

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

2015

Rights and Resources Initiative



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A message from the Coordinator

2015 was a milestone year of accomplishment for the **Rights and Resources Initiative** (RRI), both in terms of its past and its future. It was the tenth anniversary of RRI's creation; the tenth year of successive impact in advancing the recognition of Indigenous Peoples and local communities rights and aspirations; and the tenth year of innovation and creativity in developing path-breaking analyses, initiatives, and institutions to advance the causes of locally-led land and forest tenure reform, conservation, and sustainable development.

2015 also marked the beginning of a new era for RRI. As described in the following summary overview and throughout this annual report, 2015 was a year in which we consolidated a suite of strategic networks, positioning RRI and the world to dramatically scale-up efforts to secure rights, both on paper and in practice, in the decades ahead. After 10 years the case for recognition has been made, and there is now an unprecedented platform of tools and initiatives dedicated to helping local organizations seize the growing number of opportunities to implement reforms, prevent rollback of rights, and transform business as usual across the developing world.

2015 was also a year of major change and “updating” of the RRI Coalition and our Secretariat, the Rights and Resources Group (RRG). We completed independent evaluations of the Coalition and our programs, revised and signed a new MOU, and established a new leadership and organizational structure to lead RRG. The Coalition is now actively expanding, with new Partners, Collaborators and Affiliated Networks — representing new and influential constituencies and geographies — and enabling better, faster, and smarter responses to strategic opportunities in the increasing number of countries where rights are threatened and where political openings for major gains exist. RRG's new structure shifts leadership from the founding directors toward a new, diverse management team, as well as from the programmatic silos that have accreted over the years to a more dynamic matrix structure.

We also initiated an upgrade to all of our financial and administrative systems, reducing the reporting burden placed on our Partners, Collaborators, and consultants, allowing them to focus on the programmatic work rather than the paperwork.

To better describe these many achievements, shifts, and challenges we've organized this narrative report differently than in the past. It emphasizes results achieved, challenges encountered, and lessons learned. It complements the more descriptive, comparative analysis of the planned activities and outcomes published in December 2015 and found here. It demonstrates that the Coalition remains eager to learn and adjust to the changing world, and is now well positioned to achieve results in this dramatically different world than we faced 10 years ago. The report also reflects our ambition to strengthen the way we communicate our results, making it easier for our supporters to grasp the fruit of their investment.

I'd like to end by expressing my appreciation, on behalf of the RRI Coalition, for the inspiring courage, dreams, and dedication of the many indigenous and community leaders who continue to put themselves and their families at risk every day for their communities and their lands, and to the many Collaborators and supporters who have trusted and supported RRI to join them in their fight. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to work for and with so many incredible individuals and organizations: a privilege that we hope to have well spent in 2015 and one that we hope to continue to earn well into the future.

Andy White
Coordinator
Rights and Resources Initiative

RRI BY THE NUMBERS IN 2015

13 Partners

150+ Collaborators

12 Expert Fellows from **9** different countries

9 Board Members, $\frac{1}{2}$ from developing countries

1 Secretariat, Rights and Resources Group

RRI in 2015: Summary overview

What a difference a decade makes. In 2005, RRI proposed a goal of doubling the area of forest land in developing countries that is legally owned by or designated for Indigenous Peoples and local communities by 2015. That figure stood at 21 percent in 2002 and reached 31 percent by the end of the year, still short of the target but a dramatic advance for local peoples nonetheless. This represents the legal restoration of traditional forest ownership to roughly 150 million hectares, an area 4.5 times the size of Germany. Today, Indigenous Peoples and local communities hold property rights to almost 500 million hectares of forest land in developing countries.

Ten years ago, it was a struggle to make indigenous and community rights part of global discussions on forest conservation and climate change. By the close of 2015, it was clear that the case had been made. There is still much further to go, with millions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities lacking legal rights to the vast majority of their customary lands, putting their livelihoods and the sustainability of hundreds of millions of hectares of forest at risk. But secure local land rights are now widely accepted as a prerequisite for addressing the deforestation and climate crises — as demonstrated by the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change and the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests — as well as reducing both conflict and poverty.

2015 was significant for two other major achievements, both of which are the product of decades of struggle by local peoples and their allies, with strong support from the Coalition. First, there is a critical mass of countries in the early stages of actually implementing the recognition of community land rights at a national scale. If successful, this will lead to the recognition of over 100 million hectares of forest and directly benefit over 200 million people. India, Indonesia, Peru, Colombia, and Liberia stand out.

And second, by the close of 2015, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and their allies established an unprecedented platform of institutions, initiatives, and tools for stopping deforestation and scaling-up the recognition of community forest rights. The **International Land and Forest Tenure Facility** (“the Tenure Facility”) is providing direct financing to Indigenous Peoples and community organizations to implement tenure reforms and recognize rights on the ground. The **Interlaken Group** — an ad hoc group of leaders from NGOs and corporations — developed guidelines for corporations to fully respect the rights of customary landholders, and is in the process of creating similar tools to guide investors. **MegaFlorestais** has earned even stronger commitment from members of forest agencies and is now actively advocating for tenure and governance reforms in

RRI IN 2015

\$16.5
MILLION (USD) Revenues for the year

15 Countries of engagement

15 New reports and briefs
in **7 languages**

432 Media hits in **7 languages**
across **26 countries**

11 Projects funded through
the Strategic Response
Mechanism

9 Companies and
investors active in the
Interlaken Group

10 Governments engaged in
MegaFlorestais

6 Pilot projects launched
by the Tenure Facility

international fora. The **Global Call to Action** on Indigenous and Community Land Rights, an alliance of Indigenous Peoples' and community organizations and NGOs, is mobilizing greater efforts to secure land rights across the world. **LandMark** became the first global platform displaying maps of the lands held collectively by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, making their rights and claims easily visible to outsiders.

These achievements position the world for major progress toward closing the catastrophic gap between the area of land owned by communities in practice and the area to which governments recognize those rights. With this progress, RRI set a **new target** in 2015: to close the existing gap in recognition so that at least 50 percent of the developing world's forests are formally under community control by 2030, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals. Realizing this target will require substantial ambition, strategy, and implementation at scale by international organizations, private actors, NGOs, and Indigenous Peoples and communities alike.

RRI is now poised, and better positioned, to continue to support, convene, and cajole all actors to seize these new opportunities and scale-up the collective effort to secure rights and save forests — for local peoples and our planet.

RRI and how it achieves impact

The **Rights and Resources Initiative** — a Coalition of 13 Partners, 4 Affiliated Networks, 12 international Fellows, and more than 150 Collaborating organizations — was created 10 years ago to advance tenure reforms and reduce poverty in forest areas. Many things have changed since then. The global conversations on forests and lands have changed, in large part due to concerns about deforestation and “land-grabbing,” as well as heightened awareness of the threats faced by local communities and land activists. The links between tenure and development outcomes are now much better understood, and the land and forest rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are now seen as central tenets for achieving human rights, livelihoods, climate change and conflict mitigation outcomes. Commercial pressures on community lands continue, but private companies and investors are gradually realizing that communities are not silent bystanders; they will push back, and the bottom-line will eventually suffer.

In this shifting world, RRI achieves change by continuing to build on its core foundations while aptly adjusting its approach for increased impact. As a Coalition, it serves as a **conduit** for the knowledge, experience and savvy of local Partners and Collaborators. It works at **different scales** — from local, national to global — to advance new ideas, inspire a sense of the possible and effect change; it aims to promote the integration of **local strategies in global platforms**, while ensuring that global strategies respond to local priorities. It uses an **evidence-based approach** to “make the case” for the recognition of rights, and use its **convening power** to strengthen the community of practice on the issue. It bridges divides between unlikely partners — between the private sector and communities, between peasant and indigenous organizations, between traditional chiefs and women — to foster inclusive dialogue and build new strategic networks. And through its **Strategic Response Mechanism**, it builds-in flexibility to respond to unforeseen opportunities and urgent requests from actors on the ground.

As the Coalition moves into its next phase, past the 10-year mark, it will continue to support those who are working tirelessly to achieve change, and it promises to do so with entrepreneurial spirit and determination.

Championing land rights in private sector policies and practices

The cyclical shifts in commodity prices and global growth did not decelerate the long term drivers of demand for land and natural resources. On the contrary, commercial pressures on land are unabated. And so are the threats to communities claiming land that is rightfully theirs. The murder of Indra Pelani in **Indonesia** by private company security personnel and the threats perpetrated against leaders of Indigenous Peoples organizations opposing development projects in **Honduras** and across the world — threats that became only too real in 2016 — are indicative of the continued conflict between companies and communities over land.

But 2015 also showed signs of promise, with an increased awareness by some private sector actors of the importance — and financial value — of clarified tenure rights for business operations and investments. RRI played a key role in achieving this realization via the **Interlaken Group**, a multi-stakeholder forum composed of individuals from leading companies, investors, international and civil society organizations; by outlining the **financial risks** associated with operating or investing in areas where tenure is insecure with a suite of strategic analyses; by engaging firms to pilot, test, and communicate lessons from the implementation of **new tools** and alternative business models; and by effectively **leveraging the power** of progressive private sector stakeholders to influence other companies and investors to support secure community tenure. The Interlaken Group, and this broader approach to engage companies constructively, complements the longstanding and well-established RRI effort to support communities in exposing abuses by companies and holding them to account — in national as well as international arenas, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

A key achievement in 2015 — and an important step in getting companies on board — was the production of operational guidance to the Food and Agriculture Organization’s Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forestry in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) by RRI and the Interlaken Group. Aimed at portfolio and project-level professionals, the guide, **Respecting Land and Forest Rights: A Guide for Companies**, was designed to support internal decision-making and, ultimately, the alignment of a company’s operations to international standards. The guide quickly gained significant traction within private sector circles, and was presented by **Rabobank** to a network of more than 600 companies and organizations committed to sustainability. Other leading investors, including the **European Investment Bank** (EIB), the **UK Development Finance Institution** (CDC) and the **International Finance Corporation** (IFC) also disseminated the guide across their organization.

Some went even further. **Nestlé** led the field-testing of the guide with its major palm oil suppliers in Indonesia and reported back to other company leaders on lessons learned, including the finding that the guide did not adequately address legacy land issues, a major stumbling block in moving towards toward full implementation of the guide across company operations. The feedback provided by Nestlé will inform the next stages of the Interlaken Group’s work. Nestlé also actively promoted the guide, with the **opinion piece** by its Executive Vice President of Operations representing a major and very public endorsement of both the guide and the value of collaboration across sectors. **Coca-Cola** joined in the promotion, and announced

“ [F]rom our company perspective, RRI has had a strong impact. When they published their first reports, there were significant reputation issues ... My colleagues weren’t eager to open the door to RRI. But, having an open and transparent dialogue turned out to be the best way to work. ”

– Private Sector stakeholder,
Mid-Term Evaluation of RRI, 2015

the release of two new third-party country sugar studies that included an assessment of the status of land rights in its supply chains, in **El Salvador**, **Guatemala**, **Colombia**, and **Honduras** respectively. The fact that leading companies have endorsed and piloted the Guide, and launched their own studies on the impact of their supply chains on tenure rights, underscores the catalytic potential of well-designed analytical products. It is, without a doubt, one of the Coalition's greatest achievements in 2015.

In addition to helping private sector actors implement international frameworks, RRI developed tools in collaboration with TMP Systems to assist investors in identifying, avoiding and remediating tenure risk. The **IAN Risk** and **IAN Diligence** management platforms allow companies to quantify investment risks in areas of insecure tenure.

RRI's ongoing efforts to promote the inclusion of land rights into private sector policies and practices took on many forms at the national level. In **India**, the IAN Risk tool rendered visible the costs of tenure risk for the private sector, and triggered a discussion of the notion of "social license" through free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) between a set of national and international finance officials. This was a particularly noteworthy development in a country where billions of dollars' worth of investments are stalled due to land conflicts between the private sector and local communities. In **Indonesia**, RRI Collaborator ASM Law Office engaged with private sector companies on both business operations and human rights to address the issue of land conflicts by producing tools and leading the training of a police investigation body on human rights issues, including the handling of land and agrarian conflicts, and conflicts involving *adat* communities. In **China**, an Informal Forum organized with Landesa and the State Forest Agency — with support from RRI — resulted in the development of voluntary guidelines to facilitate the implementation of operational policies that respect and secure community rights by Asia Pulp and Paper, one of Asia's largest pulp and paper companies. In **Liberia**, RRI Partner the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) collaborated with Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development (SESDev) to support liaison committees — platforms for community members to engage with leading palm oil developer Golden Veroleum Liberia representatives — to enable stronger community representation in interactions with corporations.

RRI's 2015 results demonstrate the potential that comes when effective "naming and shaming" of inappropriate company behavior is complemented with constructive engagement with forward-leaning companies. The results also demonstrate the necessity of a meticulous framing of the narrative that speaks to the concerns of the private sector without jeopardizing the rights of communities. Yet transforming practice on the ground, and advancing the recognition of tenure rights within private sector circles, remains a challenging endeavor. Specifically, how to ensure that commitments made at headquarters are also implemented at the level of subsidiaries and how best to leverage change by less progressive companies, those who have not yet acknowledged the necessity of respecting tenure rights, remains a major question for RRI. Proactive steps in this direction by even a handful of influential companies and investors provide reason for continued optimism and effort, and encourage RRI to move forward in this important work.

Transforming the narrative on climate and rights

The increased recognition of the role of Indigenous Peoples in mitigating climate change that took place in 2014, combined with the groundbreaking commitments made in the New York Declaration on Forests, opened up important spaces to further tenure rights within the climate change agenda in 2015.

In 2014 RRI launched, in collaboration with the World Resources Institute (WRI), compelling **evidence** of the centrality of recognizing the rights of local peoples for climate change mitigation. And in 2015,

RRI effectively argued for the inclusion of forest tenure reform in the **2016-2020 UN-REDD strategy** and debunked the disproportionate targeting of community forest use activities as a main driver of deforestation. RRI co-organized with Rainforest Foundation Norway a high-level **Dialogue** in Oslo in March to influence the global REDD initiatives and the **UNFCCC process** via the development of targeted recommendations highlighting the link between tenure rights, forest protection and climate. RRI also joined forces with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in June to convene the first ever **Dialogue** aimed at identifying policy recommendations to advance the indigenous and community land rights in forest restoration and green growth initiatives, with a particular focus on the New York Declaration on Forests and the Bonn Challenge. RRI also focused on the **Forest Carbon Partnership Facility** (FCPF), and primarily its Carbon Fund Framework and the country proposals in its pipeline, with an analysis of the potential impacts on the tenure rights and livelihoods of forest communities. This analysis was presented at a **Dialogue** in October, convened by RRI and attended by the World Bank and key organizations working on climate finance.

While by COP21, RRI was successful in articulating the importance of recognizing the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a climate change mitigation strategy, several of the Dialogues were not as effective as in the past. This was in part due to content, form and execution, but perhaps as well due to the fact that the moment for international Dialogues had passed, and the attention of global leaders was now (and appropriately) focused on national-level implementation. In sum, these shifts prompted RRI to scale-back its **Dialogue series** in 2016. Without a doubt, there is value in convening dialogues that focus on climate change initiatives, if only to ensure that alternative narratives are rendered visible and not drowned out by the dominant discourse. How to better use these platforms to elevate national and regional-level issues and opportunities to the global level, catalyze more supportive adjustments in the international architecture and programs, and prudently optimize the financial and human resources required for their success will be a topic of discussion as RRI prepares to enter into its next strategic phase.

Supporting change agents at the local, national, and international level to promote and advocate for community land rights and address rollback

The murders of more than 100 land activists in 2015 proved, once again, that community land rights are a dangerous proposition in many areas of the world. As the global land rush endures, with commercial interests in land continuing to put the rights of communities, their livelihoods and very often their lives at risk, the need for targeted support to communities is even greater. The upsurge in threats to community lands — from agribusiness, extractives, conservationists, local elites and national governments alike — combined to the rising potential of rollback and the increased criminalization of communities fighting for their rights, led RRI to diversify the scale and scope of its work in 2015.

RRI's approach to supporting change agents facilitated a number of important breakthroughs. In **Colombia**, advocacy by rural women, including RRI Collaborators the Departmental Federation of Peasant Women of Cundinamarca (FEDEMUCC) and the Roundtable of Advocacy of Colombian Rural Women, led to the development of the first comprehensive public policy for rural women's rights within the Colombian National Development Plan 2014-2018 (NDP) — the country's roadmap for growth and development. In **Guatemala**, legal support to eight communities by RRI Collaborators Ut'z Che' resulted in the **prevention of a rollback** of rights for the collective tenure over an area of 2,483 hectares where approximately 1,000 people live. Also in **Guatemala**, Coalition efforts by RRI Collaborator ACOFOP led to the re-classification on non-timber forest products, which made it inherently easier for communities

— and particularly women and young people — to engage in the marketplace; paving the way for the 20 forest communities near the Maya Biosphere Reserve to earn sustainable sources of income from sustainably harvested products such as ramon nuts, xate leaves, and allspice.

In **Nepal**, massive mobilization and advocacy campaigns — spearheaded by RRI Partner FECOFUN — led the government to reconsider the declaration of the Chure Environmental Conservation Area and effectively stalled its implementation which would have led to the eviction of communities totalling roughly 14 percent of the country's population. In **India**, RRI and its Collaborators Vasundhara and Natural Resources Management Consultants essentially managed to recast the discourse on the Forest Rights Act's (FRA) with the launch of groundbreaking research on the potential of the Act for the recognition of community forest resource rights; noting that if adequately implemented, the Act would place more than half of the country's forests — more than 40 million hectares — under community jurisdiction. Also in **India**, RRI Collaborator Vasundhara developed a scalable methodology for mapping community claims that led to the recognition of 28,000 hectares of community forest resource rights inside a tiger reserve.

In **Cameroon**, as a result of efforts by the National Council of Traditional Chiefs (CNCTC) and the RRI Coalition, the Prime Minister signed a decree to form a new *ad hoc* committee to review proposals from the Traditional Chiefs regarding ongoing forest, land, and land use planning reform processes. In **DRC**, CACO — the RRI-supported civil society platform on tenure — successfully pushed back on regressive decrees in the land and forest sector, including decrees that would have weakened the independence of the National Land Commission (CONAREF), the participation of civil society in reform processes, and the role of communities in managing their forests.

These important gains provide a glimpse into what is possible when stars within the tenure reform constellation align: when action is coordinated, when interventions are tailored to respond to a particular opportunity and when there is political will and momentum. However, 2015 also demonstrated the complex and often unpredictable nature of tenure reform processes. **Liberia** is a case in point. Despite the Coalition's best efforts at pushing for the passing of the Land Rights Act (LRA), progress in the country has stalled. Expected to pass in the fall of 2015, the Land Rights Act is currently in the National Legislature undergoing review, with fears that some of its core principles on the recognition of customary rights might be eroded during this closed door process. Likewise, following a *coup d'état* in **Burkina Faso**, some activities relying on engagement with government institutions had to be postponed until after the presidential elections to allow for effective and stable engagement with state actors.

In **Indonesia**, 2015 was expected to be the year of change: commitments were made to recognize *adat* communities' tenure rights and to advance the agrarian reform agenda. However after one year in power, the Jokowi government has not yet taken any concrete steps to realize these commitments. Out of the 12.7 million hectares of community forest targeted by 2019, there has been no *adat* forest recognition. Likewise, no land has been allocated to poor farmers under the 9 million hectares land redistribution target. In **Nepal**, after years of political negotiation and gridlock, a new Constitution was promulgated in September 2015. While the RRI Coalition advocated for the inclusion of community land and forest rights in the Constitution, it was ultimately unsuccessful in having such an explicit declaration incorporated into the final document.

In **Bolivia**, increased government-led fragmentation between indigenous groups and within the leadership of indigenous organizations led RRI to cancel all of its activities for the year. In particular, the existence of two Confederations of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOBs) that both claimed legitimacy and national representation became a major stumbling block for efforts in the country.

Paradoxically, while external factors slowed down progress on planned results for the year, they also gave rise to unexpected wins. Designed to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities and respond to urgent demands for support from local actors, the **Strategic Response Mechanism (SRM)** bore fruit in 2015. In **Colombia**, an RRI-supported SRM built on an unprecedented legal victory for the Indigenous Peoples of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta (Arhuaco, Kogi, Wiwa and Kankuamo) that recognized more than 380,000 hectares of their ancestral territories, to support the development, and expansion, of an innovative GIS mapping system that will serve to monitor the more than 400 proposed extractive and infrastructure development projects on the Arhuaco's lands. In **Cameroon**, also as a result of an SRM, the RRI Coalition produced 21 participatory maps of local communities' customary forests in Ngoyla-Mintom that led to the significant expansion of the forest area secured for communities from 25,000 hectares of forests to over 400,000 hectares for both community forests and hunting and gathering activities. In **Brazil**, an SRM supported preparations for a hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Raposa. The hearing concluded with a request from IACHR to the Government of Brazil to clarify its domestic law, so that it complies with State duties and obligations under international law. This request led the government to settle the case with the Indigenous Peoples of Raposa out of court, setting an important precedent for other Indigenous communities of Brazil who are seeking to affirm their land and resource rights.

Despite these major wins, the 2015 scorecard on both planned and unplanned activities is somewhat mixed. While some of the challenges encountered in 2015 can be attributed to external factors, such as political instability, internal constraints such as limited human resources and overly bureaucratic processes, sometimes hampered RRI's influence. In **Senegal**, for example, even though a civil society proposal to influence the land reform was finalized, it received very little traction and did not move policy forward in any discernable manner. Compounding the challenge is the fact that that tenure reform can sometimes take years to unfold. **Guatemala** is a case in point with the recent approval of the Pro-Forest Law, after years of engagement by the Coalition. Sharpening the design of interventions and speeding-up administrative processes to advance change, while accounting for the often elusive nature of tenure reform, will be a priority as RRI moves past its tenth year of operations.

Deploying strategic analyses and evidence-based tools to effect policy change

Land rights are often a divisive and emotionally-laden issue. Conflicting interests in land — those of Indigenous Peoples, communities, governments, and private actors alike — give rise to competing narratives that frequently collide. In 2015, RRI continued to promote an evidence-based conversation on collective land rights with multiple stakeholders.

In 2015, after several years of work, RRI published a seminal **global baseline** quantifying the amount of land owned or managed by indigenous and local communities in total areas. This baseline extends and builds off the forest-focused database that was initiated by RRI Partner Forest Trends in 2002, providing a comprehensive view of the state of community rights around the world. The baseline was adopted by leading land rights practitioners, such as the International Land Coalition and Oxfam, to inform their own policy work, and cited in **press articles** around the world. The baseline findings further contributed to efforts at making the case for the inclusion of land rights in the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The **Global Call to Action** on Indigenous and Community Land Rights, an initiative comprising over 300 participating NGOs, CSOs, and governments, used the baseline to inform its five-year plan and

set quantifiable targets for its work. Baseline findings were also tailored to inform the work of Coalition partners at the national and regional level. The Coalition's efforts at rendering visible customary land claims culminated in the launch of the **LandMark Map**. A collaboration of organizations working on mapping collective rights, LandMark is the first interactive global platform of its kind to provide a centralized access to maps and other critical information on lands that are collectively held and used by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

In 2015, RRI also accelerated the deployment of tools and analyses aimed at effecting change within private sector circles. The **Respecting Land and Forest Rights: A Guide for Companies** was embraced by several private sector companies and successfully field-tested by a major international corporation in **Indonesia**. Led by TMP Systems, the **IAN: Risk** and **IAN: Diligence** tools effectively raised awareness, and quantified, the risks posed by insecure tenure to companies and investors. It expanded the evidence base for consideration of alternative models of production that prioritize community rights via an analysis of alternatives to industrial palm oil production in **Liberia**.

RRI analyses and tools were also effectively employed to support Indigenous Peoples and local communities to push back against companies encroaching upon their land and combating the threat of rollback. In **Latin America**, baseline data was used to assess the state of tenure rights and examine trends in rollback, garnering significant media attention in the region as well as pick-up of the data by Indigenous Peoples organizations in countries outside of RRI's realm of engagement, such as the Mapuche of **Chile**. In **Colombia**, RRI supported the Arhuaco community to continue the development, and expansion, of an innovative GIS mapping system outlining 60 layers of information that will monitor the more than 400 proposed extractive and infrastructure development projects on the Arhuaco's lands. In **India**, RRI, its Collaborator Vasundhara and Natural Resources Management Consultants launched a **study** that used the government's own data to render visible the overarching threat of the disenfranchisement of tens of millions of tribal peoples and forest dwellers brought about by the poor implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) by state governments; the study revealed that once implemented, the Act would result in the recognition of at least 40 million hectares of forest land. The study prompted the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the ministry responsible for the Forest Rights Act, to request state governments to review all cases where forest rights claims have been rejected and the ministry has also taken important steps to fast track community forest rights recognition. Analyses by TMP Systems on the financial and human costs of protected areas in **Liberia** and **DRC** were influential in swaying World Bank and REDD strategies in those countries.

If in 2015 many analyses and tools gained significant traction, some others did not. In **Mali**, for example, a study conducted by RRI Collaborator Sahel-Eco highlighted the need for the development of a national strategy for non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and the resultant positive impact on socio-economic development garnered some degree of government buy-in but without any discernible change resulting from the analysis, due to the government's focus on the Peace Accords, which highlight implementation of collective forest tenure and governance as a foundation for peace and eventual prosperity

RRI recognizes that a more structured — and timely — deliberation on purpose, target audience, and dissemination strategy will improve its products and strengthen their impact. Likewise, the recognition that global level tools and analyses need to resonate with local level efforts has encouraged RRI to expand the development of country modules grounded on baseline findings, as appropriate, to make its analyses even more useful and useable by country level actors.

Creating spaces for inclusive and open dialogue for the promotion of community land rights and their contribution to key development outcomes

Year upon year, independent reports and evaluations of RRI reassert the Coalition's unique ability to convene a wide range of actors interested in land and forest tenure, including those deemed to be "unlikely partners." Brokering a dialogue between parties with different and often opposing interests is challenging; it requires skill, a bit of risk-taking, and a lot of hope that those risks will pay off. 2015 proved to be no exception.

In **Nepal**, after years of efforts at bridging the divide between indigenous and peasant organizations, the Community Forestry User Group's Federation (FECOFUN), Indigenous People's Federation (NEFIN), Dalit organizations and women's organizations agreed to collaborate on the elaboration of a new Forest Rights Act. Together, this new network represents a significant political force in the country and, in fact, account for a substantial number of Nepal's Parliamentarians. In **India**, key civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations and multilateral entities jointly brainstormed on strategies to push for the effective implementation of the 2006 Forest Rights Act (FRA), adding to the momentum gained from the awareness that — when fully implemented — the Act will directly benefit at least 150 million forest dwellers and dramatically shift forest governance in a more democratic and inclusive direction, as well as provide more secure and stable property rights regimes in rural areas across the country. In **China**, with RRI support, a major international paper and pulp company, the Asia Pulp and Paper Company, the State Forest Agency (SFA) and Landesa launched an informal forum to identify best legal practices for corporate forest land acquisition in China, resulting in the joint development and endorsement of voluntary guidelines. In **Indonesia**, agrarian and Indigenous Peoples organizations agreed, for the very first time, to engage in a joint platform to discuss common strategies and coordinate on the critical issue of land and forest rights, including *adat* rights. In **Cameroon**, RRI Affiliated Network the Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) engaged in a dialogue with traditional chiefs from around the country, and made strategic use of the Queen Mothers, the chiefs' wives, to advocate for the recognition of women's rights in the ongoing land reform process. In **Liberia**, supported by RRI Partner Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), local organizations established a platform to deepen and normalize their engagement with leading palm oil developer Golden Veroleum-Liberia.

At the international level, RRI pursued its efforts at convening leading private companies, investors and NGO leaders. Known as the **Interlaken Group**, the group officially launched its first collaborative product, **Respecting Land and Forest Rights: A Guide for Companies**, proof that opening spaces for dialogue between "unlikely partners" can yield very positive and tangible outcomes. The **Global Call to Action** continued to foment the movement to secure community land rights by convening a **major international conference** in Bern that mobilized more than 300 leaders from Indigenous Peoples, local communities, national and international NGOs, private sector, governments and donors. The conference paved the way for the official launch of the Call a year later. Spun out of the first installment of the conference, a global platform for mapping indigenous and community lands, **LandMark**, was officially launched; a direct result of efforts at boosting collaboration between organizations working on the mapping and tracking of rights.

“ RRI is powerful in putting people together from different perspectives and building a common understanding. ”

– Forestry Sector Consultant,
Mid-Term Evaluation of RRI, 2015

Creating spaces for inclusive dialogue is not an end in and of itself, but rather a means to an end. The **MegaFlorestais** meeting hosted by the Peruvian Forest Service achieved the dual outcomes of more commitment to recognizing Indigenous Peoples rights and securing the government's support for a Tenure Facility project. It also served to earn the commitment of MegaFlorestais leaders to develop a five-year strategic plan and to fundraise for the event. A more intentional follow-up to these gatherings would enable RRI to better gauge and communicate the impact of MegaFlorestais in affecting policy changes over time. The same holds true for the host of **Dialogues** on climate and REDD+ organized during the year and some **Strategic Response Mechanism**-supported activities, such as an Asia regional meeting ahead of the **World Forestry Congress** that resulted in information-sharing and awareness-building but with few distinct outcomes. Better defining the potential returns of this type of intervention at the very outset will enable RRI to assess whether investing time, money, and effort is a strategic use of resources.

The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility is established

The **International Land and Forest Tenure Facility** (“the Tenure Facility”) was officially launched in September 2014 to increase the tenure security of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in rural, forest, and dryland areas, through (i) the provision of funding and technical support for reform projects sponsored by relevant stakeholder groups, governments, and civil society organizations in developing countries; and (ii) a convening platform to help raise and coordinate commitments across key constituencies, and develop shared strategies to strengthen community land and territorial rights in developing countries.

The Tenure Facility activities in 2015 were guided by the approved design document which laid out the rationale, theory, and implementation schedule. A Transition Team, comprised of RRG staff and dedicated resources, has overseen the establishment of the Tenure Facility and built a solid base for institutional independence by the end of 2016.

The Tenure Facility has been advised by the Tenure Facility Advisory Group, which is comprised of representatives from leading bilateral and multilateral initiatives and institutions (World Bank, IFC, FAO, Sida, UN- REDD), as well as private sector, indigenous, and civil society organizations. The Tenure Facility's Interim Board was formally established by the RRG Board in their annual January 2016 meeting. The Tenure Facility's social and environmental standards, governance structure, accountability rules and policies, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were developed during 2015 and vetted at the first joint Interim Board and Advisory Group meeting in March 2016.

Throughout the year, a number of critical bilateral and multilateral engagements were pursued at the international level to share information and stimulate support for the Facility, including the UN Forum on Forests in New York (May 2015), the Dialogue co-organized by RRI and the Rainforest Foundation Norway in Oslo (May 2015), and the UNFCCC COP21 (December 2015) in Paris. Optional locations for domiciling the institution were assessed, and a decision was made to defer final site selection until another donor was secured.

Given the explicit aim of developing a nimble and strategic institution, capable of serving a broad subset of constituencies, including groups that have so far been marginalized by the existing institutional mechanisms (i.e., Indigenous Peoples' and community-based organizations), care has been dedicated to generating useful knowledge from engagement with these key stakeholders.

A portfolio of six pilot projects was launched in 2015. Pilots in **Indonesia, Peru, Panama, Liberia, Mali, and Cameroon** are testing Tenure Facility project cycle management and providing feedback for shaping

the Tenure Facility at the same time as the projects themselves accelerate implementation of reforms by governments. During 2015, the pilot project leaders actively participated in shaping the Tenure Facility so that the Facility responds to their needs. That process has also generated the trust and legitimacy required for long-term success.

The Tenure Facility is well-positioned to become independent during 2016. During 2016, the Advisory Group will be expanded to include members from regional networks of indigenous and local communities. The Facility's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework will be tested and modified through its application across the six pilot projects during 2016.

Elevating women's rights in tenure regimes and reforms

In many ways, 2015 represented a watershed moment in RRI's gender justice strategy. Due in large part to increased donor commitment, RRI was able to dedicate more efforts towards reflecting on how to best orient its work on gender, the results it seeks to achieve and the strategy for doing so. Much of 2015 was therefore dedicated to codifying relevant thinking and learning processes, and developing the networks and methodologies needed to deliver on the Coalition's promise to advance gender justice in collective tenure systems.

In 2015, a number of gains were made on this front. In **Colombia**, RRI's support to local women's networks culminated in the development of the first public policy for rural women's rights within the National Development Plan (NDP) — the country's main development roadmap — potentially setting the stage for the successful implementation of a law promoting tenure equity between rural men and women. Also in **Colombia**, an RRI-sponsored workshop resulted in a number of recommendations to strengthen the role of indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant women in public policy platforms dealing with land tenure, climate change, and sustainable development. These recommendations, informed by a **study on advancing women's rights in REDD+**, were presented to the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Gender Equity and used to inform the newly established Office of Rural Women. In **Burkina Faso**, after support to the demarcation of their land, eleven women's organizations were able to submit applications for local land certificates. In **Cameroon**, a position document on the rights of women in the land reform process gained substantial traction within government circles, with the Ministry for Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) actively leading on its promotion even today. Again in **Cameroon**, engagement with traditional chiefs and their wives ("Queen Mothers") enabled to gain incremental — if still limited — support from customary leaders on the importance of including women's tenure rights in the ongoing land reform process.

In 2015, RRI identified the first set of indicators and gathered initial data needed to expand its **tenure tracking** to include gender-disaggregated data capturing the extent to which women's land rights are protected in national laws and policies. It gained a greater understanding of the current narrative, existing gaps and range of actors working on **gender-differentiated impacts of large-scale land acquisitions** (LSLAs), enabling RRI to better identify its niche in addressing the impacts for women within collective tenure systems.

RRI's quest for a deeper engagement on gender justice also generated a number of key learnings, not least of which, the need to be pragmatic in scope, to better define pathways of change and specify expected outcomes. Efforts at elevating women's rights in global networks and platforms, such as the **International Conference on Community Land Rights**, the **Global Call to Action** and the **COP21**, for example, did not lead to results beyond increasing awareness, boosting participation and disseminating

information. Initial steps taken in 2015 to adjust course in this respect included shifting the composition of the gender working group, working to ensure parity in the Steering Group of the Global Call to Action and initiating the development of a strategy for COP22. In addition, in 2016, RRI will place greater efforts on strengthening the gender portfolio in the Asia region.

Adjusting the Coalition to achieve greater impact

In many ways, 2015 has also been a year of renewal for the RRI Coalition. Thirteen of the existing RRI Partners signed a new **Memorandum of Understanding** in June of 2015. The Memorandum of Understanding was adjusted to reflect the Coalition's ambition for the next five years. Three new **Goals** were set: the Coalition vowed (1) to substantially increase the forest area under local ownership and administration, with secure rights to manage, conserve, use and trade products and services; (2) to prevent all changes to national laws and regulations that weaken the customary and statutory forest land rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and simultaneously promote new laws that strengthen customary and statutory rights of IP; and (3) to dramatically reduce poverty in the forested areas of the world. The Coalition set two new **Targets** as global indicators of progress — all situated within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals: (1) at least 50 percent of lower and middle income country forest area is owned or designated for use by Indigenous Peoples and local communities by 2030; and (2) Indigenous Peoples and local communities have recognized rights to manage, conserve, use and trade forest products and services in 100 percent of the area under their ownership or designated use by 2030. These new Goals and Targets will serve as reference points to structure, monitor and assess the Coalition's work into the future.

In addition, recognizing that the Coalition needed adjustment to expand its reach and better engage with other relevant networks, a new category — **Affiliated Networks** — was added to the final document in 2015. Affiliated Networks are networks (institutional or informal) of key constituencies (such as Indigenous Peoples, forest communities, women, policy-makers, academia, and civil society) that have regional and/or global relevance, that complement RRI's capacities and advocacy efforts, and are committed to advancing RRI's strategic priorities.

In 2015, the Coalition also took three major steps to improve the way it plans for its annual work. First, it sharpened its focus to a smaller set of countries, where RRI deemed to have the most potential to play a decisive role in advancing the implementation of tenure reforms at the national level. This decision influenced the development of the Coalition's **Work Plan for 2016** and will serve to anchor additional adjustments that will be made to the Coalition's planning functions in the coming years.

Second, RRI increased the budget allocated to the **Strategic Response Mechanism** (SRM) two-fold. This increase in the SRM budget will enable RRI to continue to respond to opportunities in many of its countries of engagement and beyond, and ensure that the high impact and high level of efficiency of this mechanism is maintained.

And third, RRI decided to base a majority of its strategic analysis and communications work on the needs and opportunities to advance its agendas at the national level. This bottom-up approach, combined with the new matrix organization and management structure (described below), better positions RRI to support actions and take advantage of opportunities in countries where the laws, policies, lands and lives are most affected by the work it does.

Strengthening the Secretariat and preparing for the future

Amidst all of this activity, and building on the findings of the [Mid-Term Evaluation of RRI](#), the Rights and Resources Group (RRG) — the Coalition’s Secretariat — has worked steadily during the year to strengthen its organizational operations while also bolstering its ability to respond to emerging needs and provide better services to its Partners and Collaborators.

Rapid growth over the last several years had resulted in an overly bureaucratic and siloed structure. This, in addition to the departure of several founding Directors and the desire to provide more leadership opportunities for staff, indicated that it was time for major adjustments to the Secretariat.

In 2015, RRG executed two major organizational shifts. First, it established new executive and senior management teams to lead the organization. And second, in an effort to collapse programmatic silos, it moved from a functional organization to a **matrix organization**; changing the way it works and building staff capacity to deal with high levels of complexity and ambiguity. The Secretariat also hired a **Senior Director of Finance** to strengthen the Secretariat’s ability to deliver its mandate more efficiently, and minimize delays in contracting the work of its Partners, Collaborators, and consultants. It further invested in **technology** to increase reliability and efficiency, and initiated the upgrade of every major operational system within the organization. Though this process is still ongoing, the organization has contracted a software solutions company to review RRI’s **business systems and processes**, and identify current and future technology needs to support the operations of the Secretariat. The finance team reviewed all of the Secretariat’s **internal controls** and conducted an IT Assessment and internal audit that was used to inform the modernization of its office operations. At the direction of the Audit Committee, the Secretariat developed a set of **Key Performance Indicator’s** (KPIs) that will be included with the quarterly financial statements to give the RRI Board and management team a better view of RRI’s financial condition.

Also in 2015, the Secretariat launched **Director’s Desk**, an online portal designed to serve as a paperless board. Aimed at providing the Board with greater access and tools in the preparation and conduct of Board meetings, Director’s Desk enables the Secretariat to facilitate the work of its international Board by providing them with a centralized portal accessible at any time, and from all corners of the world.

RRG is confident that these changes better position it to sustain performance as a Secretariat and give Coalition members the support they need to advance their work. But these are only initial steps of a much longer process. The Secretariat is committed to even greater movement on this front. RRG needs to tackle the rate of **personnel turnover** that has affected the organization in 2015. It also needs to improve the way it **plans, monitors, and reports** on activities and put greater effort in **communicating** its roadmap toward impact.

RRI’s next strategic plan, Framework Proposal III, will provide the Secretariat with an opportunity to adjust, improve, and innovate. RRG promises to take advantage of this opportunity to prove that it can be even more efficient and accountable in its mandate, without sacrificing the heart and soul of the organization.

Annex 1: 2015 financial results

2015 was a successful year financially. **Total Revenue** grew from \$11M (USD) in 2014 to \$16.5M (USD) in 2015, a growth rate of 50 percent, primarily due to the incubation of the Tenure Facility. RRG continued to find ways to put as much of its funds as possible towards programmatic impact. In 2015, RRG increased the percentage of **program expenses** as a percent of total expenses from 83 percent in 2014 to 87 percent in 2015.

RRG's **working capital** increased from \$1.8M at the end of 2014 to \$2.8M at the end of 2015 as a result of a large advance disbursement of 2016 funds from one donor to help protect against additional funding cuts and a large unrestricted gift received at the end of the year. It is RRI's intention to maintain a higher level of working capital until economic conditions improve. At the direction of the Board, RRI has increased the Board Designated Reserves to \$1M to provide the organization with more of a cushion against short-term fluctuations in cash flow. (An additional \$300K was added to Reserves at the 2016 Governance Meeting). By the end of the year, RRI's Net Assets had increased from \$1.6M in 2014 to \$2.9M an increase of 45 percent, which puts us in a relatively stable position for 2016.

Looking at 2016, the Board Approved budget was \$14.8M which represents a 10-percent reduction from 2015 to reflect reduced funding for RRI's Second Framework Program (FP2), which ends in 2017. To improve opportunities for impact within the boundaries of available funding, RRI has reduced its focus to seven spotlight countries. To increase its ability to respond quickly to emerging opportunities for impact that have a short response window, RRI has increased the allocation to Strategic Response Mechanisms (SRMs) from 10 percent of the program budget to 20 percent for a total of \$1.2M in 2016.

In early 2016, RRI was struck with sudden decreases in core support from three major longstanding donors — for a loss of over \$1M. This also meant that a growing percentage of program support is tied to grants, putting at risk the RRI model of flexible and responsive support to strategic opportunities. RRI is thus seeking to diversify its funding portfolio to protect itself against further reductions in funding and reduce its exposure to foreign currency risk due to its current reliance on European government agencies as primary funding sources.

Annex 2: Key findings of the 2015 Mid-Term Evaluation

In 2015, RRI commissioned a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) focused on assessing the Coalition's overall performance related to its planned strategic and programmatic impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities identified in Framework Program II. The MTE further considered relevant organizational and governance matters affecting RRI's capacity to pursue its goals, and identified recommendations for improved future performance. The 2015 Mid-Term Evaluation was carried out by Universalia, a consultancy firm based out of Montreal, Canada. The full Mid-Term Evaluation report is available online and may be accessed [here](#).

Below are the key findings from the Evaluation:

Finding 1: Consulted stakeholders agree that RRI is perceived as a world leader in working towards the recognition of collective, and particularly Indigenous Peoples' forest and land tenure rights.

Finding 2: RRI's adaptation to the unique complexities of each national context is a key source of its relevance at the national level.

Finding 3: The RRI Coalition operated and is perceived differently in different national contexts.

Finding 4: There is much information in support of RRI's effectiveness in contributing to the recognition and enforcement of forest and land tenure reforms.

Finding 5: There is some evidence of progress toward the FPPII outcome, but limited country data related to progress on RRI targets.

Finding 6: There is ample evidence of progress toward the FPPII outputs. RRI has met or exceeded expectations for the majority of its logframe outputs.

Finding 7: RRI has increased its efforts to ramp up and advance the forest tenure and land rights and reform agenda, and accelerate reforms.

Finding 8: RRI has identified, engaged and mobilized new constituencies.

Finding 9: The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility is largely perceived as a strategic step forward for RRI, and has already contributed increased funding to the customary forest tenure and land rights agenda.

Finding 10: The Strategic Response Mechanism has provided funding support to Coalition Partners and Collaborators to respond quickly to emerging issues outside the constraints of the annual planning cycle.

Finding 11: Awareness of the Strategic Response Mechanism differs significantly from one region to another, and Partners and Collaborators lack clarity on Strategic Response Mechanism selection processes.

Finding 12: RRI has supported Partners and Collaborators in integrating gender mainstreaming into the customary forest tenure and land rights agenda. However, RRI's monitoring and evaluation framework does not yet include gendered objectives and indicators.

Finding 13: RRI plays an important strategic analysis role through its publications, which build on knowledge provided by various Coalition members. RRI's strategic analyses have situated and established the terms of debate and informed key decision makers and policy makers in the field of tenure rights.

Finding 14: RRI has been most effective at communicating, networking, and convening at the global level, somewhat less so at the national level, and far less so at regional and cross-regional levels, where interest and demand is increasing.

Finding 15: RRI gives global visibility and access to national organizations, campaigns, and people, which is largely perceived as valuable by Coalition actors.

Finding 16: RRI's advocacy work is based on a dual strategy at global and national levels. At the global level, it is effective due to the diversity of its participants and their own strategic practices. Its effectiveness at national level stems from its ability to adapt its strategies to national contexts.

Finding 17: RRI has contributed to significant increases in political will favouring customary land and forest tenure reform processes at national government levels, though less so at sub-national levels.

Finding 18: RRI's development and facilitation of MegaFlorestais, a network of public forest agency leaders, is perceived as having made a modest though important contribution to increasing political will.

Finding 19: Though controversial (notably in the Global South), there is solid evidence that RRI's work with the private sector through its two-pronged approach to engagement based in advocacy and dialogue is relevant and effective.

Finding 20: RRI's work has translated into modest community economic development benefits and opportunities for local populations.

Finding 21: RRI has attracted the attention and significant financial commitments of individual and institutional investors.

Finding 22: A review of RRI's financial situation demonstrates that it is financially healthy and stable.

Finding 23: Documents reviewed and stakeholders consulted suggested there was room for RRI to improve the management and allocation of its human resources, a matter that RRI has started addressing.

Finding 24: A certain measure of free-riding has been recognized as a persistent problem facing the RRI Coalition, raising concerns both about efficiency and membership. The extent of the problem remains unclear and a strategic response has yet to be crafted.

Finding 25: RRI's annual planning cycle and project funding approach tends not to favour the sustainability and resilience of RRI Collaborators' efforts. Collaborators would prefer biennial strategizing, planning and funding cycles.

Finding 26: RRI faces challenges in conflict-affected environments, which pose a constant threat to the sustainability of its work.

Finding 27: RRI regularly reviews its governance and strategic direction.

Finding 28: RRI's annual planning, implementation and reporting cycle is seen to be too short and strategically limiting for RRI Collaborators. However, RRI's funding model limits its ability to commit funds for longer periods.

Finding 29: RRI's monitoring and evaluation system is considered adequate by Coalition members. Its limitations stem from being only partially geared at providing data for tracking progress on land and livelihoods at national and global levels.

Finding 30: RRI monitoring mechanisms provide data for high-level decision-making and reporting, notably for the Secretariat. Partners and Collaborators feel that there is room for improvement in RRI monitoring, particularly with respect to national level data, SRM monitoring, and in terms of the accessibility of data throughout the Coalition.

Finding 31: RRI has a good communication system but has not yet built a culture of learning across the Coalition.

Finding 32: RRI uses confusing terminology for levels of results, which affects the coherence of its operations and as well as its reporting to donors.

The Rights and Resources Initiative

RRI is a global coalition of 14 Partners and over 150 international, regional, and community organizations advancing forest tenure, policy, and market reforms. RRI leverages the strategic collaboration and investment of its Partners and Collaborators around the world by working together on research, advocacy and convening strategic actors to catalyze change on the ground.

RRI is coordinated by the Rights and Resources Group, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit www.rightsandresources.org.

Partners



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