About Us

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) is a global coalition of organizations working to encourage forest land tenure and policy reforms and the transformation of the forest economy so that business reflects local development agendas and supports local livelihoods. RRI works at country, regional, and global levels by collaborating on research and advocacy and convening strategic actors.

The RRI Coalition is formed by a group of core Partners who work in their respective areas of regional and thematic expertise. Partners also engage with a wide group of Collaborators who participate in and support RRI activities. Our 15 Partners, six Affiliated Networks, 14 international fellows, and more than 150 collaborating organizations are directly engaged in land and forest policy reforms in countries throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Together, we are working to encourage greater global commitment and action on pro-poor tenure, policy, and market reforms.

RRI goes beyond the traditional set of international development actors to involve a wide spectrum of organizations, each providing a critical perspective necessary to advance change.

The Rights and Resources Group (RRG) is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, that leads the global-level analysis and advocacy, catalyzes new strategic collaboration and advisory groups, and coordinates the governance and activities of the Initiative.

Global Challenge, Global Opportunity

The world is at a turning point. Global land grabs, the battle to slow climate change, and the emergence of dozens of new players—including the BRICs and Middle Eastern nations—necessitate global solutions.

Forests are a critical part of both mitigating climate change and ensuring sustainable development. They cover close to 30 percent of the world’s land area, and more than a billion people rely on forests for their food, fuel, and income. Indigenous Peoples and local communities are increasingly locked out of access to their only real source of wealth—land and its resources. At risk are political stability as well as food security and sustainable development. Secure legal rights for these communities could reduce poverty and hunger in the world’s poorest nations.

Dominant models of forest industry and conservation have often exacerbated poverty and social conflicts and have precluded pro-poor economic growth. The lack of clear rights to own and use forest land, develop enterprises, and trade in forest products has driven millions of forest dwellers to poverty, encouraged widespread illegal logging, and resulted in massive forest loss.

The world will not meet global goals to reduce poverty and protect the environment unless rights to land and resources are clarified and strengthened. Nor will the world effectively mitigate or adapt to climate change without clarifying local tenure and governance. The next two decades are critical for people and forests.

There are reasons for optimism. Indigenous Peoples and local communities are gaining voice and opportunity, and along with their allies have established an unprecedented platform of institutions and tools for scaling-up the recognition of community forest rights. After decades of limited action, many
countries are beginning to consider far-reaching legal and policy reforms, and recognizing community land rights is now internationally accepted as integral to reducing poverty and mitigating climate change. This is a major opportunity to advance the rights and livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples by establishing the institutional foundations for sustained conservation and forest-based economic development.

Core Beliefs

As a coalition of diverse and varied organizations, RRI is guided by a set of core beliefs. We believe that secure, legally recognized community land rights are a prerequisite for achieving global development goals, including decreased conflict, climate change mitigation, poverty reduction, and equitable and sustainable economic growth. We hold several core beliefs about what must happen to ensure tenure security and access and use of natural resources worldwide.

- **Rights of Poor Communities Must Be Recognized and Strengthened**

  We believe it is possible to achieve the seemingly irreconcilable goals of alleviating poverty, decreasing conflict, conserving forests, and encouraging sustained economic growth in forested regions. However, for this to happen, the rights of poor communities to their lands and forests, as well as their rights to participate fully in markets and political processes that regulate forest use, must be recognized and strengthened.

- **Progress Requires Supporting and Responding to Local Communities**

  We believe that progress requires supporting, and responding to, local community organizations’ efforts to secure community land tenure and advance their own well-being.

- **Now is the Time to Act**

  We believe that the next few decades are particularly critical. They represent an historic moment where there can be either dramatic gains, or losses, in the lives and well-being of the forest poor, as well as in the conservation and restoration of the world’s threatened forests.

- **Progress Requires Engagement and Constructive Participation by All**

  It is clear that progress on necessary tenure and policy reforms requires constructive participation by communities, governments, and the private sector, as well as new research and analysis of policy options and new mechanisms to share learning between communities, governments, and the private sector. Secure land rights are not only vital for community livelihoods, but also to government and corporate goals on conflict, development, and climate.

- **Reforming Forest Tenure and Governance Requires a Focused and Sustained Global Effort**

  The movement to secure rights and save forests has never been better-positioned to deliver significant change, but reforming forest tenure and governance to the scale necessary to achieve either the Sustainable Development Goals or the broader goals of improved well-being, forest conservation, and sustained forest-based economic growth will require sustained global effort and support.
The experience and beliefs of the founding Partners are the basis for the Initiative’s focus on rights and governance. They are also the basis for RRI’s Mission, Goals, and Targets.

**Mission**

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

**Goals**

As a diverse coalition of development organizations dedicated to advancing the land and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, RRI has fostered the creation and implementation of innovative solutions to land tenure security to advance three global goals:

1. Substantially increase the forest area under local ownership and administration.

2. Prevent all changes to national laws and regulations that weaken the customary and statutory land rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and simultaneously promote new laws that strengthen customary and statutory rights.

3. Dramatically reduce poverty in the forested area of the world.

**Targets**

RRI advocates two targets as global indicators of progress—situated within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals:

4. 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.

5. 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.

**Leadership**

Coordination of the Rights and Resources Initiative is conducted by the Rights and Resources Group, a non-profit 501 c (3) organization based in Washington DC, United States.

**Andy White**

**Coordinator, Rights and Resources Initiative**

Prior to helping create and establish RRI, Andy served as Senior Director of Programs at Forest Trends and Natural Resource Management Specialist at the World Bank, as well as worked as a consultant to the International Food Policy Research Center, Save the Children Federation and the Inter-American Foundation. He has worked extensively in Haiti, Mexico, and China and supervises policy research,
advocacy, and policy engagement in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. His research and publications have focused on forest tenure and policy, as well as the role of forests and communities in climate change.

awhite@rightsandresources.org

Janis B. Alcorn
RRI Senior Director, Programs & Interim Director, The Tenure Facility

A biologist and anthropologist, Dr. Alcorn has applied her skills in Latin America, Asia, the South Pacific, and Africa for over 25 years. Prior to joining RRI, she served as the Deputy Director for Social Soundness in the USAID global project–Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities. From 2000 to 2012, Dr. Alcorn carried out consulting assignments for USAID, the World Bank, UNDP, and numerous other organizations. Dr. Alcorn began her career as a Peace Corps Volunteer in India. She received her doctorate in botany and anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1982. Her publications include five books and 143 articles and reports from work and research around the world.

jalcorn@rightsandresources.org

Matt Zimmermann
Chief Operating Officer

Contacts

Andy White
Coordinator, Rights and Resources Initiative
awhite@rightsandresources.org

Janis Alcorn
RRI Senior Director, Programs
Interim Director, The Tenure Facility
jalcorn@rightsandresources.org

Matt Zimmermann
Chief Operations Officer
mzimmermann@rightsandresources.org

James Christopher Miller
Director, Finance and Administration
jcmiller@rightsandresources.org

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The Centre for Environment and Development (CED) was created in 1995 with the specific aim of realizing sustainable management of Central Africa’s forests. CED was created to counter the rising threats to forests observed during the 1990s, and situates itself firmly within the local context (where forest destruction takes place, and where its impacts are felt most strongly among communities), as well as the national level (the seat of decision making that leads to or legitimizes deforestation and the dispossession of local peoples). CED also works on the international level where decisions are made affecting the forests and lives of millions of people. For more information, visit the [CED website](#).

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) advances human well-being, environmental conservation and equity by conducting research to help shape policies and practices that affect forests in developing countries. CIFOR is a member of the CGIAR Consortium. Our headquarters are in Bogor, Indonesia, with offices in Asia, Africa and Latin America. For more information, please visit the [CIFOR website](#).

Civic Response was founded in 2003 by a group of social activists with a wide experience of campaigns in Ghana and internationally. Civic Response works to deepen the political economic analysis of grassroots groupings and to facilitate their networking towards the emergence of articulate social movements that could lead in the democratization and development of African societies and in international development struggles. For more information, visit the [Civic Response website](#).

The Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) is a formal network of Community Based Forest User Groups from all over Nepal. FECOFUN emerged from the idea that forest users from all parts of the country should be linked in order to strengthen the role of users in policy making processes. Since its inception in July 1995, FECOFUN has grown into a social movement organization with about 8.5 million people represented - all of whom are forest users. More than 11,200 Community Forest User Groups are affiliated with FECOFUN. For more information see the [FECOFUN website](#).

Forest Peoples Programme supports forest peoples to secure and sustainably manage their forests, lands and livelihoods. Our strategies to achieve this include: (a) promoting the rights and interests of forest peoples at local, national and international levels; (b) creating space for forest peoples to have an effective voice in decision-making processes; (c) challenging top-down policies and projects that deprive local peoples of resources; (d) coordinating support among environmental organizations for forest peoples' vision; (e) supporting community-led sustainable forest management; and (f) publicizing forest peoples’ plight through research, analysis and documentation. For more information, visit the [Forest Peoples Programme website](#).
Forest Trends is an international non-profit organization that works to expand the value of forests to society; to promote sustainable forest management and conservation by creating and capturing market values for ecosystem services; to support innovative projects and companies that are developing these new markets; and to enhance the livelihoods of local communities living in and around those forests. We analyze strategic market and policy issues, catalyze connections between forward-looking producers, communities and investors, and develop new financial tools to help markets work for conservation and people. For more information visit the Forest Trends website.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is a member-based, non-profit organization that is engaged in 30 partner countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Based in Switzerland, the primary focus of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation is to:

- **Reduce poverty** through specific, sustainable development projects and advisory services
- Inform the Swiss public about its work and **raise awareness** concerning global injustice and the necessity to stand up for the needs of the world’s poorest populations.
- **Promote fair trade** of products such as cocoa, rice and cotton from developing countries.
- Participate in global networks, petitions and as a member of Alliance Sud to **take a public stance** on development issues within Switzerland and internationally.

For more information visit the HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation website.

The primary mission of IFRI is to examine how governance arrangements shape forest outcomes in terms of both social and environmental dimensions. Scholars and policy makers affiliated with IFRI are interested in understanding the role of formal and informal institutions in enhancing livelihoods and adaptive capacity of peoples, conserving biodiversity, and promoting greater sustainability in carbon sequestration. IFRI’s goal is to carry out rigorous research that can help policy makers and forest users design and implement improved evidence-based forest policies. Most importantly, IFRI comprises partner collaborating research institutes in North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. As such, it draws on localized knowledge and perspectives in developing its program, and promotes interdisciplinary research and analysis that enables comparability across regions. For more information, visit IFRI’s website.
ISA aims to defend social, indigenous and environmental rights and has pioneered the concept of integrating environmental protection and sustainable development with indigenous groups. ISA’s work has achieved significant impact by influencing public policies and spearheading new laws while effectively developing 70 million hectares through three separate projects, in three different parts of Brazil. It has introduced integrated programs from satellite mapping and monitoring against land invasions, to sustainable income-generation, to schools and clinics designed and operated locally, to extending formal citizenship and advocating for needed national policy changes. These initiatives have become models for indigenous socio-environmental development in Brazil and around Latin America. For more information, visit ISA’s website.

Landesa works at scale to create opportunities for the world’s poorest to lift themselves out of poverty by working side by side with governments and other organizations to strengthen land rights for the landless poor. It provides support for the design and implementation of land systems that reduce poverty, encourage women’s empowerment, promote inclusive economic growth, improve nutrition and health, reduce and prevent violent conflict, and foster environmental stewardship. For more information, visit the Landesa website.

PRISMA (Salvadoran Research Program on Development and Environment) is a policy-oriented research center founded in El Salvador in 1993. Their mission is to work for the social and environmental revalorization of rural communities and territories as an integral aspect of development processes. Our vision is societies that advance toward greater social justice and environmental sustainability.

PRISMA serves as a regional platform for dialogue, critical analysis and action. This platform is an ongoing process, a social construction, based on the following key elements:

- A shared concern by all participants for improving the livelihoods of poor marginalized communities and promoting sustainable development;
- A commitment to a genuine dialogue among different perspectives, focuses, and points of view;
- Fomenting interaction among diverse actors, representing diverse sectors and disciplines, and engaged at a variety of levels.

For more information, visit PRISMA’s website.
RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests is an international organization specializing in community forestry and devolved forest management in Asia and the Pacific. It works to see more communities actively managing more forests in the region to ensure optimal social, economic, and environmental benefits. Since its founding in 1987, RECOFTC has trained more than 10,000 people from over 20 countries in devolved forest management: from national policy makers, researchers, and practitioners right through to local forest users. Training services and learning events are complemented by on-the-ground projects, critical issue analysis, and strategic communications. For more information visit the RECOFTC website.

The Samdhana Institute was formed in 2003 by a group of individuals, conservationists, development practitioners, constituting the first Samdhana Fellows; moved by the same commitment of ‘giving back’ what they know to the next generation; and bringing together skills, knowledge, experiences, networks, colleagues and friends; delivering maturity, strength and sustainability.

Samdhana’s vision is a region where natural, cultural and spiritual diversity are valued, where environmental conflicts are resolved peacefully, with justice and equity. With a growing network of fellows, Samdhana assists in environmental conflict and mediation support and helps local organizations to reflect upon their approaches to: i) problem identification and strategic planning; ii) leading change processes; iii) monitoring and assessment; iv) reflection upon effectiveness. For more information, visit the Samdhana Institute website.

Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) is an indigenous peoples' organization born out of the need for heightened advocacy to have the rights of indigenous peoples recognized, respected and protected worldwide. Established in 1996, Tebtebba seeks to promote a better understanding of the world's indigenous peoples, their worldviews, their issues and concerns. In this effort, it strives to bring indigenous peoples together to take the lead in policy advocacy and campaigns on all issues affecting them. For more information, visit the Tebtebba website.

The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. ICRAF’s primary mission is to advance the science and practice of agroforestry and in doing so, transform the lives and landscapes of the rural poor in developing countries. ICRAF operates in over 20 countries throughout the tropics. ICRAF program research areas are Land and People, Trees and Markets, Environmental Services and Strengthening Institutions Policy research cross-cuts each of these programs. For more information visit the World Agroforestry Centre website.