

*Bringing skills, experience, contacts and passion  
to the worlds of global philanthropy and international development*

---

---

**PHILANTHROPY SUPPORT  
SERVICES, INC.**

## **Assessment Of The 2008 Program**

**Independent Monitor,  
Rights and Resources Initiative**

February 27, 2009

# Assessment of the 2008 Program of the Rights and Resources Initiative

	<i>Page</i>
I. INTRODUCTION .....	3
II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS .....	4
A. Validity of RRI Value Proposition .....	4
B. Creation of Neutral Spaces .....	4
C. Bridging Research and Application .....	4
D. Influencing Research and National Data Collection .....	5
E. Engaging with Industry .....	5
F. Grassroots Voices and Policy Change, A Balancing Act .....	6
G. Global Actors and Actions .....	6
H. RRI Through the Eyes of Another Independent Assessment .....	7
III. OBSERVATIONS ON THE 2008 PROGRAM .....	8
A. <u>RRI Program Areas</u> .....	8
1. Country/Regional Initiatives .....	9
2. Network Support .....	11
3. Strategic Analysis .....	11
4. Global Communication/Outreach .....	11
5. Coordination/Operations .....	12
B. <u>RRI Crosscutting Themes</u> .....	15
1. ATEMs (Alternative Tenure & Enterprise Models) .....	15
2. Realizing Rights .....	16
3. Conflict .....	17
4. Climate Change .....	17
5. Additional Crosscutting themes? .....	17
IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	18

Annex:

*Getting up to Speed in the Sahel, A Few Suggestions* ..... sent separately to RRG

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Monitor was asked by the Rights and Resources Group (RRG) to provide some initial observations and impressions of the 2008 programs/activities of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI). We are happy to do this with two important caveats:

- ❖ there has been no opportunity for field verification and validation<sup>1</sup>, and
- ❖ while a great deal of documentation has been examined, interaction with stakeholders and boundary partners directly involved in this work has been limited to meetings with RRG staff and to brief interactions with some of the participants at the RRI Governance Meeting at Osprey Point.<sup>2</sup>

### An Initial Observation

For the past 20+ years the international community has been struggling to tackle forestry issues. One international forum after another has promised a way forward but in the end failed to make much headway. While discussions of forestry issues have mostly been spinning in circles – from the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests to the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development to the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests to the United Nations Forum on Forests to the Forests Dialogue and beyond<sup>3</sup> – other natural resource sectors, most notably water, have evolved with a great deal more coherence; captured the imagination of governments, donors and stakeholders; and moved on to action. Even in the mundane technical arena of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, no fewer than nine competing processes were launched in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

Into this arena enter the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI). In a very short period of time, with modest funding, a handful of partners and limited staff, RRI has done a remarkable job of:

- ❖ establishing its credibility in the forestry sector
- ❖ inserting RRI issues into the global dialogue, and
- ❖ shaping the global forest agenda

Everyone involved in the conceptualization, support and implementation of the Initiative deserves to take a (short) break, a (deep) breath and a (quiet) moment to celebrate these important achievements. They then need to jump back into the fray, roll up their sleeves and continue moving the RRI agenda forward.

The observations that follow need to be taken in the context of this remarkable progress.

---

<sup>1</sup> The PSS Independent Monitor (IM) was contracted on November 26, 2008, for the period through December 31, 2012. An extensive program of field visits had been scheduled to start in early 2009 with the first full Annual Assessment prepared by November 30, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Rights and Resources Governance Meeting, Osprey Point Retreat Center, Maryland, United States January 14-16, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent treatment of this progression see David Humphreys 2006. *Logjam: Deforestation and the Crisis of Global Governance*. London: Earthscan

<sup>4</sup> Humphreys Table 6.1 p.121-122.

## **II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE RIGHTS AND RESOURCES INITIATIVE (RRI)**

### **A. Validity of the RRI Value Proposition**

The RRI Business plan states:

*The value proposition of this Initiative is that, with a limited incremental investment in improved coherence and coordination, existing organizations can dramatically increase their contributions to the rights, dignity, and development of forest dependent people.<sup>5</sup>*

From everything we have seen to date, RRI is holding true to this value proposition.

As noted earlier, the relevance of RRI's mission is widely acknowledged in the global community and by local organizations. This has been validated by:

- ❖ The demand from organizations to join RRI
- ❖ The eagerness of partners and collaborators to participate in RRI programs
- ❖ The success of fund-raising efforts, and
- ❖ The growing awareness of RRI and its mission at global, regional and community levels.

### **B. Creation of neutral spaces**

RRI is attempting to position itself as a neutral but proactive agent that provides a forum in which a variety of state and non-state actors can safely introduce, research, and debate issues without being overwhelmed or discouraged by emotionally charged advocacy positions. This role for RRI will make a positive contribution to global, national and local dialogues if it can provide a pathway for new ideas on tenure, pro-poor enterprise models, and local resource governance to be introduced into entrenched bureaucracies too often under the influence of powerful commercial and other interests.

So far, indications are that the delicate balance required to maintain neutrality and still have a clearly enunciated mission in favor of local communities has been achieved through skillful and mature approaches of the RRI partners. Inevitably, this position of neutrality will be challenged and some partners and collaborators will push for stronger advocacy while governments and industry may also seek to marginalize RRI's work by branding it as extremist. Developing the skills and tools to respond to these challenges will be important for RRI's future effectiveness.

### **C. Bridging research and application**

RRI has established itself as a coalition that is taking the results of research to policy makers and development actors. This includes assembling and analyzing secondary research results with a focus on tenure and enterprise rights for local communities in forest areas. While some of the partners, particularly the CGIAR partners CIFOR and

---

<sup>5</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative Institutional and Business Arrangements. February 2008. p.2.

ICRAF conduct primary research in their own programs, RRI's role has been to make use of this and other research in its own analyses and to play a major role in its dissemination and application.

So far, this role appears to have been carried out with commendable results. The quality of the RRI publications and the reaction to them has been overwhelmingly positive. The questions of whether, how and how much this work has influenced policy and thereby created significant and lasting change has yet to be assessed. There are also important associated questions on whether RRI has done all that is needed to ensure that research results and policy recommendations have been communicated to the policy makers and end users as effectively as they could be. Answers to the questions could well influence the range and the choice of topics for future analysis and the possibility of outsourcing some or all of this work as RRI moves into the "pivotal" year of 2009 towards an increased emphasis on the implementation of its country and regional initiatives. (For additional discussion of the "pivotal" year see Section III below.)

#### **D. Influencing research and national data collection**

In addition to summarizing and communicating relevant research results, RRI has worked to influence the research agenda of partner organizations to incorporate and/or place additional emphasis on the issues of tenure and local enterprise. RRI has reported that CIFOR has adopted tenure rights as a cross-cutting theme in four of its program areas.<sup>6</sup> We also understand that FAO has adopted tenure parameters as part of its five-yearly collection of statistics from all member countries.<sup>7</sup> Both of these changes could have significant impacts down the line.

#### **E. Engaging with industry**

The larger drama of rights over resources is being played out between a number of disparate actors and forces, as documented in RRI publications. Commercial forest, biofuel, agricultural and other industries are becoming major players in this arena. Local communities, with their supporting NGO organizations, are often relatively mute or ineffective in the debate over use of forest resources. Government bureaucrats are frequently motivated by turf, self-interest, and competing demands from their political constituencies – and yet they are most often the key policy forming and implementing lynchpin in the rights and resources landscape.

As will be discussed later in greater detail, RRI has shown admirable initiative in engaging with the industries whose effect is so large in this arena through working with ITTO to create and enlarge the space for civil society engagement including the discussion of tenure issues. Given the scale and power of these global forces, is RRI

---

<sup>6</sup> We have been unable to validate this claim. The CIFOR website does not highlight rights nor are they mentioned prominently in the CIFOR Strategic Plan for the period 2008-2018 [http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/publications/pdf\\_files/Books/CIFORStrategy0801.pdf](http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/CIFORStrategy0801.pdf) including in the criteria used to prioritize research domains (Box 1, p.28). In fact, typing "rights" in the search section of the CIFOR website yields 300 documents none with a "ranking" (of relevance to the search term) higher than 0%.

<sup>7</sup> The role of RRI in this remains to be assessed. For a critique of FAO's definition of forest tenure and other terms in the most recent State of the Worlds Forests 2007 see: [http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/117/FAO\\_definitions.html](http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/117/FAO_definitions.html)

doing enough in this arena? (See discussion of the RRI annual Global/Regional Scans in Section III below.)

#### **F. Grassroots voices and policy change, a balancing act**

RRI's mandate includes working with local communities to build their capacity to influence policy and program decisions that mold their access to sustainable forest-based livelihoods. However, since there is limited access and internal capacity to reach the thousands of communities involved there is a need to periodically reassess how this is being done, how effective it is, and what alternatives there are. The primary outcomes RRI is seeking to influence are policy changes at national and subnational levels that will improve the rights and livelihoods of forest-dependent people and poor communities. In certain countries, these policies are, or could be, amenable to grassroots advocacy. In others, that is a long-term dream. Keeping a hand in at the grassroots level is an effective strategy adopted by RRI to keep the analysis "real" and nurture the empathy necessary for this kind of work. The presence of FECOFUN and ACICAFOC in the RRI Partnership is an important piece of this strategy. However, there are strategic trade-offs, and RRI will need to examine carefully whether more directly focusing activities on policy makers (including commercial actors) would be more effective in pursuing the Mission of RRI: *to promote greater global action on pro-poor forest policy and market reforms to increase local household and community ownership, control and benefits from forests and trees.*<sup>8</sup>

#### **G. Global actors and actions**

Assessing the success of efforts to influence global-level policies and rights-based global pacts and agreements is difficult. RRI has sought to influence some global agendas (e.g., climate change and associated instruments and policies such as REDD) and has paid less attention to others such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Regional fora that could be used to promote the RRI agenda, such as the Summit of the Americas, do not appear to be on RRI's radar screen. Choosing when and where to engage are difficult strategic decisions. The relative value of engaging in different global fora needs to be and is being subjected to regular informed staff and board scrutiny and on-going independent assessment. Balancing focus on the global forces that are having large impacts on local resource rights with timely interventions and long-term underlying issues will be a continuing challenge.

The choice of which international actors to engage with is also important and difficult. Major multilateral banks and bilateral donors still wield disproportionate influence on policy reform in many of the poorest developing countries. The front line actors in this process, the task managers and sector specialists, are critical to this effort. RRI has not explicitly been targeting this audience. In our view, the time has come to reassess the validity of this decision. Difficult decisions also need to be made about which donor-funded programs to engage with. We commend RRI on its recent formal engagement with WWF-US and its Community Based Forest

---

<sup>8</sup> This statement of the RRI Mission, from the website, includes a small but very important change from the statement in the RRI Institutional and Business Arrangements document (February 2008). "To promote greater global commitment to..." has been changed to "To promote greater global action on..." We commend the Partnership on this change.

Enterprises (CBFE) Program.<sup>9</sup> We recommend that RRI carefully review work currently underway on land rights and tenure with a view to identifying potential allies and strategic partners outside of the forestry sector.

On a separate but related front, a recent decision by RRG to proactively seek out opportunities for interacting with senior-level Washington-based policy makers is a welcome step in the right direction. Attending events and making presentations both serve to raise the profile of RRI and increase the odds of serendipitous connections.<sup>10</sup>

## H. RRI through the eyes of another independent assessment in 2008

As part of its study *Towards a global forest partnership: Consultation, assessment and recommendations*, IIED developed a "map" of 100+ international forestry initiatives and made "a rough assessment of the range, roles and associated strengths and weaknesses of initiatives internationally that already cover some or all of the ground that a potential Global Forest Partnership might cover." The Rights and Resources Initiative was given three stars (high impact in a large number of countries) in the category Empowerment Focus, one star (low impact) in the category Real Connections and Cross-sectoralism and no stars in the categories Global Public Goods Brought Down to Earth and New Forest Investment.<sup>11</sup> The recognition for RRI's empowerment focus is well-deserved. If the IIED assessment is correct, it raises two useful questions:

- ❖ should additional attention be devoted to making connections/building synergy with other efforts (both forestry sector-specific and cross-sectoral)?, and
- ❖ is additional attention warranted to help bring global public goods down to earth?<sup>12</sup>

Our preliminary responses, subject to additional analysis and our own field verification, would be "yes" to the first question and "probably not" to the second. Having said that, RRI does need to be proactively engaged in looking for opportunities to link work at both the global and local levels on global public goods (including the provision of environmental services (PES)) to the RRI Mission of increasing local household and community ownership, control and benefits from forests and trees. RRI is to be commended for its contributions to this IIED study

---

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the interesting programmatic link this expands RRI's engagement with the international environmental NGO community.

<sup>10</sup> Additional Washington venues for presentations that RRG may wish to explore include the Center for Global Development, the Woodrow Wilson Center through its Environmental Change and Security program, and the Brookings Blum Annual Roundtable on Global Poverty (held most years in Aspen).

<sup>11</sup> IIED. 2008. *Towards a global forest partnership: Consultation, assessment and recommendations*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development. Section 2.4 and Annex 6 *Rough guide to international forestry initiatives*. Bringing global public goods (gpg) "down to earth" refers to developing practical mechanisms to sustain gpgs generated by forests (e.g., climate change mitigation/adaptation, biodiversity protection and watershed conservation) in diverse national and local contexts with equitable cost/benefit-sharing.

<sup>12</sup> RRI Partner Forest Trends scores three stars, CIFOR and IUCN two stars (medium impact) and RECOFTC one star in this category.

and for continuing to work with global forestry stakeholders in their ongoing quest both to help the World Bank develop new, value-added forestry investments and to support the development of "a new and radically different approach to partnerships aimed at fostering 'people's forestry.'"<sup>13</sup>

### **III. OBSERVATIONS ON THE 2008 PROGRAM<sup>14</sup>**

RRI has declared 2009 a "pivotal year."<sup>15</sup> In an important sense 2008 was also a "pivotal year" in two senses. First, it was RRI's first full year implementing the Framework Proposal.<sup>16</sup> Second, there was an awakening of major international interest in climate change with its enormous implications for the global forestry agenda. Massive doses of international attention, frenetic "conferencing" and large amounts of money are becoming available for this set of issues. For RRI, and particularly for RRG as the lead voice of the coalition, all of this translated into a rapid reassessment of priorities. It meant that some issues got pushed to the background while large measures of energy and attention were shifted to developing and getting the RRI climate change message onto the international stage.<sup>17</sup> Our assessment of how that effort turned out is presented later in this report.

#### **A. RRI Program Areas**

The program areas used in this section are those used in the RRG Summary Report for 2008: Key Outcomes and Products.<sup>18</sup> In our view, the five categories used in this report are an improvement over the four categories currently on the website. Among the reasons:

- ❖ Adding a 5th category: splitting coordination/communication into two pieces (global communication/outreach and coordination/operations) is a good idea. Category #5 serves to highlight the importance of the care and feeding of the Partnership (and the broader Coalition) as well as the operational issues of RRG/RRI interactions and internal RRG management. The splitting up of communication and coordination also underscores the importance of having a stand-alone category linked to knowledge management and knowledge sharing which are essential themes if RRI is to achieve its overall objectives.

---

<sup>13</sup> Op.cit IIED 2008, p. 5 from the Preface by Chair of the Exploratory Committee Stewart Maginnis. In addition to RRI Board member Maginnis the Exploratory Committee set up to ensure the quality and credibility of the consultation process included RRG's Augusta Molnar and RRI Fellow Hans Gregerson. The Indigenous Peoples Survey was prepared by RRI Partner FPP and the in-country survey in Ghana was done by RRI partner Civic Response.

<sup>14</sup> This section of the Assessment has benefited during the later stages of its preparation from our review of the Final Working Draft and Final Draft of the RRI Annual Progress Report 2008/Integrated Reporting Framework dated 19February2009 and 20February2009.

<sup>15</sup> RRI Email Update October-December 2008, p.1

<sup>16</sup> RRI. November 2007. Accelerating Reforms in Forest Tenure and Governance to Meet Priority Global Challenges: Strategic Analyses, Narratives and Networks to Advance Local Rights and Development. A Framework Proposal from the Rights and Resources Initiative. 79p.

<sup>17</sup> For example, selection and contracting of the Independent Monitor (which slipped to the end of 2008) and work on the Network strategy (which slipped from 2008 into 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative Governance Meeting January 14-16, 2009 Osprey Point Retreat Center, Maryland, United States: Agendas & Background Materials. Tab 4.



- ❖ Changing some names: morphing country initiatives into country/regional initiatives provides a more accurate description of RRI programs and highlights something that far too many development initiatives do not take as seriously as they should: the regional dimensions of their work.
- ❖ Rank order: moving network support up from #3 to #2 and strategic analysis down from #2 to #3 provides a subtle but significant signal that emphasis is shifting from building credibility/making the case to action in 2009. This shift is at the heart of the 2009 "pivot."

## **1. Country/Regional Initiatives**

RRI programs in most countries/regions are off to a strong start. The degree of coherence and coordination varies from region to region, with Africa appearing to have its act together the most and Asia trailing the other two regions. Part of the coherence of the Africa program is due to having a strong, senior Regional Facilitator in place. That the Regional Facilitator is also the leader of RRI's key African partner directly contributes to both the coherence and the momentum.

Regional Facilitators need to be put in place in the other regions/subregions as expeditiously as possible. Regional Coordination from RRG also deserves increased emphasis and attention.

RRI is to be congratulated on both the process and the quality of its regional programming process. The guidelines developed in 2008 appear to have been both useful and, therefore, used.<sup>19</sup> Framing the regional planning documents with a strategy piece at the beginning provides coherence and a rationale for the choices made that would otherwise be lacking.

Several stakeholders and RRG staff have noted that the voices and priorities of the Collaborators get lost in the later stages of the regional planning process. These voices are strong at the country level planning but are not present at the regional level planning as this is restricted to Partner representatives. This is an issue that deserves discussion and perhaps some guidance from the Board.

While the Tier 1/Tier 2 system helps to focus and concentrate scarce monetary and human resources, the country selections deserve to be reviewed from time to time. For example in Africa, the decision to focus on Cameroon and not engage directly in the Congo Basin due to the large number of actors already working there appears to make strategic sense. A key question to which we have not yet found a satisfactory answer is: can the RRI program succeed in Africa without engaging with the "the giant" Nigeria? Engaging directly with Nigeria would immediately raise a series of operational and funding issues but these should not in and of themselves drive the decision. Coming at this from a different angle: are there networks and other indirect ways of initiating some proactive engagement with Nigeria? A parallel question could be raised concerning Angola and Mozambique.

---

<sup>19</sup> RRI Strategy Development and Planning Process - September 2008

Turning to Asia, the China program appears to be moving forward well, making strategic contributions that will have important long-term impacts.<sup>20</sup> The two biggest “holes” in Asia are India and Indonesia/Philippines. RRI has used a very appropriate approach to India – building awareness and support for the agenda from the inside. We look forward to the outcomes of the March meeting and hope that this will set the stage for RRI “taking off” in India. In Indonesia and the Philippines, the induction of Samdhana as a Partner will hopefully go some distance in raising the profile of RRI in both countries. Selecting Nepal as a Tier 1 country has made sense for the first several years given the policy agenda of the new government and the deliberate, phased approach to working in India. If the India process evolves as hoped/planned, the importance of Nepal over the medium to longer term could substantially diminish. Nepal will, of course, continue to be an inspiration for other parts of the world and a useful place to test various tenure and ATEM models, but its ability to contribute to advancing the RRI agenda in Asia will be modest compared to India, China, Indonesia or many other countries in Asia.

In Latin America the two largest countries, Brazil and Mexico, are not included in the Tier 1 category. However, both are key to the transformation of the forestry sector in this region. Together with the concerns raised above for other regions, this might argue for revisiting the criteria that were developed to select Tier 1 countries and to determine if they need any modifications particularly given the increased emphasis on REDD and other climate change issues.

Returning to Africa for a minute, the IM Team is concerned about the RRI programs in the Sahel, particularly Mali and Burkina Faso. Based on what we have been able to discern from reading documents and doing a small amount of triangulation it appears that this concern can be addressed by two simple actions:

- ❖ supporting the Regional Facilitator by seconding, reassigning or hiring a senior staff person fluent in French,<sup>21</sup> and
- ❖ conducting a quick but thorough review of all of the relevant work across the Sahel on forestry and the decentralization of forest management from the CILSS Segou Roundtable in 1989 to date.<sup>22</sup> Some notes on key events and documents are being compiled as an Annex to this report. Additional suggestions, including people to be contacted for additional detail, are available if/as requested.

A note on management of this program: The arrival of Deborah Barry to coordinate Country/Regional Initiatives is an important addition to the management structure of RRG. A single person looking at Country/Regional Initiatives across all three regions will be able to build increased coherence across the program, stronger monitoring

---

<sup>20</sup> Getting IM team members to China for field-level verification needs to be a high priority in 2009.

<sup>21</sup> The Africa Regional Coordinator is currently serving as a de facto deputy Regional Facilitator responsible for both facilitation and translation services for programs in francophone West Africa. This arrangement is not sustainable. French capability and francophone contacts need to either be strengthened in Civic Response or brought into the Partnership through a new Partner.

<sup>22</sup> CILSS/Club du Sahel Segou Roundtable on Local Level Natural Resources Management in the Sahel. Segou, Mali May 22-27, 1989.

and evaluation, and more systematic attention to learning both within and across regions.

## **2. Network Support**

If we needed to characterize our impressions of this piece of the RRI program in a couple of words they would be "needs work." Having said this, there appears to be a very positive result in the work with ITTO. This is an important engagement with the "commercial" sector.

The Megaflorestais connection provides an interesting link to a potentially important set of actors. How useful it is will depend in large measure on the degree to which the senior forestry officials involved in the network from producer countries such as Indonesia, Brazil, Congo, and Cameroon and consumer countries such as China and the United States internalize and support the goals and objectives of RRI. A related issue is the extent to which forestry officials in these countries have a voice in questions related to the often politically-charged issues surrounding land and natural resource tenure.

RRG clearly knew what needed to be done when it proposed to the Board, and the Board approved, the development a strategic plan for Network Support as part of the 2008 Workplan. Other priorities pushed this task off the table in 2008. It is back on the table for 2009 and deserves careful and concerted attention looking at both global and regional networks that could support the RRI agenda.

## **3. Strategic Analysis**

RRI's work in this arena has been simply outstanding. The breadth and rigor of this work and the insights flowing from it have given RRI credibility and a seat at many tables around the world. The challenge for 2009 will be to capitalize on this and transform "points well made" and credibility established to "action taken on the ground."

## **4. Global Communication/Outreach**

As mentioned above, knowledge management and knowledge sharing are an essential function if RRI is to achieve its overall objectives. That said, the IM team believes that more attention needs to be given to the RRI website and how it can play an even greater role in the KM/KS arena. For example, finding out from the website what RRI was up to on enterprise development took some digging. More generally we had difficulty navigating the site to track down information on things other than "current events." While we believe that website is quite attractive, we do think it might become more functional and in the future be adjusted to provide easily-accessible digital space for such things as peer-to-peer learning.

RRI is to be commended for the rapid and effective launch of the website [www.rightsandclimate.org](http://www.rightsandclimate.org).

One area of communications that may deserve increased attention is the use of new media and linking with transnational advocacy/action groups that have been harnessing social networking and the powers of the internet to promote global causes. Examples include the ONE campaign, the NGO channel of YouTube, the website from Paul Hawken's book *Blessed Unrest* ([www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org)) and the

transnational advocacy group Avaaz ([www.avaaz.org](http://www.avaaz.org)). The website of the Environmental Investigation Agency provides an interesting example with its links to their Flickr, YouTube and GreenTV pages.<sup>23</sup> For more conventional communications, A Communications Evaluation Guide produced last year for the Packard Foundation may provide some useful ideas.<sup>24</sup>

## **5. Coordination/Operations**

### *The Regional Coordinator/Facilitator functions:*

There is an urgent need to sort out, staff and operationalize the Regional Coordinator and Regional Facilitator functions. They are critical to develop increased program coherence, insure that M&E is happening, and stimulate learning across both the partnership and the coalition. Clear and comprehensive guidelines for the RRI regional structure have been established.<sup>25</sup> The challenge for 2009 is to build the pieces of the structure that do not yet exist and get the system up and running.

### *Governance of the Initiative:*

Based on the Osprey Point Governance Meeting, we believe that it would be important for the partnership to examine where it is and review the criteria and procedures agreed to as members of the partnership. This includes the criteria used for selecting priority countries and the criteria and procedures for making decisions on how budgets are allocated. This is especially true for global programs. Global programs are the responsibility of RRG. Partners have a range of views on these programs depending, in part, on the nature of their own global programs and engagements (or lack thereof). Based on what we heard at Osprey Point, we believe there is scope for increased partner participation in and contributions to the global programs. The partnership is to be commended for its apparent openness to ongoing refinement of the agreed-upon governance structures and to improving what is already in place.

On a separate but related matter, RRI is currently focusing its attention on Asia, Africa and Latin America. The RRI Mission of increasing local household and community ownership, control and benefits from forests and trees also has echoes in North America, particularly among indigenous communities, and in parts of Europe among Roma communities. We believe that this merits discussion by the Board. While the practical implications over the short term for an already-overstretched RRG need to be kept clearly in mind, identifying and starting to cultivate one or more potential future Partners who c/would lead such a program could have important benefits for RRI over the medium and longer term. RRI's core beliefs speak of "a new, clearly focused and sustained global effort by the global development community."<sup>26</sup> In our view, development efforts have for too long been focused exclusively "over there." Directing some attention "over here" could have important payoffs for RRI in terms of both substance and synergy, in addition to the symbolic

---

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.eia-global.org/videos\\_photos.html](http://www.eia-global.org/videos_photos.html)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.comnetwork.org/resources/downloads/AreWeThereYet.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> RRI Regional Structure: Roles and Responsibilities - August 2008

<sup>26</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative Institutional and Business Arrangements. February 2008. p.2.

importance of making a global effort truly global.

*The growth and development of the RRI Partnership:*

As noted above, our impression from the parts of the Osprey Point Governance Meetings that we attended is that RRI partners are committed to refining the governance structures of the partnership and to incrementally improving what has already been put in place. An important new element of the annual meeting next year would be a facilitated discussion of the organizational life-cycle literature to assess where RRI stands in the stages of partnership development and to use that assessment to strengthen both the understanding and the functioning of the partnership. An excellent framework to start with is the one developed by Universalia. This session would build upon a "lesson learned" that was reported on by RRG in February 2008:

*We have learned in the past year and a half that the coalition structure of the Initiative is one of its most powerful assets. We have realized that expansion of the coalition must be restrained until it has successfully navigated past the first "growth" phase and through a phase of maturing and "consolidation," and similarly we have learned that it is critical to increase the voices and participation of community organizations in the partnership and its governing bodies.<sup>27</sup>*

An additional source worth consulting for this session is the *Review of Approaches to Partnership Governance and Operation* in the IIED consultation on the Global Forest Partnership.<sup>28</sup>

*Board composition and membership:*

We commend RRI on the recent addition of Victoria Tauli-Corpuz to the Board. She will bring a strong voice to the Board, the partnership and the coalition on indigenous issues and on the need for continued proactive engagement on implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We also commend RRI for its plan to increase the number of "private members" on the Board. This will, of necessity, mean a decrease in the number of Partner members. This willingness to include private, independent voices on the Board is an important indication of the growing maturity of the RRI partnership.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> RRI footnote: Lusthaus, Charles and Christine Milton-Feasby. 2006. *The Evaluation of Inter-Organizational Relationships in the Not-for-Profit Sector: Some observations*. Universalia, has been an invaluable resource for us to understand the dynamics of non-profit coalitions. We will continue to seek other resources to enable us to improve the structure, functioning, management, and effectiveness of the coalition.

<sup>28</sup> Annex 5 *Review of approaches to partnership governance and operation* IN: IIED. 2008. *Towards a global forest partnership: Consultation, assessment and recommendations*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development. Summary of Annex 5 included in Section 2.3 of the main report.

<sup>29</sup> A second, parallel, indication is the creation of the Independent Monitor and the clear message at Osprey Point from donors and partners alike that one of the most important challenges (and requirements) of the Independent Monitor was to be truly independent.

*The Strategic Response Mechanism:*

Flexibility has been a key characteristic of RRI from the outset. The response to Poznan described above is an excellent example of this. The response to changes in the Bolivian political scene and the opportunity this has provided is another. The establishment of the Strategic Response Mechanism appears to be a very useful way of maintaining this flexibility. The Strategic Response Mechanism was launched last year to enable rapid responses to opportunities for policy reform or new relations between civil society actors and government decision-makers. In its first year of operation there were three proposals funded. However, given the very recent termination of two, with a third to finish in 2010, it is too early to evaluate achievement and produce lessons learned.

*RRG Staffing:*

There is universal appreciation for the level of productivity demonstrated by the management and staff. It was also clear at Osprey Point meeting that there is concern that RRG staff is being stretched to the breaking point: the constant travel, long days, and short nights appear to many to be unsustainable. Are there ways for RRG to reorganize its workload to recruit more staff, delegate or outsource more tasks, and, perhaps most importantly, enlist more support from RRI partners and collaborators in accomplishing the work load? If not, difficult decisions on reducing programs and focusing activities may need to be taken. As an interim step, there appears to be scope for additional delegation of work from senior to more junior staff within RRG. This should be pursued to the maximum extent feasible.

*The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) System:*

RRI has developed a logical framework with a hierarchy of development objectives/goals, project objectives/purposes, results/outputs, and activities at the global, regional and country level. This framework provides a solid structure on which to build a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system that will help RRI to make more strategic choices on program activities and validate critical linkages it has hypothesized between its outputs, outcomes and final goals.

A major task in operationalizing the MEL system will be to embed the identification of the critical outcomes and their indicators and the system for tracking these indicators within the annual planning processes. In the case of monitoring activities and outputs, this is likely to result in minimal changes to existing systems. Current planning guidelines for regional teams specify that outputs be identified along with activities, responsibilities and budget. However, in the case of describing outcomes and associated indicators, additional efforts will be necessary that will require the regional teams to become more purposeful in describing the pathways to change, the actors involved, and the likely ways in which the changes in the behavior of these actors can contribute to the final goals. RRI will also need to decide to what extent, if any, it wishes to explore recent work on theory of change (with potential implications for both refinements and possible changes in the logical framework) and on decision-making (with its potential implications for redefining pathways to policy change).<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> For example Malcolm Gladwell's books *Blink – The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* and *The Tipping Point – How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*; Nassim Taleb's *The Black Swan – The Impact of the Highly Improbable*; Ben Ramalingam et.al. *Exploring the science of*

## **B. RRI Crosscutting themes**

The crosscutting themes could be a powerful way of integrating RRI program areas and prioritizing funding decisions. However, there is little evidence of strategic clarity or systematic use of the themes. There has been some fluctuation in the list over time and the themes do not appear on the website. The What We Do/Issues section of the website is a random list of many different issues. This is useful for searching the site, but not for providing discipline or coherence to RRI programming. Crosscutting themes that appear in some of the Regional Plans for 2009 but are not on this RRI-wide list include attention to gender (Africa Regional Plan) and indigenous peoples (Latin America Regional Plan). These could be added as sub-themes to theme #2 Realizing Rights. Most of this is understandable given that the crosscutting themes were not introduced into the program until July of 2008. We hope and expect that they will provide an increasingly important filter for programmatic decision making moving forward.

### **1. ATEMs (Alternative Tenure & Enterprise Models)**

If we had to characterize our understanding of RRI's work on ATEMs with a single word, that word would be "opaque." Alternative Tenure & Enterprise Models sounds like and, we are confident, is an important concept that deserves both serious attention and additional work. Three important things remain unclear:

- ❖ What ATEM is – A search of the RRI website using the acronym scores only a single hit (the RRI Update, February 2007). Using the earlier acronym ABTM scores four hits but only two discrete documents (the Update noted above and the 2006 Annual Statement of Business Affairs).<sup>31</sup>
- ❖ How ATEM links to the broader development literature and programs. How ATEM is similar to/different from work on community-based (forest) enterprise, small and medium (forest) enterprise, value chain and market analysis, work on non-traditional forest products etc. needs to be clarified.<sup>32</sup>
- ❖ What plans RRI has (or c/should have) to link this work on ATEM with the work of others. A very quick Google search unearthed two programs, both supported by IIED:

---

*complexity – Ideas and implications for development and humanitarian efforts.* ODI Working Paper 285 (October 2008) starting with the Foreword by Robert Chambers; and material from the TED network ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com))

<sup>31</sup> Using ATEMs produces a considerably longer list, but there is little reason to believe that those outside of the RRI coalition would think of using ATEMs.

<sup>32</sup> The 2007 International Conference on Community Forest Management and Enterprise in Acre, Brazil was an important first step in more clearly defining this work. A second step will be the International Conference on Forest Tenure, Governance and Enterprise scheduled for Yaounde, Cameroon May 25-29, 2009.

1. Forest Connect Program: Linking small and medium forest enterprises, markets and services in Burkina Faso, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Lao PDR, Mali, Mozambique and Nepal with an interesting group of partners.<sup>33</sup>
2. Small and Medium Forest Enterprises and Associations program: Active in 5 countries with the aims of:
  - \* Developing ways in which SMFEs can better contribute to sustainable poverty reduction
  - \* Lobbying policy makers and practitioners to help establish and support sustainable SMFE associations.<sup>34</sup>

The main point we wish to make is simply this: we expect that there is at least one, probably several, important new ideas contained in the concept of ATEMs. These ideas need to be more fully explained, hopefully in ways that can connect RRI's ATEM work to the work of others and in ways that make the case that ATEM deserves to be added to the lexicon of forestry development.

## 2. Realizing Rights

The discussion at Osprey Point led by Marcus Colchester on the theme "What Rights?" provided important insights into the state of play of this crosscutting theme. The partnership deserves congratulations both for having this discussion (with donors and members of the Independent Monitor present) and for the frank and open discussion that followed. For many in the audience, the scope and complexity of the issues presented was clearly something new. Equally important (and impressive) was the frank admission by RRI leadership that they did not realize the complexity of the rights issues when they launched the RRI.

The spirit of inquiry, the reflex to delve into complexity and tackle thorny issues rather than running from them, and the willingness to be openly self-critical all bode well for the future of RRI. The key moving forward will be: what happens next? A draft policy statement on rights is to be prepared. Both the process used to do this and the substance of the final document will serve as an important test of the partnership. The IM team hopes that what emerges is something that pushes the envelope, something more than just the least common denominator that can be agreed to by the disparate members of the partnership, something that links back to the set of core beliefs set forth as guiding the Mission of the Rights and Resources Initiative.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.iied.org/natural-resources/key-issues/forestry/forest-connect-linking-small-and-medium-forest-enterprises-markets-and-services>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.iied.org/natural-resources/key-issues/forestry/small-and-medium-forest-enterprises-and-associations> We understand from RRG that there has been some collaboration with IIED on both of these programs. RRI is not currently listed as a partner for either program. Based on the information available on the website it would appear that important synergies might well be possible.

<sup>35</sup> These core beliefs are set forth in the document Rights and Resources Initiative Institutional and Business Arrangements. February 2008. p.2. Groups outside of the partnership that may have useful inputs into the RRI policy statement are the International Council on Human



### 3. Conflict

Work on this theme does not appear to have gotten underway in any concerted, clearly identified fashion. Three important papers were produced in 2008 addressing various facets of the conflict issue.<sup>36</sup> These should serve as a useful springboard for increased attention to this theme in 2009, or perhaps in 2010 if the dual “pivots” from strategic analysis into country/regional initiatives and from climate change as a crosscutting theme to climate change as a key threat and opportunity for the entire RRI program in the run-up to the climate change meetings in Copenhagen in December push work on themes like conflict onto a back burner.

### 4. Climate Change

The amount, quality and diversity of documentation available on the rights, dignity and development of forest peoples is very impressive. As a consequence, RRI was able to rapidly mobilize its efforts, following the Oslo conference, for the recent climate change meetings in Poznan. Previous research and reports carried out on forest tenure in particular put RRI in a strong position to develop messages for Poznan. In addition, the work that had been done with partners in Central America ensured that the voices being presented at Poznan were not only those of the better endowed organizations from the North but included peoples, particularly forest peoples, of the South as well. Moreover, the follow-up to Poznan being planned in Central America demonstrates that RRI’s involvement there was more than a one-off opportunity to participate in yet another international conference.

Building on the momentum from Poznan, the challenge for 2009 will be to work in a smart, focused and strategic way to get the key elements of the RRI agenda included in the global agenda on the road to Stockholm in December.

### 5. Additional crosscutting themes?

It is not (yet) clear whether/how RRI intends to systematically address the issues of gender and indigenous peoples. Clarification would also be useful on whether and, if so, how RRI intends to approach the rights to forests and forestry resources of other groups of forest dependent people including:

---

Rights Policy (ICHRP), specifically their work on Climate Change and Human Rights <http://www.ichrp.org/en/projects/136?theme=13> and Realizing Rights [www.realizingrights.org](http://www.realizingrights.org). A connection with ICHRP could help to link to Realizing Rights through its Board. Adding the RRI rights agenda to Realizing Rights’ list of five critical global challenges would be an important coup. Current interest in/concern about climate change might be the key needed to unlock this opportunity.

<sup>36</sup> RRI’s synthesis piece *Seeing People Through The Trees: Scaling Up Efforts to Advance Rights and Address Poverty, Rights and Climate Change*; Ruben De Koning et.al.’s *Forest-related Conflict: Impacts, Links and Measures to Mitigate* and Liz Wiley’s *Whose Land Is It? Commons and Conflict States. Why the Ownership of the Commons Matters in Making and Keeping Peace*.

- ❖ pastoralists
- ❖ other nomadic peoples<sup>37</sup>
- ❖ people displaced by conflict
- ❖ looking ahead, people displaced by climate change

An additional crosscutting theme could be Forces Beyond the Forests. This would help integrate awareness of and (at least) some modest contribution to analysis and/or action on the "big picture" themes discussed during the Global/Regional Scan sessions at the annual Governance Meetings.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The concluding remarks in RRI's most important synthesis piece for 2008, *Seeing People Through the Trees*, are built around a quote 30 years ago from the visionary forester Jack Westoby.<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps fitting then that we begin our concluding remarks with another quote from the same source. Looking back over three decades of forestry development Jack Westoby, an early proponent of industrial forestry who later became one of its strongest critics and an early and prominent supporter of the new community forestry paradigm, noted:

*"Yes, development fashions have changed over the last three decades, and that is why gradually the files, the archives, the case-books of the development establishment . . . have come to resemble the private cemetery of a fantastic zoo, a cemetery stuffed with the corpses of wild geese, lame ducks, red herrings, white elephants and dead horses."*<sup>40</sup>

What does this have to do with RRI? Everything. If Westoby were alive today he would most certainly reaffirm what he had written in 1987, change "the last three decades" in the passage above to "the last six decades," and strongly endorse the paradigm shift that RRI is vigorously pursuing.

Looking back on 2008, RRI has clearly made both important and impressive progress. The ambitions of the Initiative, reflected most clearly in their Modus Operandi statement, are as follows:

---

<sup>37</sup> One starting point on pastoral and other nomadic peoples: the *Encuentro Mundial des Pasteurs Nomades y Transhumantes* held in Spain in September 2007. Details at [www.nomadassegovia2007.org](http://www.nomadassegovia2007.org)

<sup>38</sup> We have been impressed by both the 2008 and 2009 Global Scans. One point that has not yet made it into these scans is opportunities to influence policy and practice through legislation in consumer countries. A current example is the Lacey Act in the US. See, for example, <http://www.wri.org/stories/2008/12/environmental-stories-watch-2009#lacey> and [http://www.eia-global.org/forests\\_for\\_the\\_world/lacey.html](http://www.eia-global.org/forests_for_the_world/lacey.html)

<sup>39</sup> From Jack Westoby. 1987. *The Purpose of Forest Areas: Follies of Development*. New York: Basin Blackwell, p.247

<sup>40</sup> Westoby 1987, p.242 cited in GF Taylor 1993. *Forests & Forestry in the Nepal Himalaya: Reflections from the banks of the river Niger, downstream from Timbuktu*. Unpublished paper. p.15

*The Initiative seeks to be:*

- 1. A global leader (not "the" leader) that will focus world attention on institutional and public sector reforms that lead to pro-poor outcomes, strengthened forest governance, conservation and restoration of forest ecosystems and sustained forest-based economic growth;*
- 2. Strategic, in its choice of issues and areas of intervention – seeking to leverage dramatic, structural change in response to and in support of local Partners (rather than "representative" of local voices, partner and other development organizations);*
- 3. A premier global source of analysis and research on tenure and regulatory reform, public institutional reforms, pro-poor investment and business models, finance and subsidy reforms;*
- 4. A credible, balanced and constructive advocate for institutional reforms that increase pro-poor outcomes;*
- 5. A convener of communities, governments and the private forest industry in country dialogues and events; and*
- 6. A major provider of information, analysis, data and messages to community and indigenous groups to strengthen their capacity to successfully engage global and domestic policy makers.<sup>41</sup>*

Our assessment: RRI has made significant progress in each of these six areas. There is still, of course, much that remains to be done.

Looking ahead to 2009, one of the core beliefs of the Initiative stands out:

*We believe that the next few decades are particularly critical. They represent a historic moment where there can be either dramatic gains, or losses, in the*

---

<sup>41</sup> Rights and Resources Initiative Institutional and Business Arrangements. February 2008. p.3

*lives and well-being of the forest poor, and the conservation and restoration of the world's threatened forests.*<sup>42</sup>

While the next few decades will certainly be critical, we believe that the next year – 2009 – will be particularly critical, an historic moment where there can be either dramatic gains, or losses, for the well-being of the forest poor, for the conservation and restoration of the world's forests, and for the ability of the Rights and Resources Initiative to continue to build, consolidate and move forward with its ambitious agenda.

The "road to Copenhagen," the separate but closely interlinked need to reverse backsliding by the international community on implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the unprecedented challenges of the global economic situation bring to mind the Chinese word for crisis. It is now widely believed in the West that the Chinese word for crisis is made up of two parts: danger + opportunity. Several experts in the Chinese language vigorously disagree. In their reading, the two Chinese characters making up the word crisis denote danger + incipient moment or crucial point indicating the need for quick-wittedness and resourcefulness.<sup>43</sup> Any/all of these possible readings apply to RRI. Clearly, 2009, a "pivotal year," will require all of the quick-wittedness and resourcefulness that the Secretariat (aka RRG), Board, Partners and Collaborators can muster.

Onward . . . *en avance* . . . *adelante!*

-- # --

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.pinyin.info/chinese/crisis.html>

---