



The crisis of insecure land rights—most immediately felt by the millions of Indigenous Peoples and other local communities who risk losing their lands and livelihoods—profoundly impacts our ability to confront climate change, increase food security, and overcome poverty.

And while the level of recognition of this crisis, including the [Voluntary Guidelines](#) and commitments from the G8 and the World Bank, are beacons of hope as we look to 2014, continued mobilization to ensure these commitments are acted upon will be necessary.

The recent [international conference](#) to dramatically scale-up efforts to secure community land and resource rights built shared agendas among key players including governments, civil society, the private sector, and conservation organizations, all of whom have a direct, common, and urgent interest in clarifying and securing the ownership of the developing world's lands and resources. The conference, which brought together 180 participants from 40 countries, was an important milestone toward the kind of consistent and coordinated action that we hope will characterize efforts to support community tenure in the years to come.

Conference co-conveners—RRI, Oxfam, the International Land Coalition, IUCN, and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation—recognize that what we, and the entire international community, have been doing on this issue is not enough, and have called for doubling the amount of land recognized as owned or controlled by Indigenous Peoples and local communities by 2018.

The examples of ongoing work in Asia, Africa, and Latin America highlighted below—many implemented by conference participants—can benefit from the increased coordination and commitments from key stakeholders to scale up efforts to secure land rights. But the conference was just a starting point. We owe it to the roughly 2 billion people whose rights are at risk to push this movement forward.

- Rights and Resources Initiative

Click [here](#) to learn about our reasons for engaging in these areas of the world.



The 2013 Rethinking Forest Regulations Workshop: The 2013 meeting of the [Rethinking Forest Regulations Workshop](#) series, held on July 22-26 in Montana, U.S., exposed participants to an effective and innovative regulatory model that is inclusive of various stakeholders and respects individual and collective property rights. With simultaneous interpretation provided in French and Spanish, it also promoted information sharing through frank and open dialogue beyond the usual language barriers. Participants discussed the broad challenges confronting forest agencies including the growing pressures from other ministries – such as agriculture, environment, and mining – as well as private investors and the international community. The workshop served as an important tool to affect real change in the regulatory frameworks of participating countries, as well as broaden RRI's network of contacts receptive to its values within these countries. Particularly important was the bringing together of officials from Senegal, Myanmar, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, all of whom are in the process of designing new regulations. See [workshop resources and presentations](#). [Contact Claire Biason](#).

International conference on community land and resources rights: The [Conference on Scaling-Up Strategies to Secure Community Land and Resource Rights](#), co-convened by RRI, HELVETAS, ILC, Oxfam and IUCN, concluded on a high note on September 19-20. See [full coverage and photographs](#) from the conference, which packed about 180 participants representing indigenous and local communities, the private sector, national governments, academia and the NGO sectors from 40 countries, and garnered over 320 media hits in seven languages. The conference was a significant accomplishment for RRI—both in terms of achieving a rare coming together of some of the most critical stakeholders working on land and resource rights, and in developing agendas for practical steps forward across five main thematic areas: mapping and documentation, legal recognition, private sector investment, international platforms and rights-based conservation. The event will have a global impact by establishing the groundwork for a movement to double the global area under secure community land tenure by 2018. Read the [Community Land Rights Blog](#) and see a [two-minute video](#) capturing the essence of the conference, and continuing the momentum and conversation it started. Read the [press statement](#) released by the Conference co-organizers on September 20. [Contact Claire Biason](#).

New RRI analysis highlighting financial risks in large scale land acquisitions: On September 18, RRI launched a new landmark analysis highlighting the substantial financial risks faced by investors when key players in large scale land acquisitions ignore the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. The report, [Global Capital, Local Concessions: A Data-Driven Examination of Land Tenure Risk and Industrial Concessions in Emerging Market Economies](#), prepared for RRI by The Munden Project, investigates a critical problem for investors in emerging economies: overlapping land claims that diminish the value and viability of industrial concessions. This "land tenure risk" extends across all land-dependent sectors, regardless of concession type. The report was launched just before the above mentioned conference in Interlaken, and received global media attention by outlets such as the Associated Press, The Guardian, The Washington Post, Agence France Presse and Radio France International. [Contact Bryson Ogden](#).



AFRICA

REGIONAL

Using REDD and VPA-FLEG T to secure communities' rights to forests and lands: A workshop in Douala on September 23-26 allowed 19 African NGOs (part of the Africa Community Rights Network (ACRN)) to meet and share information on the REDD and FLEG T processes, learn lessons from each other's experiences and agree on a strategy to better address community rights issues. The workshop, was organized by CED, included 40 participants from Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire, along with representatives of RRI, FERN, Forest Peoples Programme and Global Witness. ACRN members shared information on the ongoing REDD and VPA processes in their respective countries and will be used to produce an analytical report and policy briefs to be used at local, regional and international forums. Key points of the discussion included: the importance of specifying types of community land rights that lead to land security, forest land conversion, women's involvement in decision-making, inter-sectoral conflicts among local administrations, the weaknesses of civil society organizations, and the status of NGO funding for protection of community rights. In order to link this information and make strategic projections at the global level, the participants considered and agreed upon the recommendations of the [13th RRI Dialogue on Forests, Governance, and Climate Change](#). [Contact Hortense Ngonu](#).

BURKINA FASO

Gender Study Workshop on Mining Code: TENFOREST's Gender Study Workshop on the Mining Code, held in Kombisiri on August 23, provided critical insight and recommendations for the inclusion of gender-related issues in Burkina Faso's legal mining codes. The workshop convened a variety of stakeholders – the TENFOREST steering committee, mining and land experts, state mining officials, private sector mining actors, and civil society organizations promoting human rights, gender equality, and the decentralization of land ownership and management – to discuss and constructively design national measures to safeguard vulnerable populations adversely affected by mining activities. [Contact Jennifer Schenk](#).

CAMEROON

Update on Forestry Law Reform: At a high-level meeting in Yaoundé on September 12, representatives of the Cameroonian Prime Minister informed participants that a proposed revision of the country's forest law, submitted to the Prime Minister in December 2012 by Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), is now under consideration by the government. RRI's recommendations were included in the draft law submitted by MINFOF, and highlighted the internal gaps and contradictions in the existing legal framework for sustainable forest management. RRI and Green Development Advocates also presented a study on problems with how community rights are taken into account in the current land reform process. The government representatives appreciated the results of the study and invited RRI to submit a summary report of proposals for improvement in the law. Participants of the meeting included representatives of the Department of Parliamentary Affairs, the Parliamentary Network, MINFOF, NGOs, forest experts and development organizations. [Contact Robinson Djeukam](#).



AFRICA

Parliamentarian dialogue to harmonize sectoral policies: A workshop on the harmonization of sectoral policies, held on July 25-26 in Kribi, promoted the legal recognition of community rights and the need to consolidate these rights for sustainable natural resource management. Forty participants, including two senators, 11 parliamentarians, development organizations, traditional leaders, private sector representatives, natural resource management experts and a representative of Parliamentary Affairs for the Cameroonian Government were in attendance. The event fostered understanding of the frustration, deprivation and abuse that local populations bordering mining and forestry sites face. It highlighted the lack of clarity involved in the management of the Annual Forest Tax (RFA), and the lack of regulations on recording and management of mining revenues. In addition, contentious situations were noted between State/forest holders and populations, protected areas, communities and investors, institutions, neighboring states and across sectors. The participants stressed the important role of parliamentarians to resolve these crises, who in turn proposed a study on the costs and benefits of activities to improve government processes throughout the country. These observations and the resulting studies on the “harmonization of sectoral policies” and the “management of mining and forestry income share for populations” will be used as advocacy tools for the Senate and Parliament. The workshop was organized by the Network of Parliamentarians in Cameroon (REPAR), RRI, and the Ministry of Planning in Cameroon.

[Contact Hortense Ngonu.](#)

LIBERIA

Strengthening customary land and property rights: On August 14, 21 participants from several civil society organizations and development partners working on land and natural resources policy reform issues in Liberia resolved to 1) facilitate a nationwide consultation process to strengthen and secure customary land and property rights protection under the Liberian constitution, 2) work with the Forest Development Authority, USAID PROSPER Project, Green Advocates and other stakeholders to address the current inconsistencies between the Community Rights Law and existing Community Rights Law regulations, and 3) create a committee to re-engage the Government of Liberia and other stakeholders on the future of the Liberian REDD process, for which Green Advocates will serve as the secretariat. These actions will serve to mobilize communities and civil society actors across Liberia to push for land and property rights policy formulation in favor of community rights and adoption, as well as ensure that necessary and agreed upon community land rights amendments are provided to the Liberian Constitutional Review Committee. [Contact Alfred Brownell.](#)



ASIA

REGIONAL

Recommendations on LSLAs provided to Human Rights Commissions in ASEAN framework: The 3rd Agribusiness and Human Rights in Southeast Asia workshop brought representatives from National Human Rights Institutions from Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Timor Leste together with representatives from supportive civil society organizations to assess developments in safeguarding human rights in the agribusiness sector and develop an action plan for effective State-level enforcement of these rights. The August 7-9 workshop, held in Bangkok, Thailand, introduced the Montien Resolution calling on Southeast Asian countries to establish their own independent Human Rights Commissions in line with international law, and highlighting the non-existence of Human Rights Commissions in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Singapore, and Vietnam. This kind of collaboration and cooperation in the region has the potential to increase implementation of international standards and norms in addressing human rights and bolster the ability of watchdog organizations, such as the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights, to monitor and enforce human rights frameworks.

[Contact Ganga Dahal.](#)

International mapping conference on participatory mapping in Indigenous Peoples territories: Organized by Tebtebba, representatives of 17 countries and several resource experts convened in North Sumatra, Indonesia, on August 25-27, to produce the Toba Declaration which calls on national governments and international mechanisms to embrace community mapping as an integral component to realizing indigenous rights and the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in climate change policy. During a technical working group meeting for operationalizing community-based monitoring and information systems (CBMIS) following the conference, participants called for further integration and coordination of CBMIS proponents at the regional and global level. The conference provided a forum to share best practices, discuss challenges to participatory mapping and the risks associated with exchanging indigenous forestry knowledge, and how these seemingly disparate groups can work together to strategically advance their agendas as preparations for the 2014 World Conference of Indigenous Peoples begin. [Contact Raymond de Chavez.](#)

New publication on LSLAs and human rights in SE Asia: In August, Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) released a series of studies – [Agribusiness large scale land acquisitions and human rights in Southeast Asia](#) – that provide an overview of large scale land acquisitions (LSLA) in Asia and its effects on safeguarding human rights. In particular, the report highlights existing laws and policies to protect these rights and identifies trends, common threats, divergences, and possible solutions to ensure compliance and strengthen protection. The study illustrates that pressure to acquire land to expand agribusiness is increasing across Southeast Asia, with most ventures focused on oil palm and sugarcane plantations. It also confirms that in the absence of secure community tenure, sound land governance and protection of human rights, large-scale agribusiness expansion is causing significant social and environmental harm. The study provides important agribusiness literature to better inform policymakers and private sector actors on the dangers to human rights with unregulated agribusiness practices and to local livelihoods with insecure tenure rights and poor land governance. The study has been translated to allow for wider dissemination to policymakers in Myanmar. [Contact Gemma Humphrys.](#)



ASIA

INDONESIA

Improving public awareness to support forest tenure reform strategies: The national Consortium for Agrarian Reform, Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA), collaborated with Indonesia's Television Journalist Association (IJTI) to conduct training for TV journalists on forest tenure reform, on July 13-14 in Jember, East Java. Iwan Nurdin (KPA's Secretary General), Yadi Hendriyadi (IJTI's Chairman), Dianto Bachriadi (Vice Chairman of National Commission of Human Rights or Komnas HAM RI), and Imam Wahyudi (Member of National Press Council) presented on the importance of forest tenure reform to 25 journalists from East Java. As a result, the journalists committed to creating original news stories on forest tenure/agrarian reform for local TV stations in Java twice per month. The success of the training and information dissemination has led to a follow-up training for journalists in West Java and the production of a training guide for wider dissemination. Such community support will serve to increase public awareness and understanding of forest tenure issues, as well as intensify political pressure on safeguarding land rights and curbing climate change. Moreover, KPA's leadership in advancing land reform has been instrumental in ensuring equitable policies are ingrained in Indonesia's draft Land Bill. On July 27, KPA provided recommendations for the bill that included streamlining the processes for Indigenous Peoples, women, and other marginalized groups to obtain land rights under the Bill. These points are now under consideration:

- i. Land Bill must be implementation of Basic Agrarian Law 1960 (UUPA 1960), not its replacement;
- ii. Land Bill must stop sectoralism in land by implementing the Bill to all Indonesia's area without any separation between forest and non-forest area;
- iii. Land Bill must promote implementation of genuine agrarian reform and agrarian conflict settlement; and
- iv. Land Bill must strengthen the rights of farmers, indigenous people, poor-people and women in getting land rights.

[Contact Naomi Basik.](#)

NEPAL

Mobilization of private sector support: In July, FECOFUN leaders and other civil society representatives met with government and private sector actors to discuss the role of community forest enterprise (CFE) in advancing development and green growth goals. On July 16, this first-of-its-kind meeting in Indreni Foodland identified the private sector's role in CFE development in Nepal, provided an opportunity to discuss CFEs contribution to Nepal's Green Growth agenda, and address ongoing challenges to the sector. As a result, both civil society and private sector leaders have agreed to develop a common advocacy agenda to ensure they meet community livelihoods and national revenue generation goals. To follow on this progress, nine district workshops were held in the Doti districts to create awareness of the barriers inhibiting advancement of sustainable forest management, forest enterprise, green job creation, and overall economic growth. Localized strategizes were identified and put in place to overcome these obstacles to success. Two-thousand community members participated, gaining critical insight on how the roles of various stakeholders affect success of CFEs and green jobs initiatives. The media attention earned from these workshops catalyzed new political will on the part of community forest user groups (CFUGs), roll back regulatory barriers to CFE development, and could impact voter behavior in national elections to be held in November. [Contact Ganga Dahal.](#)



ASIA

Ensuring community rights are included on the national policy agenda: On September 28-30, FECOFUN and HELVETAS and other members of the RRI Coalition held two timely and critical dialogues in Kathmandu, Nepal, with leaders of the four leading political parties in Nepal to discuss the need to recognize local people's rights and grant them full ownership of forests and forestlands. As a result, these leading parties have committed to actively endorse community forestry and protection of community property rights in their platforms for the forthcoming November Nepali election. Representatives from the four parties present have included the community rights agenda in their election manifestos, with many parties expressing their commitments to include these rights prior to the election. The four parties present also endorsed some 40 community forestry activist candidates for the upcoming Constituent Assembly election. The dialogues provided a strategic opportunity for Nepali community forestry advocates to participate in high level political processes, set a precedent for their inclusion in the pre-election process, and have the potential to influence sweeping reforms at a national level, including, but not limited to, the Nepali constitution. [Contact Ganga Dahal.](#)

Advocating for Gender inclusive policies in the forestry sector: Throughout the third quarter of 2013, the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Association for Natural Resource Management (HIMAWANTI) organized four district level interactions and four community rights dialogues to ensure gender justice is considered in forestry policymaking. These meetings convened government agents and community members, particularly from marginalized groups – such as women, Indigenous Peoples, and landless citizens – to raise awareness and advance understanding of current threats to realizing community forestry rights in practice. As a result, HIMAWANTI and the National Resource Management Confederation have successfully built alliances with indigenous (NEFIN), dalit (RDN-Nepal), and land and water rights groups to work more synergistically in advancing the pro-poor rights agenda. Moreover, HIMAWANTI successfully created an informal “Women's leadership circle” network to share lessons learned and expertise on gender issues in preparation for a forthcoming study. [Contact Ganga Dahal.](#)



LATIN AMERICA

REGIONAL

Promotion of gender justice as a key component of RRI regional and national strategies: On September 26-27, Nitlapan hosted a two day workshop in Managua, Nicaragua, to discuss barriers to securing gender equitable tenure and territorial rights, share best practices, and strategizes alternatives to overcoming these challenges. Although Latin America leads in global efforts to secure forest and territory rights to local communities, very little has been done to ensure that women are equally benefiting from these gains. The 41 participants in this workshop – representing 24 organizations and 8 countries – forged new alliances and promised to work together to scale up efforts on a more gender inclusive approach to collective forest ownership and territories in each of their countries.

[Contact Omaira Bolaños.](#)

BELIZE

Preserving the rule of law in southern Belize: Since 2010, the Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) has worked with 38 Mayan communities in southern Belize to overturn a decision denying their communities the legal right to the lands they occupy (a decision that overturned the initial ruling that the Mayans had legal rights to their land). The decision in 2013, upheld the initial decision, overturning the 2010 decision that had denied this legal right to Mayans. In a triumphant decision for Indigenous Peoples worldwide, the Court of Appeals in Belize ruled, on July 25, in favor of upholding the initial ruling – a historic decision to grant the Maya people of Toledo the legal holding and farming rights to their ancestral lands. Although the government of Belize insists it is not responsible for ensuring these rights, a barrier the Mayans anticipate may prove difficult to overcome in realizing their rights, the Court decision is indeed a victory in advancing the efforts to secure legal land and resource rights for Indigenous Peoples across the globe. [Contact Omaira Bolaños.](#)

GUATEMALA

Inclusive Debate on Legislative Processes Related to Environment, Climate Change and Forests: On September 5, the Guatemalan state passed the national “Framework Law for Regulating the Reduction of Vulnerability, Obligatory Adaptation to the Effects of Climate Change and the Mitigation of Green House Gases GHG” establishing new mechanisms for indigenous and peasant communities to participate in decision-making processes regarding climate change policies. As members of an ad hoc committee formed by that National Congress of Guatemala, la Asociación de Forestería Comunitaria Utz Che, la Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén ACOFOP, and la Alianza Nacional de Organizaciones de Forestería Comunitaria are largely to thank for their successful advocacy efforts leading to the inclusion of community demands in the aforementioned framework law. In addition, the law now requires specific social and environmental safeguards be put in place to protect these communities. Such a victory will serve to expand indigenous and local communities’ abilities to affect national policies, particularly their abilities to protect their rights to land and reap benefits from carbon markets. [Contact Omaira Bolaños.](#)



LATIN AMERICA

PERU

Monitoring the legal status of Territorial Reserves for isolated Indigenous Peoples: In yet another victory for Indigenous Peoples, AIDSEP helped secure official recognition of the existence of Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation in five areas of the Peruvian Amazon. On July 10, Peru's Ministry of Culture issued an official memorandum (Oficio Circular N° 001-2013) calling for the provision of these five reserves to protect these Indigenous Peoples. The decision marks a first for Peru in officially recognizing indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation. It also builds support in favor of other territorial rights for Indigenous Peoples. [Contact Omaira Bolaños.](#)



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PUBLICATIONS & EVENTS

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Global Capital, Local Concessions: A Data-Driven Examination of Land Tenure Risk and Industrial Concessions in Emerging Market Economies

UPCOMING EVENTS

MegaFloresta 2013

October 21-25, 2013

Bali, Indonesia

RRI Regional and Global Programs Planning Meeting

November 11-14, 2013

Washington, DC, USA

RRI Annual Governance Meetings

January 13-17, 2014

Warrenton, VA, USA

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in calling for a *doubling* of the amount of land recognized as owned or controlled by Indigenous Peoples and local communities by 2018

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