion in 2010. The program choices resulting from the country planning process were well aligned with the intended outcomes projected in the 2009-12 workplan for Guatemala. Because that plan is somewhat less ambitious than the ones developed for both Cameroon and Nepal, our team has less of a sense of a need to "accelerate" implementation in 2010 and 2011 in order to achieve the desired outcomes. This sense is, of course, quite subjective, given that the 2009-12 country plans do not contain measures that could allow one to gauge progress toward its intended outcomes.

The one exception to this observation is work in the ATEMs area. While RRI collaborators in Guatemala are clearly engaged in the development of alternative forest enterprises, and RRI is engaged with that work, the connection to the analytical

perspective and technical expertise present in RRI's ATEMs program has yet to be made. If RRI has the capacity to engage on ATEMs with the program in Guatemala, that would be an important step forward for all sides.

Important implementation is certainly moving forward in Guatemala. We question, however, if RRI's original assessment regarding the opportunity presented in Guatemala remains accurate. In the context of the observations in the 2008 Independent Monitoring Report concerning the significance of Brazil and Mexico in the Latin American forest sector, the combination of challenges faced by RRI's work in Guatemala raises questions for the monitoring team about the country's classification as a Tier One country by RRI. This, of course, further raises the corresponding question of how, in a structure like the one adopted by RRI to date, the coalition is able to engineer shifts in its country and national program priorities. This question is addressed more fully later in this report.

C. Nepal

Given its large, well-organized community forest sector, and a long history of connection to key actors in RRI, Nepal was a natural priority country for RRI. In fact, one highly knowledgeable observer of the forestry sector in Nepal and of RRI made a comment that KMSC would not have expected to hear in either Cameroon or Guatemala. In all seriousness, he suggested that, "RRI needs Nepal more than Nepal needs RRI."

Perhaps the need is mutual. RRI went to Nepal based on a direct request from partners operating in Nepal. In addition to building on well-formed relationships, RRI also sensed that the democratic transition in Nepal and the apparent intent of government to re-write the country's Constitution offered important opportunities for the formal recognition of community tenure rights in ways that would favor the future development of the sector. Both InterCooperation and IUCN are active in Nepal, and RRI has two local partners working there, as well: FECOFUN and Forest Action.

RRI reports the following strategic accomplishments in Nepal in 2009:

- An analytical study on the community forestry sector's continuing inability to make progress in the strategic region of Terai and another on the investment policies of Community Forestry user groups (GFUGs);
- Ongoing social mobilization in Terai to influence government tenure positioning there and the consolidation of a national confederation of community associations in all 75 districts of the country; and
- Deepening work on the issue of Rights and Climate change, including the production of outreach materials on the issue for community groups, the successful organization of a side meeting on climate justice at the UN Forum on Forests 8 and a well-attended cross-regional community forestry workshop held in Nepal.

The monitoring team's visit to Nepal in November 2009 was able to validate this assessment in all respects, and collect and review a variety of perspectives on the program's progress there.

In 2009, RRI's work in Nepal included support for two important studies on the community forestry sector. One of these analyzed tenure rights within the sector and the continuing inability of the sector to gain a solid foothold in the economically important Terai region. The Terai region has special significance because of its high-quality forests, rich soils, value-added industrial production and proximity to India. Given the potential value of the forests in the region, the Nepalese government has been particularly reticent to cede control over those forests to the communities that reside there. To date, the community forest sector has made relatively little headway in the region, which also makes it worthy of both the strategic analysis work and the resources being provided by RRI for social mobilization there. The other study undertaken in Nepal looked at the investment policies of Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) and examined possible alternative investment approaches. Both of these studies should be published in early 2010.

In addition to those studies, RRI's agenda in Nepal included social mobilization of user groups to advocate for inclusion of community forest rights in the Nepalese constitution. In this area, some new user networks were formed and others strengthened, and organizing work among these networks clearly highlighted the opportunity posed by the constitutional deliberations. It is difficult, however, to discern whether or not this work rose to the level of the "massive social mobilization" called for in RRI's 2009-12 workplan. This work was to have a special focus on strengthening the very weak community forestry sector in the region of Terai. Incorporation of these communities into Nepal's community forestry movement remains a major challenge.

Finally, RRI prioritized building the community forest sector's awareness of the debates surrounding the implementation of UN-REDD, and the direct engagement of Nepalese representatives in those debates. FECOFUN published and distributed a DVD and a written handbook on climate change for forest groups and formed part of the Government of Nepal delegation to UNFF8, held in NY in April 2009. FECOFUN also participated actively in an important community forestry workshop in Nepal in September. While the event was not funded or convened by RRI, it provided an important opportunity for the dissemination of the coalition's perspective to a key audience.

At the regional level, RRI coalition members from Nepal actively participated in the regional community forestry event in New Delhi.

"The Community Forestry Conference in New Delhi had a greater profile in Nepal than anywhere else. RRI provided the [ed: a small amount of] funding and the

keynotes. The conference was excellent. The quality of the presentations was also outstanding. The level of engagement from people from Latin America and Africa really added to the discussions and to the sense that this was an international conference. The Nepalese government really appreciated that RRI has a global approach. “

These activities are clearly aligned with the outcomes projected in the 2009-12 plan for Nepal, and all data sources suggest that significant progress was made on planned activities in 2009. Implementation, however, will need to be accelerated significantly in 2010 and 2011 if RRI is to make a serious approach at the ambitious outcomes projected for delivery by the end of 2011. This is particularly true in the areas of social mobilization related to the constitutional debate and realizing livelihood benefits through sustainable management of forest enterprise and markets.

As in both Cameroon and Guatemala, RRI's partners and collaborators in Nepal most clearly perceive the coalition's value in the analysis of tenure issues that it is able to provide, especially analysis related to tenure and climate change. In Nepal, however, participants in RRI also express a high level of appreciation for the coalition's ability to facilitate the insertion of local actors in global debates, such as the debate regarding how the developed world's resources can most effectively be applied to the challenge of slowing the release of carbon from the world's forests.

“The most useful thing RRI has done is get a position for civil society onto UNSC committee, this has been extremely useful. Within REDD, there needs more talk about equitable distribution and at what level.”

Two observers of RRI from Nepal, one external and one representing a partner organization, suggest that RRI is seen there as developing a new model of donor-recipient relations that emphasizes horizontality and reciprocity, while favoring collective strength over individual actions. The coalition has developed this positive image—at least among these observers—despite doing everything in its power not to be seen as a donor. Such comments must be balanced against others that express some degree of uncertainty about how decisions regarding the distribution of resources are made within the coalition.

In addition, RRI has built its presence in Nepal on the operating principles of agility and responsiveness.

“RRI has been useful for moving issues forward because they are quite nimble. They maintain a global reach through various partners, collaborators, and networks. For example, China increased their demand for timber and everybody wanted to know how to get a detailed understanding through forestry, consumer markets, trend data, etc., RRI was able to pull this together through universities,

organizations, and looking at buying trends, which led to putting the study together in a short amount of time that has been pretty useful.”

Perhaps most importantly, RRI has contributed to the efforts of traditionally marginalized people to develop a voice. The community forestry sector has significant strength in the more marginalized, high-altitude areas of the country and RRI supports efforts to build upon this strength by amplifying the voice of forest communities in those areas.

“The impact of RRI may be difficult to assess. I may not be able to say, ‘this is from RRI.’ I think, however, I can say my strength has increased because I am working closer with my partners, not at the level of figures, but at the level of confidence. When IC, FECOFUN and IUCN come together they are stronger. Then if we put something together, the government is less likely to tear us down.”

RRI has invested in building a strong coalition in Nepal with a high degree of collaboration among partners and collaborators. Coalition members have spent time getting clear on the strengths of the various members and coalition members have assumed roles within the group that reflect those strengths. RRI has brought to the coalition a focus on evidence-based advocacy work. This has slowed the process in some ways, but has generally increased the quality of the work and, over time, is likely to provide enhanced leverage. This has simultaneously brought researchers closer to community-level advocacy and increased their knowledge of and appreciation for that work.

Challenges

Success for the community forestry agenda in Nepal ultimately depends on the sector’s ability to influence leading actors in the Ministry of Forestry and other key government posts. From that perspective, the weakness and inertia that reigns in the Ministry is a serious obstacle to progress. In addition, despite the degree of collaboration achieved by RRI, there remain important divisions within the community forestry sector that limit the sector’s ability to project a unified voice on key issues such as constitutional reform. There is limited experience in policy advocacy within the sector and, as a result, little capacity to develop a strategic perspective on influence strategies. The combination of institutional inertia in government and the lack of long-term influence strategies has limited policy reform results.

“...we have had a lot of success in community forestry here in Nepal, but in regards to institutional reforms, we haven’t moved an inch in 20 years.”

The current opportunity around the drafting of the new constitution stands as a test of the sector’s ability to overcome these limitations, and RRI is well-positioned to lend a hand.

The inability of the sector to advance significantly in Terai is also a major liability. Finally, the economic base of the community forestry sector is extremely tenuous, as it is in most places, and work on alternative enterprise models is undeveloped.

Areas for Possible Reinforcement

- RRI should continue to strengthen its country planning process, preserving the separation between planning and governance decisions and strengthening each.
- The country initiative should take steps to increase the transparency of decision making regarding partner/collaborator choice and financing of RRI activities.
- RRI should work to extend the ATEMs framework to Nepal in an effort to bridge poverty reduction and community forestry strategies.
- Increased efficiency in the coalition contracting system would help strengthen partner and collaborator implementation in Nepal.

Conclusion

Nepal is well-classified by RRI as a Tier One, priority intervention country. Overall, RRI's implementation in Nepal in 2009 was quite successful and well-aligned to both country strategies and RRI's overall desired outcomes. A significant part of the work was correctly oriented toward strengthening the community forestry sector and enhancing the ability of the sector to influence the drafting of the national constitution. This is an historic opportunity for community forestry in Nepal.

While the quality of implementation was high, resource limitations meant that implementation was probably inadequate to keep the coalition on track to meet its ambitious goals for the period of the framework proposal. To reach those goals, implementation will need to be accelerated in 2010 and 2011. Achieving that increased implementation will require addressing resource, capacity and process issues. RRI has at least temporarily addressed the resource issue through its resource development efforts and issues of RRI/RRG capacity are addressed elsewhere in this report. Our discussions in Nepal suggest that there is reason for RRI to review some of its internal decision-making procedures from the perspective of clarifying, to the extent possible, decisions regarding choices of partners and collaborators and regarding allocation of funds.

D. General Comments: Country and Regional Initiatives

There is great diversity among the country initiatives reviewed as part of this project, but certain observations pertain across all three situations to the point that they may provide the basis of generalizations about RRI country level work.

1. RRI's local partners and collaborators generally hold the coalition in high esteem and see value in their participation. National partners and local collaborators express particularly high regard for the support provided to them by RRI.
2. Coalition participants especially value two aspects of RRI's contribution: (1) The high quality analysis of global issues related to forest rights and tenure, especially the emerging perspective and analysis on the relationship between climate change and the tenure rights of forest communities (2) RRI's ability, through exchanges and other collaboration strategies, to connect them with outside actors and networks for learning purposes and as possible channels of policy influence.
3. The financial problems faced by RRI in 2009 limited implementation across all country programs meaning that implementation will need to be accelerated in order for RRI to stay on track with the ambitious goals of its framework proposal. That said, progress was made in each country that probably reaches the somewhat vague standard of "substantive, demonstrable progress in the majority of Tier One countries" called for in RRI's "Strategic Priorities for 2009."
4. Country-level implementation faces issues of capacity, as well as resources and RRI must continue to address the capacity needs of key partners and collaborators.
5. RRI's country and regional planning process for 2009 represented an improvement over the previous year, but there remains room for further improvement. RRG facilitation is critical to the planning meetings, although partners and collaborators express the desire for additional, self-facilitated and organized network gatherings.
6. RRI possesses a core competency related to the successful convening of targeted events that bring together diverse actors to discuss innovative approaches to forest management issues. Events such as the ones held in New Delhi and Yaoundé, while sometimes costly and demanding on RRG staff (the co-sponsoring partner bore the entire cost of the new Delhi event), are great opportunities for RRI to broaden its networks and promote multi-sectoral discussions of its perspective.
7. RRI's partners clearly provide significant budgetary support for RRI's Country and Regional Initiatives (according to RRG, this collaboration amounted to \$982,000 in 2009). That said, there is room for improvement in this regard. There are cases in which the country workplans become the set of in-country activities that RRI is able to support from its budget. This notion of coalition work as activities funded by RRI severely limits RRI's implementation capacity, especially in a year such as 2009 when RRI faced its own financial shortfalls. The monitoring team did not investigate, in any depth, the nature of partner financial support to RRI where it occurs, or the obstacles to such collaboration where it does not take place. We do note, however, that such collaboration is a key ingredient in the success of this part of the RRI program. For the year 2010, we note that one-half of partner financial collaboration is budgeted to occur in a single country (Indonesia).

8. Partners perceive RRI's planning/contracting/disbursement cycle as unnecessarily long and burdensome, and they seek changes that make the system more efficient.

V. GLOBAL PROGRAMS

As suggested above, RRI's Global Programs are analysis, advocacy, capacity building, communications and coordination activities managed by the Washington, DC-based staff of RRG. As in the case of Country and Regional Initiatives, Global Program activities are planned through an annual process culminating in the Board budget review.

Since most of the work planned as Country and Regional Initiatives generally end up as contractual commitments between the partner(s) and RRG, plans are generally expressed and managed as outcomes and activities for the sake of straightforward accountability. Global Program activities are implemented in three ways:

- Directly by RRG staff;
- Jointly, by RRG and Partners/Collaborators; and
- By Partners/Collaborators on a contract basis.

In all cases, RRG oversees the implementation.

These activities are planned and reported on with somewhat less formality than those that take place within Country and Regional Initiatives. This informality allows RRG to be highly flexible in the implementation of Global Programs, cancelling activities and adding others in response to management's reading of external conditions. This flexibility makes RRG a much more agile structure, but it complicates the work of monitoring program outcomes. The 2010 Global Program planning process included a clearer shared commitment to planning to specified outcomes.

As in the case of Country and Regional Initiatives, RRI's Global Program implementation emerges from an annual planning process that takes place in the final quarter of each calendar year. Staff involved in each program develops proposed annual plans, with budget requirements, and those plans are reviewed by management, amended as necessary and collated into a Global Programs plan and budget that is eventually submitted to the Board of Directors for review.

Until 2009, the primary articulation mechanism between Global Programs and Country and Regional Initiatives was the participation of senior management in each process. Those managers, along with regional coordinators, consulted with Global Programs staff on overall organizational priorities before the beginning of the Country and Regional planning cycle, and brought that perspective on priorities to their facilitation of the planning process. Based on a sense that stronger articulation was needed, in 2009 the

pre-planning consultation process was formalized and RRG added a Global Program meeting that brought partner representatives and regional facilitators to Washington to analyze and comment on Global Program proposals before they went before the Board.

A representative of the Monitoring Team was able to observe that meeting and found it to be an impressive first attempt to achieve closer integration of RRI's two major program areas. We question, however, if such a meeting adds value proportional to its cost if most of the partner representatives present are the same ones who sit on the RRG Board of Directors.

In unearthing the highlights of 2009 Global Program work, we have triangulated the results of an annual review meeting conducted by senior management in December 2009. That meeting summarized the highlights of 2009 implementation against 2009 strategic priorities established in late 2008.

A. Strategic Analysis

Prominent among the core competencies of RRG is the ability to synthesize information concerning the forest sector from a variety of research sources and then package the information in forms useful to a wide range of stakeholders. The existence of a global demand for such analysis is one of the primary assumptions that lay behind the design of RRI.

Given the need to focus its strategic analysis efforts, RRI identified four themes around which it would orient its analytical work. These are:

- Realizing Rights
- Rights and Climate Change
- Alternative Tenure and Enterprise Models (ATEMs)
- Rights in Conflict

Based on conditions of capacity and demand, RRI has decided to put work on the "Rights in Conflict" theme on hold indefinitely.

The first Independent Monitoring Report addressed these as cross-cutting themes relevant to the entirety of RRI's programs. RRI did not act on the recommendation that they be treated in this way, which would mean that all program priorities would be viewed through the lens of these themes. Whether or not they are relevant to program choice across the entire organization, these themes clearly have significance for RRI's work beyond the Strategic Analysis component of Global Programs.

In 2009, the Rights and Climate Change theme was clearly the most active area of RRI's strategic analysis. During 2008, RRI made a conscious choice to synthesize and develop existing research to clarify the close connection between strategies to reduce carbon

emissions and the tenure rights of forest-dependent people around the world. This analysis took the form of the paper *Foundations of Effectiveness (FfE)*, which was used to great positive effect at RRI's Oslo conference in October 2008 and at COP14 in Poznan, Poland in December of that year.

This year, RRI has effectively built upon the foundation created by the 2008 analysis. The FfE analysis has been widely disseminated and discussed within RRI's Country and Regional Initiatives and the networks in which those initiatives sit. Given the level of interest in the understanding how REDD implementation will influence local work on forest tenure, the RRI analysis has been timely and extremely well-received. The theme of rights and emissions reduction was addressed intensively at the conferences held in Yaoundé and New Delhi and at the Megaflorestais gathering in Vancouver, BC in October. Over the course of the year, FfE has become a standard reference in discussions of Rights and Climate Change, and RRI has recorded an increasing volume of citations of the paper in a variety of languages.

Less progress was made on planned analysis of the legal terms of carbon ownership and the impact of evolving definitions of carbon ownership on the rights claims of forest-dependent peoples. Two experienced researchers were contracted to complete this study, but neither was able to deliver in the agreed upon timeline. Any organization commissioning analysis on the scale that RRI is working on will always encounter occasional problems with external delivery. In this case, RRG will not re-commission a study along these lines, but will incorporate consideration of trends in carbon ownership into various studies being undertaken in 2010.

Much more importantly, RRI brought the FfE analysis to key people in structures such as UN-REDD and the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and engaged in dialogue around the implications of the findings. There remains a great danger that REDD implementation will fail to incorporate a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tenure rights and emissions, but these rights issues are now clearly on the agenda. A range of external observers acknowledge the role of RRI and its analysis in an important change in the profile of the rights debate within UN-REDD.

2009 ended with COP15 in Copenhagen. While RRI was represented at the conference, RRG made a strategic decision not to invest major resources in a high-profile RRI presence there. RRG prioritized work to engage with COP15 negotiators in the run up to the event, informing them of the key points of the FfE perspective in hopes of influencing the positions they would take with them to Copenhagen. In addition, the coalition also facilitated the participation of RRI partners at Copenhagen, most notably through the Global Alliance of Forest Communities. Several other RRI partners also participated in the conference and undertook tenure and rights-related messaging in their own names.

RRI partners and RRG staff discussed this decision in some depth at the November Global Programs meeting. While partners understood the strategic choice made by RRG, some thought that it was important that RRI and its message have a more visible presence at the event. It was not clear that RRG had consulted with partners in any way regarding its plans for Copenhagen. The discussion led to a decision to at least explore the possibility of RRG organizing an informal RRI event in Copenhagen. Then, just as that decision was about to be formalized, one partner representative relayed a message from her home office that her organization would not be in favor of RRI having such presence in Copenhagen, and a second relayed a message from her organization raising questions about some of the core messaging that was being considered for the event. Those present, nonetheless, decided to go through with exploration of a possible event in Copenhagen but, in the end, logistical considerations made such an event impossible.

The entire discussion ended up being moot, in important ways, but it offered a fascinating window on the inner workings of RRI, especially the relation between RRG and RRI's partner organizations. We are not aware that RRG or RRI, as a whole has yet had the opportunity to evaluate its participation in COP15.

RRI's work around Rights and Climate Change highlights the degree of integration that characterizes RRI's programs. In this case, RRI's Strategic Analysis work drove a series of activities involving communications and advocacy programs, as well as a majority of the coalition's Country and Regional Programs. The success of the effort, which is still in an early stage of development, was dependent, first of all, on the quality of the analysis, but also on the abilities of the aforementioned programs to work together in a highly collaborative fashion. A monitoring approach focused on individual programs can easily miss the power of this aspect of the RRI organizational culture.

Climate change and the REDD response promise to change the rules of the game in the forest sector, in good and in potentially harmful ways. RRI must fully engage and influence this process without losing focus on the other lines of work that are also crucial to its mission. In 2009, while work on the Rights and Climate Change theme was certainly the strongest aspect of RRI's Strategic Analysis commitment, important work was also undertaken on both Realizing Rights and ATEMs.

In the area of Realizing Rights, RRI produced briefs on national experiences of implementing tenure reform in Brazil and Bolivia. The three Brazil briefs did not meet expectations, but the one on the Bolivian experience was more complete. Another brief regarding reform in Mozambique is nearing completion. RRI is emphasizing strong technical content in that brief. The review of these briefs affirmed that they need to be both technically rigorous and understandable, which is a difficult combination to achieve. The first audience for the briefs is the national audience, but they must also be accessible to external audiences. The joint RRI-CIFOR research project did occur and RRI deems that the results will be very useful for future analysis work. The results of the studies are available on CD-ROM, but it is not clear that active dissemination and

facilitated discussion of the results have occurred to the degree intended. Planned analysis work on “rethinking regulations” did not get underway in 2009. That work will be taken up in 2010, along with analysis of the gender component of implementing tenure reform. The 2008 Independent Monitoring Report states,

“A draft policy statement on rights is to be prepared...The IM team hopes that what emerges is something that pushes the envelope, something more than just the least common denominator that can be agreed to by the disparate members of the partnership...”

The need for such a statement was also discussed at the November 2009 Global Program meeting, and the need to clarify the content of RRI’s rights perspective in Cameroon also surfaced in discussions there. Progress on “a draft policy statement on rights” was not made in 2009, although a structured discussion of the content of RRI’s outlook on rights is planned for 2010. This may not result in a “policy statement” but some sort of clarifying statement is a high priority and has been prioritized by RRG.

In the ATEMs area, RRI made progress on a synthesis of the experience in Africa to date and produced a series of briefs on work at the national level in Liberia, Ghana and Cameroon. The program was also very active around the Yaoundé conference and engaged with a team from the University of British Columbia to prepare a major research project on Africa.

Conclusions

RRI’s Strategic Analysis program was clearly very active in 2009, and accomplished a great deal, especially in the area of Rights and Climate Change. Key deliverables resulted from work on nearly all of the priority outcomes identified by RRG and affirmed by the Board of Directors in January 2009. That said, some lack of precision in the description of the deliverables makes it difficult to determine if some deliverables were fully attained.

The 2009 Strategic Priorities include a deliverable related to the establishment of a “country data and target tracking system” that would be concluded and made available on the Web during 2009. RRI’s website does an excellent job of presenting the findings of its 2008 study of global forest tenure trends, *From Exclusion to Ownership*, but the proposed tracking system has yet to appear.

Ambitious deliverables projected in the areas of ATEMs and Realizing Rights did not fully materialize, even though important work did occur in each of those themes. It is not clear to the Monitoring Team that RRG has the installed capacity to deliver the kinds of results promised across all analysis themes in 2009. This question of capacity will be addressed more fully in the report’s conclusions and recommendations.

B. Network Support

Another key assumption behind the concept of RRI is that critical decisions regarding forest management are made at the national and, increasingly, at the global level. If they are to influence these national and global decisions in favor of the tenure rights of communities, forest-dependent people and their allies must overcome the challenge of extreme fragmentation.

RRI identifies support for the construction and consolidation of content-driven networks as a core strategy to address this challenge in the forest sector. The content driving these networks is the core rights and tenure perspective of RRI. In keeping with this challenge, RRI—itsself, a network—provides organizing support through RRG to a remarkable array of networks, from a global alliance of grassroots organizations representing forest communities—The Global Alliance of Forest Communities (GAFC)—to a group of senior forestry officials from the governments of some of the world’s most heavily forested countries (Megaforestais). The implementation of this strategy requires strategic networking capacity. This capacity—another core competency of RRG—is the ability to identify and convene diverse groups with shared interests for purposes of improved communication, mutual education and the advancement of a larger, shared purpose.

RRI has conceived of its network support activities in three categories:

- Global networking to bring RRI’s perspective to the global stage;
- Regional policy networks driven by RRI engagement at the country level; and
- Thematic networks addressing what RRI views as key strategic issues such as Gender, Indigenous Rights, ATEMS, and Rights and Climate Change.

In 2009, RRI made progress in all of these areas, with more visible results at the global level. The coalition has established strong networks: The Global Alliance of Forest Communities; Civil Society Advisory Groups to The International Tropical Timber Organization (CSAG) and the UN-REDD process (CC); and Megaforestais. In the cases of CSAG and Megaforestais, RRI was instrumental in forming the networks and continues to play a key facilitating role.

RRI also sees its work of facilitating learning exchange experiences among forest communities from different areas. Discussions with RRI partners and collaborators certainly suggest that they see such exchanges as an important component of the value added to their work by participation in coalition, and RRI acknowledges the demand for these exchange experiences. While such exchanges were not identified as a strategic deliverable in 2009, several occurred and more are planned for 2010. In addition, conferences like the ones held in Yaoundé and New Delhi can also serve this purpose, depending on how they are organized.

RRI remains committed to working on the formation of regional policy networks and thematic networks on its strategic analysis themes, although progress in these areas was not highly evident in 2009.

Conclusion

RRI's delivery of network support in 2009 exceeded projections in the board-approved 2009 priorities document. Given the demands of energy and resources implied by these commitments, RRG management has acknowledged that it must "always be reviewing which to support and how they strategically contribute to our mission." In the context of what the Monitoring Team perceives as an overall strain on RRI's human and financial resources, this review process is destined to become more important over time.

C. Communications

RRG has acknowledged that communications—for RRI, the use of all appropriate technologies to achieve the strategic dissemination of the coalition's perspective and mission-driven messaging to priority constituencies—is not one of its core competencies. Acknowledging this, RRI has also noted that effective strategic communications—both internal and external—is absolutely essential to the achievement of its mission. In response to this challenge, RRG has developed a communications strategy, begun to build the internal capacity to implement that strategy and engaged external communications expertise, where necessary. To its credit, RRI is attempting to implement a single, integrated approach to the challenges of both external message dissemination and internal communication among coalition secretariat, members and collaborators.

The communications capacity of partners is also a primary interest of RRI, as reflected clearly in the Priority Outcomes for 2009. This theme was scarcely developed in the area of Key Deliverables/Indicators of Achievement, except for a reference to assessment of partner requests for communications capacity building. Such an assessment was carried out in 2009, with the primary conclusion being that there were "very few" such requests.

In its 2009 assessment of progress on strategic priorities, Senior Management suggested that the focus in 2009 was on building RRG's own communications capacity, and that it would be impossible to build partner capacity without first building RRG's own capacity. They felt that RRG would be in a better position to address partner needs in 2010. The theme also came up in the Global Program meeting, with at least one partner emphasizing the capacity needs of RRI's national partners. As an initial response, RRG agreed to convene communications professionals from some of RRI's larger partners to consider, among other issues, this question of partner capacity.

This is an important discussion that needs more careful attention by RRG. There exists a great body of experience in communications capacity-building programs much of which relates closely to RRI's situation.

As suggested by Senior Management, over the course of 2009 RRG added staff communications capacity in the form of a Communications and Coalition Manager as well as other staff with the ability to contribute to communications products. Engagement of external communications expertise has also added communications capacity. Additional translation capacity resulted in several new translations of core communications products. The demand for translations of RRI publications continues to grow steadily.

As a new coalition, RRI continues to struggle for visibility and name recognition. The co-existence of RRI and RRG, along with the unclear boundaries between the two creates an additional branding challenge. RRI implemented a significant number of branding activities—in the form of media outreach, public presentations and proactive dissemination of RRI/RRG's analysis—during 2009. To date, however, the coalition has not molded those activities into a coherent campaign to brand RRI. This may be due to the difficulties inherent in the RRI-RRG relationship, but the Monitoring Team also sensed a certain tension within the coalition concerning branding, with not all partners equally committed to aggressive branding of the coalition. RRI's communication strategy should directly address the issue of branding.

RRG continued its collaboration with Burness Communications in 2009. This important relationship has resulted in both enhanced media visibility for RRI and quality information concerning overall media exposure. This model of outsourcing key communications tasks is one that may have additional value for RRI.

In terms of publications, the *Quarterly Update* continues to be the primary periodical publication of RRI. It was delivered in English, Spanish and French, on schedule, during all four quarters of 2009. Distribution numbers have grown impressively since launch, but that growth came mostly from the integration of other internal lists into the distribution list. Except for that internal injection of names, the English audience for the newsletter has remained essentially flat. Most notably, viral expansion of readership has been very limited as few readers are forwarding it to their contacts. Readership has grown more quickly for the Spanish and French editions, but the absolute number of foreign-language subscribers remains modest. The long-term marketing strategy for this important publication is not clear.

RRG launched a new product, *Tenure Trends* in November, and it was distributed to *Quarterly Update* readers and other internal contacts. The first issue received positive feedback from a number of readers, and seems to fill a unique niche in the field. We are not aware of a marketing strategy for this promising product.

Rather than longer, topical analysis publications, the 2009 communications approach focused on short, 4-page policy briefs, of which 34 were published. According to RRG, among these were:

- 16 ATEMS briefs analyzing different community forest enterprise experiences;
- 8 country-level policy briefs on tenure reform published cooperatively with CIFOR;
- 5 technical briefs analyzing the assumptions behind national level REDD implementation strategies; and
- 3 briefs summarizing the operational lessons of efforts to strengthen tenure reform in Bolivia, Brazil and Mozambique.

These are used to support the reform efforts of partners and collaborators and as outreach materials to new constituencies. In terms of proactive distribution, in 2009 RRG undertook a proactive distribution of RRI publications to libraries in the United States. The coalition does not currently have a plan for monitoring or evaluating its distribution activities.

The RRI websites continue to be important communications vehicles for the coalition and primary tools for the distribution of publications. The Monitoring Team judges the sites to be visually effective, user friendly and well-organized. All of the public documents sought by the team were present and easily accessible. Time-sensitive analysis is frequently updated, but some outdated material stays on the site longer than might be necessary. During the monitoring team's discussion with participants in Country and Regional Initiatives, several people, including RRI partners, mentioned that it is a problem for them to access publications that are available exclusively as PDFs on the website. If RRI prioritizes use of its publications in the countries where it is active, then it must address this important access problem.

The use of Google Analytics provides RRG access to a large amount of detailed information concerning website use. The information is collected and reviewed occasionally, but there is no consistent reporting or evaluation of this information. Since the website launched in March 2008, steady growth in usage has been driven by marketing of the site at major conferences and other outreach events, and by media coverage of the release of major new RRI publications. Unique visitors to the English site grew by 54% during the period March-December 2009 over the same period in 2008. Total page views grew by 31% over the same period. This is consistent, but not explosive growth.

As recently as five years ago, "new media" referred primarily to Web and e-mail communications strategies, but today those are considered mainstream strategies. New media in 2010 refers increasingly to the use of social networking and mobile communications strategies to advance missions of all sorts. By the end of 2009, RRI was

considering experimentation with social networking strategies, but had not yet moved decisively in that direction.

Internal communications is always a major challenge to coalitions such as RRI. If the coalition is to create productive synergies among its members and collaborators, then each must be aware of what the other is doing. In addition, where a coalition secretariat exists and has its own programmatic role, very good lines of communication must exist between that secretariat and other actors within the coalition.

In 2009, RRG continued to strengthen its internal communications mechanisms and hired a staffperson to be responsible for coordinating communications among coalition members (among other tasks). The main instruments of internal communications are: direct conversation on key issues, coalition meetings, the RRI Quarterly Newsletter and the coalition intranet.

Recognizing that RRG is making an effort to communicate, some partners suggest that insufficient attention is being given to the internal communications necessary to facilitate maximum coordination of partner and collaborator activity at all levels. Partners report not finding out about activities that they might have been able to support in some way, or finding out about things too late for them to respond to the opportunity to contribute.

Conclusion

As audacious as RRI's 2009 Strategic Priorities were in the areas of Country and Regional Initiatives and Strategic Analysis, they were conservative in the communications area. Priority outcomes were stated in highly general terms and deliverables did not take into account the growth in capacity that actually occurred. Not surprisingly, RRI delivered much more than was committed in communications, but this is only part of the story.

In the early stages of its development, RRG/RRI represented the classic case of a network whose communications footprint was demonstrably smaller than its programmatic foot. That is to say, it was doing more than it was able to communicate to its target audiences, so it was chronically unable to reap the public relations significance of its truly outstanding program. In a relatively short time, the organization has worked hard to change that situation. It has added communications capacity, prudently engaged external capacity and consciously heightened the communications sensitivity of all RRG staff.

The result has been a growing communications reach as evidenced by the increased distribution of RRI publications, the adoption of RRI analysis and the use of RRI data across a range of private and public forest-sector organizations and the emergence of RRI as a credible source for media reports, notably reports addressing issues of climate change and the world's forests. But as the communications footprint has grown, so, too,

have the quality and scope of the program that it must describe and promote. The Monitoring Team still senses an organization where communications struggles to catch up with the opportunities created by its program.

The same sense of challenge also applies to work on internal communications. Considerable effort is expended on internal communications, but RRG staff and some coalition partners see room for improvement in this area. RRI clearly understands the importance of both internal and external communications, as well as the need to integrate the two areas of activity, but more strategic attention to this area appears to be an important priority.

D. Operations

In the early stages of RRI implementation, Communications and Operations were conceived as a single Global Program. By early 2009, however, the decision had been made to treat each as a separate program. Operations are understood to include the coordination of all RRI activities (including those implemented by RRG), support of the governance work of RRG's board of Directors, and management of the Strategic Response Mechanism.

During 2009, the operational demands on RRG increased dramatically over 2008, a year when administrative and other systems were already overstretched. The Monitoring Team wonders what would have happened had financial constraints not enforced a constriction of activities and, hence, operational activities, on the organization.

As has been suggested throughout the report, in 2009 RRI internal planning processes in 2009 (the planning process for 2010 implementation) were improved in a variety of ways over what happened in 2008. The introduction of a Global Programs Meeting in November 2009 is only the most obvious of those improvements. Specifically:

- Time was invested to ensure stronger collective construction of strategic analysis as the core activity on which program is developed;
- Additional staff was in place and trained to guarantee more effective convening, easier logistics, etc.
- Work was done to improve the content and user-friendliness of information systems for planning and program management.

These changes were all welcome; few of these changes, however, served to streamline planning. Instead, the changes tended to make planning more comprehensive and hence, labor intensive.

Three productive board meetings occurred during the year, and, more importantly, the process of board development continued, with the active contribution of board members to organizational outcomes expanding in a number of areas. For example, one

new member provided invaluable insights on private sector timber operations and access to critical contacts within commercial networks and organizations. Others made essential contributions to resource development activities and one member led the process of review of the MOU that governs internal relations within RRI.

Despite the need to restrain budgetary growth, contracts executed between RRG and implementing organizations in 2009 increased by nearly 20% over similar figures for 2008. Additional training and support from RRG administrative leadership helped increase the efficiency and the accuracy of the drafting of contracts.

Operational capacity increased in 2009 via the introduction of new administrative systems and some added operational staff. The key question for RRG Operations is whether or not capacity is growing as fast as the operational requirements of a very active coalition. This has been an issue in the past, but may become more of an issue in 2010 as RRI's budget (and, hence, its operational requirements) are projected to grow by nearly 50%, while growth in operational capacity remains much more modest. We return to this issue in the Conclusions and Recommendations sections of this report.

RRI's Strategic Response Mechanism (SRM) provides a mechanism for the coalition to respond to unforeseen opportunities or emergencies. The flexibility with which annual plans are treated, at least at the Global Program level, means that RRG can generally be quite responsive to opportunities in its implementation, but the SRM serves to provide even greater responsive capability. RRG develops SRM profiles and forwards them to the Executive Committee of its Board for approval. The budget restrictions in 2009 meant that a relatively small amount of funds (\$124,000) was available for SRM grants. In all, the Executive Committee approved 4 SRM proposals for a total of \$110,871. Approvals included:

- Consultations with indigenous and other resident communities in Cameroon regarding the planned re-classification of certain forest tracts;
- A side event on rights and climate change organized by FECOFUN at UNFF8 in New York in May; and
- Research on emerging forest tenure trends in China, especially reports of accelerating land "grabs."

Both RRG staff and partners consulted for this report seem to think that the SRM is working well, but that it could be more aggressively promoted and used. RRG has been hesitant to promote the program widely because of the limited availability of funds. In 2010, however, the quantity available to the program will quadruple, so RRG will need to act more aggressively to see that proposals emerge for the use of these funds on strategic activities.

Conclusion

Given the number of people dedicated to operational leadership and support at RRG, the productivity and the quality of the administrative output is extraordinary. The Monitoring Team concludes its research wondering if there is adequate operational capacity in place to sustain and increase this level of output.

The consequences of inadequate operational support for the success of mission-driven organizations are well known. Over time, lack of operational capacity will impact staff morale and the delivery of key organizational outcomes. In the early stages of this process, dedicated operational staff become overstretched and operational responsibilities become one more demand on the time and energy of senior management and other program staff.

Remarkably, the Monitoring Team was not able to identify any clear cases of major administrative/operational bottlenecks significantly limiting or conditioning implementation in 2009, although we assume that such situations existed. The only possible exception might relate to the observations that the coalition's cycle of decision/notification/contracting/ disbursement of funds causes serious difficulties for their own planning and implementation process, although that may have been an artifact of the budget difficulties in 2009. In any event, absent a serious assessment of operational needs and a plan to address them, it would not surprise the Monitoring Team if such limitations became more apparent in the next 1-2 years.

With the exception of the internal side of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system, all key operational deliverables related to 2009 Strategic Priorities were fully attained. Given the nature of the RRI mission and the value proposition on which it is based, the continuing absence of an adequate system for internal evaluation is a serious issue as it impedes RRI leadership from gaining a reliable picture of overall progress toward global goals.

E. General Comments Concerning Global Programs

- RRI has opted, in practice, for a model in which a secretariat coordinates the RRI-related activities of coalition partners (including the administration of financial transfers), but also catalyzes the added value of the entire effort through the implementation of a program of its (RRG's) conception.
- Given the genesis of RRI and the nature of its mission, the Monitoring Team considers this model to be entirely appropriate, as long as RRG, its Board and all RRI partners share an understanding of the critical role of collaborative partner activities at all levels in the value proposition that gives life to the entire enterprise.
- Despite budgetary limitations in 2009, Global Programs grew in size and effect

- Global Programs were more completely staffed at the end of 2009 than at the beginning of the year, but some budgeted positions remained unfilled.
- Implementation was of high quality and generally met or exceeded commitments to deliver as part of the 2009 Strategic Priorities approved by the RRG Board of Directors.
- The work was particularly strong in RRG's core competency areas—strategic analysis and network support.
- Within strategic analysis, RRG was especially active in 2009 within the thematic area of Rights and Climate Change.
- The work done in this area is emblematic of what is required to move RRI in the direction of its overall goals, especially because of the enthusiastic support for the initiative by partners and collaborators in a variety of countries.
- In its current program configuration, it is difficult for RRG to deliver relatively equal outputs in all three thematic areas of Strategic Analysis.
- Impressive strides were made in the other two Global Program areas—Communications and Operations—although capacity questions persist in each of those areas.
- Positive signs point in the direction of RRI achieving the “pivot” mentioned in the 2008 Independent Monitoring Report, from analysis to evidence-based, constituent-driven action.
- In this connection, the Monitoring Team notes with interest the absence of a Global Program area that focuses planning and implementation attention on RRG's policy. influence activities—its advocacy program—as distinct from the Strategic Analysis that provides the evidence base for influence and the Network Strengthening that builds and activates a base for influence work.
- During the January 2010 meeting of the RRI donor consortium, one donor remarked that RRI donors could possibly play an important role in the coalition's advocacy strategy, and others immediately echoed this sentiment. The Monitoring Team sees no evidence that RRI has considered this potential aspect of its strategic alliance with certain donors. This factor should be taken into account in consideration of RRI's overall advocacy strategy.
- A notable exception to the generally impressive implementation performance was in the area of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system. The Independent Monitoring element of the system continued to function, despite transitions, but the internal elements of the system remained incomplete.
- For 2009, planning of Global Programs was less formalized than that of Country and Regional Initiatives and less oriented toward desired outcomes and contracted activities.
- Through late 2009, articulation between Global Programs and Country and Regional Initiatives was informal and relied heavily on the highly intentional participation of senior managers in each process.

- In late 2009, a Global Programs meeting attempted to bring together partner representatives and Global Programs staff to review and discuss Global Program plans.
- The Monitoring Team supports this innovation and hopes that it will become a mechanism for Global Programs to more fully reflect the vision of RRI partners and take full advantage of the extraordinary resources and competencies they bring to RRI.

VI. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING SYSTEM

RRI's commitment to establishing a Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) system is clear from its foundational documents, and the level of commitment expressed in those documents to date has survived the multiple pressures of implementation. The RRI Framework Proposal presents a fairly detailed description of the desired system, noting that RRI's MEL system will emphasize **simplicity, accuracy and learning**. Four main design principles will guide the design of the system:

- One integrated system for all donors and activities;
- System should be simple and realistic for all partners and collaborators;
- Should be a learning tool for RRG and donors; and
- Will monitor both implementation and link to desired outcomes.

After establishing the contours of the MEL system, the framework proposal offers a Logical Framework expressing the nature of RRI intended interventions and results over a five-year planning horizon. This is an impressive example of the Logical Framework approach that represents the visions of the RRI "founders," but also incorporates the insights gleaned through the RRI's LLSL project. LLSL was "a participatory global scoping of forest rights, social movements, threats and opportunities to advance reforms." This scoping exercise, which appears to have been taken very seriously by those participating in it, added a great deal of value to the traditional process of developing a logical framework for a project.

After presenting a comprehensive logical framework, RRI provides two extraordinary notes to the log-frame. The first states that "RRI is fundamentally different than many projects to which the Logical Framework Approach is applied." The difference resides in the fact that RRI pursues its outcomes through advocacy work that requires operational agility, including the ability to shift implementation modalities in response to short-term opportunities. This requires influencing the behavior and decisions of people and groups who are stakeholders in complex decision-making processes and adds an element of uncertainty to implementation that is not easily captured or monitored using the log-frame approach.

The second note to the log-frame affirms that RRI will engage an Independent Monitor for this project who will be responsible (in collaboration with RRI) to “develop a set of indicators and measures to monitor the progress and ensure learning by all involved. These indicators will be consistent [with] the indicators provided in this log-frame.”

In these perceptive notes, RRI acknowledged the much-debated limitations of the log-frame for maximizing learning from advocacy projects. The framework proposal and other foundational documents did not elaborate on the insight contained in this comment. The Monitoring Team shares the sense that no single MEL approach can be expected to monitor the results of a project as complex as RRI to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. This suggests that, in addition to defining workable indicators of progress consistent with the existing log-frame, RRI might explore a fusion between the Log-Frame approach and other approaches that might complement the advantages of the log-frame approach with additional tools more suited to clarifying the true effects of policy advocacy processes.

Outcome Mapping (OM) is one such approach developed by one of the donors to RRI, the International Development Research Centre in Canada. This MEL approach views the changes that a process achieves in the actions and behaviors of “boundary partners” as the determinant outcomes of a process, rather than its tangible “products.” As a result, OM provides tools to help organizations and networks plan, monitor and evaluate based on such changes. At least two RRI partners (IUCN and InterCooperation) have experience using Outcome Mapping as an evaluation tool with some of their projects. There are many examples of this approach being “fused” with log-frame analysis in successful MEL systems for complex projects. There are, of course, other approaches that make similar claims. These should also be examined in the construction of RRI’s MEL system.

As of the end of 2009, RRI’s MEL system is not yet in place, including the indicators and measures that would allow RRI to gauge progress toward its desired outcomes, or the system to gather the information necessary to track those indicators. This is not to say that RRG does not gather implementation information. For example, several efforts were made by RRG to solicit systematic information on annual outcomes and RRI added value at the end of 2009. This is not, however, a system that will help people prioritize gathering and delivering the sort of information that will allow RRI to track the measures it considers most indicative of its progress.

Putting this system in place involves a revision of the current log-frame indicators. From the perspective of the Monitoring Team, it also requires a slightly more careful analysis of the current planning and information gathering practices to see how the insights of an approach like Outcome Mapping might be integrated at all levels. In short, if typical log-frame indicators are not able to fully assess the progress of a project such as RRI, what sort of indicators, measures or benchmarks might supplement such indicators? Finally, current processes of planning and information gathering must be reviewed with an eye

to ensuring their alignment with the information requirements of whatever MEL system RRI chooses to implement.

Another issue to be addressed by RRI in the construction of an MEL system is the indicators or benchmarks against which annual monitoring should take place. Clear global indicators may well establish a “dashboard” that will allow coalition leadership and donors to determine whether or not RRI is generally on the right track, but these may or may not provide the basis for affirming that annual implementation in “x” country, or within “y” Global Program met expectations. An effective MEL plan must address the need for clear measures of success at both the macro and the micro level.

The Monitoring Team has not reviewed the terms of reference for the first Independent Monitoring exercise, but there is no indication that the team involved engaged the question of the MEL system in any substantive way. Since then, RRG staff members have made significant progress on the construction of a system designed to gather more complete implementation information from RRG staff and RRI implementing partners. It will be difficult, however, to calibrate that system to focus information requests on the requirements of a system of indicators and benchmarks that are not yet entirely defined.

VII. CONCLUSION

Since it launched implementation based on its Framework Proposal in 2008, RRI has made impressive progress in clarifying and acting upon its unique perspective linking respect for the tenure rights of forest-dependent people with efforts to overcome the grinding poverty that characterizes life for many of the people living in and around the world’s forests. This progress can, and should, be measured by constructing metrics to measure the use of RRI’s communications products, external references to RRI’s analysis, numbers of public appearances by RRG staff members, the number of press outlets that cover RRI activities or publish using materials provided by RRI. Many of these metrics are already under construction through the collection of various bits of information by RRG staff and RRI partners/collaborators. What remains is to formalize these metrics and the gathering of information to track them, and this is well with RRG’s reach.

But RRI’s progress can also be measured by the actions or behavior changes of external actors, based on the efforts of RRI and RRG. While such actions may be less amenable to measurement, they are strong indicators of the true social impact of the RRI enterprise. In this regard, we would cite just a few examples.

- The decision by Chatham House to respond favorably to RRI’s proposal to coordinate a series of high-level public dialogues on climate change

- The decision by lead forest officials of some of the world's most forested countries to form and sustain a network to promote exchange of experience and knowledge on tenure, climate change and other issues AND to recognize RRI's role as convener of that network
- The decisions by experienced representatives of leading funding institutions in the natural resource sector to invest increasing amounts of resources in RRI's Framework Proposal in a time of reduced budgets and extreme competition for philanthropic attention
- The decision by forestry officials of the Government of Cameroon to recognize a forum created by RRI as a legitimate space for learning and relatively open discussion of tenure and rights issues in its country.

These are only a few of many examples that one could cite of external actors illustrating, by their own decisions and actions, just how far RRI has come in a short time. In very few of these cases did these things "just happen." In most cases, the external decisions resulted from implementation by RRI and its partners designed to achieve these external actions. This line of reasoning points toward a complementary, alternative way to plan and to map the outcomes of RRI implementation. This approach is also worthy of the organization's consideration.

But RRI's evident progress should not obscure the fact that there areas of implementation that could be strengthened. The Monitoring Team has mentioned some of these in the course of this report, and we return to the most compelling among them in the Recommendations section, below.

In addition, there are a small number of areas of concern that don't lend themselves to simple recommendations, but are worth mentioning in the spirit of constructive reflection.

First of all, the phenomenon of climate change is creating tremendous pressures for change throughout the forest sector. RRG and RRI partners are not immune from these pressures and are, themselves, undergoing rapid processes of organizational change. Many of the organizations that make up RRI are in a very different place today than they were when they decided to go forward with RRI in 2006, or even when they embraced RRI's memorandum of understanding in 2008. Such periods of change can be particularly challenging to coalitions, alliances and networks trying to hold together the work of various organizations, each of which is being forced to re-evaluate the foundations of its own work. These conditions can increase the centrifugal forces always present in efforts to hold together organizations of diverse practice and interest.

In such times, alliances must pay particular attention to their internal dynamics, prioritizing excellent and open internal communications and making special efforts to respond to the requests and observations of individual members. This includes intentional efforts to reinvigorate member participation and commitment. RRI exists to

create change outside of itself, so internal efforts must always occur in right relationship to the external mission of the coalition. Nonetheless, it is true that the successes of RRI depend entirely on its ability to convene and hold together its unique membership.

Secondly, we have mentioned the trend for external institutions to embrace all or part of the RRI agenda and approach. Many of these include mainstream organizations that once might have been considered odd bedfellows for RRI. The opportunity in this trend is obvious. The peril in it is equally present.

The system in which RRI operates is remarkably adept at co-opting new ideas. This cooptation involves absorbing all or part of the discourse implied by a conception (the tenure-climate change connection, for example) while divorcing that discourse from its social life and implications. This robs the concept of the “edge” which allows it to be a force for social transformation.

At this point, RRI’s discourse regarding tenure and rights retains the edge that comes from its connection to the lives of indigenous communities and others who make their homes in the world’s forests. Keeping that edge, over time, will require careful management of the warm and tender embrace of the mainstream, which is likely to be offered with more insistence and incentive in the next period.

Thirdly, RRI does everything in its power to avoid being understood by its partners, collaborators or the outside world as a funding organization. That said, a key function of RRG is that of a re-granter of funds from RRI’s primary financial supporters to RRI partner organizations. Nearly 60% of the resources entering RRI followed this path in 2009.

Balancing this re-granting role with RRI’s core mission of advancing tenure reform is a delicate matter. In the view of the Monitoring Team, the plan of the Country Planning Team in Nepal (for example) should be the set of activities that RRI partners and collaborators deem necessary to advance tenure reform under the current circumstances in Nepal. In practice, that plan becomes the activities that partners hope to get funded by RRI. If RRI is not able to fund the activity, it falls out of the plan without apparent consideration of alternative ways to support that activity. This entirely predictable characteristic of the coalition has an enormous impact on RRI’s country and regional implementation.

A very different implementation dynamic would be local RRI partners and collaborators deciding what needed to be done on tenure reform in a given year, and then deciding who would do that work and how it would be funded. That would include accessing RRI funds, according to their availability, but also looking at other possible sources, including the budgets of partners and collaborating organizations. In the end, if the activity could not be funded from any source, the activity would not take place, but activities would not necessarily be limited to what RRI could fund. In 2009, RRI partners clearly provided

funds to support coalition activities, but there were country programs in which the only activities implemented were those that RRI could fund. If coalition impact is defined by the limits of RRI's financial transfers, that will, ultimately create powerful tensions within the coalition and keep it from fulfilling its mission.

Finally, the recent Climate Change Conference confirmed the inability of international community to take binding collective action on climate change. This emphasizes the need for continued work on a global advocacy agenda, but also suggests that the national environment will continue to be the site of most of the key decisions regarding forest tenure and climate change for the next period. This affirms the wisdom of RRI's decision to combine a global advocacy agenda with well-planned initiatives at the country and regional levels. For the next period, RRG will need to focus on supporting and reinforcing the work of RRI partners at the national level. Since this will require intentional strengthening of all the systems through which RRG achieves that support (contracting, planning, governance, etc.), this focus is in no way inconsistent with a plan for increased investment in RRG capacity.

A review of RRI's 2009 implementation reveals a coalition that has come forward with a compelling set of ideas at just the right time. In addition to presenting the ideas to anyone who will listen (and some who never intended to listen) RRI brings together a broad diverse coalition of forest-connected organizations that are ready to act in concert on these ideas. This powerful combination is having some powerful results.

As a human enterprise, there are aspects of the experience that could be reinforced for improved results. We have attempted to capture these aspects in suggestions for adjustments throughout the report. We highlight what we see as the most significant adjustments to be considered in the following recommendations. We are aware that the recommendations mix observations at very different levels of organizational practice.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its assessment of the strengths and the challenges of 2009 implementation, the Monitoring Team makes many recommendations for adjustments to RRI and RRG strategies and operating procedures throughout this report. Those judged to be of highest priority are summarized here:

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System: Consistent with the coalition's foundational commitments, RRI must complete the work of putting in place a fully functional MEL system (during the first half of 2010). At a minimum, that requires a revision of the indicators in the existing log-frame and the establishment of information gathering systems consistent with the needs of monitoring progress on those indicators. The 2010 Independent Monitoring Exercise must be able to use the updated indicators and the information that supports them. The establishment of a working MEL system should also include an analysis of the extent to which these log-frame indicators fully

meet RRI's learning needs, and, as necessary, the consideration of alternative MEL approaches that might complement log-frame analysis in maximizing RRI's learning about what works and what doesn't work in its strategic approach. A decision to embrace complementary approaches would also imply additional work to integrate all approaches into a single, coherent system.

Coalition Strengthening: RRI should review existing internal communications procedures with the goal of establishing fluid communications that deepen the relationships among coalition members, while keeping those members fully informed of relevant coalition activities. In addition, RRG should carefully analyze its efforts to maximize synergies among partner actions, especially at the global program level. Articulation between Country and Regional Initiatives and RRI Global Programs is certainly important, but the integration of partners into the design, planning and execution of RRI Global Program is a separate, and equally important issue. Where existing capacity is insufficient to achieve such integration, RRG should consider developing that capacity.

Country Priorities: RRI should establish a method to annually review its choices regarding priority countries for Country and Regional Initiatives with an eye toward consistently targeting interventions in locations of maximum opportunity for progress on tenure reform. Given that RRI cannot infinitely expand the number of countries in which it is working, agility and responsiveness will require more discussion of the issue of program transition away from countries that no longer offer real possibilities for the sorts of tenure reform sought by the coalition.

Contracting System: In light of partner comments on the impact of RRG's contracting system on implementation, RRI should review that system with an eye toward capturing efficiencies, identifying potential bottlenecks and shortening the overall length of the process. This recommendation is closely linked to the one on operational capacity described below.

Communications Capacity: RRG should seriously consider adding a dedicated communications staff position to be filled by a communications professional with skills and experiences consistent with RRI's communications strategy. That strategy should be reviewed with an eye toward expanding the network of users of RRI's publications and analysis and exploring the use of new media to expand public awareness of RRI's perspective and use of RRI materials. A carefully-designed survey of current users of RRI communications products would provide indispensable grounding for any review of communications strategy, as would an effort to activate the impressive communications capabilities of many RRI partners behind the coalition's communications objectives.

Operational Capacity: RRG should assess its operational capacity based on projected needs over the next three years and make a plan to create operational capacity in line with those needs. Contracting additional permanent staff is only one way to build such

capacity. In the short-term, however, an additional financial/administrative person to focus attention on the contracting process and related activities seems like an urgent necessity.

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED*

CAMEROON

1. Cécile Niebet, National Coordinator and Pelugie Masso, Local Economy Program, Cameroon Ecology (Collaborator).
2. Adonis Milol, Senior Forest Program Officer, Forest Law Enforcement and Governance Program (FLEG) (Partner).
3. Denis Koulanga Koutou, Secretary General, Forest Ministry of Cameroon (Government).
4. Samuel Assembe, Research Assistant, Forest and Governance Program, CIFOR (Partner).
5. Cléto Ndikumagenge, Regional Coordinator for Central Africa, IUCN (Partner).
6. Peter Mbile, Scientist, World Agroforestry Centre (Partner).

GHANA

7. Elijah Danso, Senior Program Officer for Environment and Water, Dutch Embassy (Government).
8. Kyeretwie Opoku, Coordinator, Civic Response (Partner).
9. Wale Adeleke, FLEG Project Facilitator, IUCN (Partner).
10. Augusta Molnar, Director, Global Programs and Solange Bandiaky, Africa Program Coordinator, RRG (Staff).

GUATEMALA

11. Carlos Chex, Director Indigenous Rights Program, ONG Sotz'il (Independent)
12. Víctor López and Mayra González, Technical Team and Calixto Agustin Segura, President, Utz Che (Collaborator)
13. Silvel Elías, Program on Rural Studies and Territories, PERT/FAUSAC, Department of Agronomy, Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala and technical advisor to RRI in Guatemala (Collaborator)
14. Juan Girón, Director of Social Programs, Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén (ACOFOP) (Collaborator).
15. Ogden Rodas, Food and Agriculture Organization (Independent).
16. Sergio Funes, Director, CEIDPAZ (Collaborator).
17. Iliana Monterroso, Regional Facilitator for Latin America, RRG (Staff).
18. Adeldo Revolorio, Planning Director, National Forestry Institute (Government)
19. Claudio Cabrera, Rainforest Action Network (Independent)

NEPAL

20. Arvind Khare, Director, Finance and Policy, RRG (Staff).
21. Ganga Dahal, Regional Facilitator for Asia, RRG (Staff).
22. Ghanshyam Pandey, Chair; Bharathi Pathak, Treasurer; Tulashi Adhikari, Fiscal, FECOFUN (Partner).
23. Naya Sharma Paudel, Environmental Governance Specialist, Forest Action (Partner).
24. Dinesh Chandra, National Planning Commission (Government).
25. Bimala Raj, Swiss Development Cooperation (Donor).
26. Anand Pokharel, Former MP (Independent).
27. Resam Dangi, Gobinda Kaffe, Yubaraj Busal, Phil Shearman, Ministry of Forestry and REDD (Government).
28. Bharat Pokhrel, Project Director, InterCooperation (Partner).
29. Shiva Pandey, ANSAB (Collaborator).
30. Jagat Basnet, ICRS (Collaborator).
31. Gabriel Campbell, Member of 2008 Independent Monitor Team (Independent).
32. Peter Branney, Country Representative, LFP (Independent).
33. Narayan Belbase and Ram Chandra Khanal, IUCN (Partner).
34. Tatwa P. Timsina, Executive Director, ICA Associates (Independent).

WASHINGTON, DC

35. Andy White, Coordinator, RRG (Staff).
36. Deborah Barry, Director, Country and Regional Programs, RRG (Staff).
37. Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples' Programme (Partner).
38. Jane Carter, InterCooperation, (Partner).
39. Kyeretwie Opoku, Civic Response (Partner).
40. Doris Capistrano, RRG Board (Board).
41. Ghanashayam Pandey, Chair, FECOFUN (Partner).
42. Yam Malla, Executive Director, RECOFTC (Partner).

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

43. Hans Olav Ibrekk, Norad (Donor).
44. Pilar Siman, Manager for Coalition and Communications, RRG (Staff).
45. Hemant Ojha, Forest Action, (Partner).
46. Arun Agarwal, University of Michigan, (independent).
47. Sally Collins, USDA (Government/RRI Fellow).
48. John Hudson, DFID, (Donor).
49. Peter Dewees, World Bank (Independent).
50. Liz Alden Wily, Researcher (RRI Fellow).
51. David Kaimowitz, Ford Foundation (Donor).
52. Owen Lynch, Academic (RRI Fellow).

53. Kristin Walker-Painemilla, Conservation International (Independent).
54. Stephen Kelleher, IUCN (Partner).
55. Lopaka Purdy, Senior Communications and Analysis Associate, RRG (Staff).

*Each interviewee appears only once on the list, even if they gave multiple interviews.