



The Rights and Resources Initiative – Quarterly E-mail Update

October - December 2012

Dear friends,

We hope 2013 is already off to a wonderful and fruitful start for you all. The last quarter of 2012 was productive, ending another year of influence and achievements for the RRI coalition. Between October and the end of December we completed major efforts in 17 countries, including particular steps forward in China, India, and Liberia. We co-hosted a [conference](#) in Hangzhou, China with the country's State Forestry Administration, FAO-supported China Forest Tenure Project, and Peking University. In India, RRI worked with the Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD) to release an unprecedented, comprehensive [policy analysis](#) on the takeover of common lands and natural resources in over 130 districts in India - an issue that is fast becoming one of the central fault lines of Indian politics today. In Liberia, rural communities supported by RRI Partners and Collaborators saw two major successes in their struggle against forced takeover of their lands by palm oil companies. Malaysian palm oil giant Sime Darby [agreed](#) to pay reparations to communities whose sacred sites it had destroyed and taken over in 2011 without their prior consent. And a [complaint](#) filed by Green Advocates on behalf of communities affected by a land takeover by Golden Veroleum (GVL) was validated by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. The influence and efforts in Liberia also triggered the release of wrongfully arrested community activists involved in the conflict with GVL.

Overall, 2012 was a year that laid bare the critical choice for developing countries between inclusive democratic systems and exploitative development - none more apparent than in [Liberia](#).

As progress on securing rights speeds up and stagnates throughout the world, 2013 promises to be a year that will force many to recognize that secure land rights underpins progress on many other global crises, such as climate change, implementation of "no regrets" REDD policies, and the cultural survival of millions. This is not limited to the development community. Government leaders, investors, and NGOs - including RRI - all need to transform themselves if they seek a transformation in the world's development systems.

As demand for natural resources grows and the threats to rights loom larger around the world, so does the need to muster much greater global level effort, and broaden our engagement with all the actors who have the power to influence forests and forest communities, including the private sector, conservation groups, and new NGOs in the climate change and development communities. We must work together to organize and operate at the level necessary to truly capitalize upon the opportunities presented in 2013.

- Rights and Resources Initiative

P.S. Don't forget to check out RRI's [French](#) and [Spanish](#) websites! You can also now translate the website in over 60 languages by using the "Select Language" tool on the top right corner of the Homepage.

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Global Level Strategic Analysis and Action

- On December 16-22, RRI organized an exclusive fact-finding trip for a reporter from Agence France-Presse (AFP), to Sinoe County, Liberia, where palm oil company Golden Veroleum (GVL) has displaced local communities to clear land for a 220,000 hectare plantation. The trip followed the filing of a complaint to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), by Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) on behalf of the aggrieved communities; the complaint was recently validated and accepted for review by RSPO. Green Advocates led the visit, connecting the reporter with local community members, leading to the publication of several international media stories highlighting their case. Immediately following the visit, however, several members who had spoken with the journalist were arrested by local police. They were eventually released after efforts and pressure exerted by the Green Advocates, FPP and the media. Coverage of the visit can be seen [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Contact [Jenna DiPaolo](#).
- On October 22-25, RRI co-organized the 2012 Annual Meeting of MegaFlorestais on "Forest Governance in the 21st Century: Resilient Forest Communities, Landscapes and Agencies." Forest agency leaders from eight countries discussed new ways to enhance the role of forest agencies play in promoting better forest management that respects rights. They recognized the role of fair and secure tenure as a prerequisite for effective forest governance. The meeting, co-hosted by the US Forest Service, was held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, **USA**. [View more information](#). Contact [Claire Biason](#).
- On October 23-25, RRI co-organized the workshop on "Legal Options to Secure Community Property Rights" in the **Philippines**. It gathered 15 international legal experts who discussed best legal practices in securing collective property rights and compared collective and individual property rights. A report will be published based on the conclusions of this meeting. This event was co-organized with the Ateneo School of Government. Contact [Jeffrey Hatcher](#).
- On November 5, RRI organized the Twelfth RRI Dialogue on Forests, Governance & Climate Change, focusing on "Scaling-Up Strategies to Reduce Emissions and Advance Development in Forest Areas" in Washington DC, **USA**. The well-attended Dialogue accelerated learning and sharing among different sectors on sustainable supply chains, best practices related to the extractive and infrastructure sectors, and innovative finance mechanisms to leverage forest tenure and governance reforms. The event, organized in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, brought together more than 150 participants from about 20 countries, including representatives from governments, donor agencies, NGOs, community and Indigenous Peoples' organizations, international organizations, and the private sector. [Learn more](#) or watch the webcast recording in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#). Contact [Claire Biason](#).

Country and Regional-Level Analysis and Action

Asia

Regional

- On October 9-11, the **Indonesian** Human Rights Commission, with support of Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), SawitWatch, and the Community Legal Education Center of **Cambodia** convened a workshop titled [Making the Bali Declaration Effective: The Phnom Penh Workshop on Human Rights and Agribusiness in Phnom Penh, Cambodia](#), as a follow-up to the [Bali Workshop on Human Rights and Agribusiness](#) held late 2011. Participants shared updates on the situation of agribusiness in human rights across the region, and gained valuable knowledge on the progress toward establishing an ASEAN human rights mechanism. A [joint statement](#) was released, appealing to the Cambodian government to resolve a long standing land conflict in Koh Kong province, and to the European Union and two sugar importers to investigate continued rights violations. The participants included National Human Rights Commissioners from **Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Singapore** and **Timor-Leste**, the Indonesian representative to the ASEAN Intragovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AIHCR), and the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A follow-up meeting is planned for 2013. Contact [Sophie Chao](#).
- From October 15-19, the first Community Forestry Champions Networking in Asia meeting was held in and around community forestry sites in Kavre district, **Nepal**. Co-organized by RECOFTC–The Center for People and Forests, FECOFUN, and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal, the event convened key community forestry officials from select Asia countries for discussion on the challenges and opportunities for community forestry in their respective countries. Discussions also covered RRI’s global thematic agenda of Realizing Rights, Alternative Tenure and E Models (ATEMs), and Rights and Climate in the context of Nepal, with the overall objective of strengthening the arguments for community forestry and forest tenure reform from social, environmental, and economic perspectives. Contact [James Bampton](#).
- October 16-18, FPP, with the support of RECOFTC–The Center for People and Forests, organized a technical workshop to review commodity roundtables standards on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), customary land, conflict resolution and high conservation values. The workshop resulted in a realization of the need for greater consistency of use of key community protections by commodity roundtables, as well as of the need for systematic information sharing on workable certification standards relating to the issues above. Six voluntary commodity standards (Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, Roundtable on Responsible Soy, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, Bonsucro, Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue and Forest Stewardship Council) and various concerned NGOs participated. FPP’s release of [the comparative review of commodity roundtables](#) spurred an exploration of how these themes could be better recognized and/or secured through the standards, and, going beyond the standards themselves, how they could encourage the inclusion and translation of these themes into wider legal and policy reform. Contact [Sophie Chao](#).

Country-Level

- In Hangzhou, **China**, RRI, FAO and Peking University co-organized the [International Conference on Forest Tenure Reform: Status and review of forest tenure reforms in China and a global perspective on the way forward](#), hosted by the State Forest Administration (SFA) and the Zhejiang Provincial Forest Department on November 21-23. Participants reviewed and assessed progress and challenges to achieving China's tenure reforms to date, sharing relevant research and recommendations on future opportunities to deepen reforms, as well as international experiences on the development and implementation of forest laws and policies. Over 100 Chinese government leaders, policy makers, researchers and civil society representatives along with resource persons from 11 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America attended. SFA officials reiterated their commitments to strengthening economic benefits and realization of rights in future reforms, and agreed to put forth policy recommendations in the upcoming revision of China's Forest Law. Contact [Naomi Basik](#).
- Also in **China**, on November 27, the Rural Development Institute of Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (RDI-YASS) held a workshop publicizing the survey results of collective forest management practices in Yunnan Province. Research findings, released at the one-day workshop in Kunming, generated constructive feedback from researchers, experts, and local government officials. The survey investigated five forest management approaches practiced by different ethnic minority groups in Yunnan province, and demonstrated that traditional forest management practices have been challenging to implement following China's forest tenure reforms. Contact [Hu Jing](#) for full research report and workshop minutes..
- In **Nepal**, FECOFUN continued its series of issues-based local interaction workshops through October in Kapilbasu district and at Indreni Food Land, New Baneswor, Kathmandu, and on December 30 in Makwanpur district. Participants from local community forest institutions, FECOFUN district chapters, forest offices, journalists and political leaders shared information on new developments and issues facing community forestry institutions, and new paradigms for ensuring good governance at the community, district and regional levels. In Makwanpur, a team of district administrators, district and regional forest offices and FECOFUN members was developed to monitor and control corruption in community forests. Contact [Jog Raj Giri](#).
- At the sixth National Council Meeting of FECOFUN on December 14-15 in **Nepal**, Federation representatives identified key priorities for future action, including sustained advocacy for community property rights in forthcoming legislation, sustainable forest management, forest enterprise development, poverty reduction, good governance, and environmental sustainability. These themes were codified in the resulting Jawalakhel Declaration, which takes stock of current issues in community forest governance and has been delivered to the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation for consideration. Contact [Jog Raj Giri](#).
- A high-level exchange visit to Mexico was organized for six senior officials from the Government of **Lao PDR** from October 8-12, who observed how land and forest related policies have been formulated and reviewed and are contributing to positive outcomes for the national economy, local livelihoods and forest quality in Mexico. The exchange visit, co-organized with RECOFTC and hosted by the Government of Mexico, was timed to influence the current revision of land-use policies in Lao

PDR. It included a series of briefings in Mexico City with key officials from government agencies focused on forest and land tenure, and was followed by a field visit to the state of Quintana Roo, where a number of *ejidos* (communal owned/operated land) engaged in a variety of forest management initiatives were visited. Contact [James Bampton](#).

- In **Thailand** on November 13-14, RECOFTC and national partners organized a seminar on “Community Forestry: A Movement to Protect Local Ecologies and Community Rights” in the Nakorn Nayok province, highlighting the networking, cooperation and participatory actions of the community forestry movement in Thailand. The seminar reflected on past achievements and discussed future actions to realize local peoples’ rights to participatory forest management and protection. The 116 participants agreed to gather again in early 2013 to formulate their strategic plan for the next decade, which will focus on how stakeholders can collaboratively move forward to have local communities’ rights recognized in the management and protection of the country’s soil, air, water, and forest resources. Contact [Somying Soontornwong](#).
- In **India**, the Conference on Forests and Common Lands: Rights, Conflicts, Forest Rights Act (FRA) and Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), was held on December 18 in New Delhi. This international conference launched a new suite of research conducted by RRI and the Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD). The report documents the historical and structural causes of a recent and significant upward trend in the transfer of extractive resources and land taking place across India in recent years, despite constitutional and legal guarantees. Over 60 government leaders, tribal and community representatives, civil society, and academic experts attended the conference. For more information on the research and to download conference materials, [click here](#). Contact [Jenna DiPaolo](#).

Africa

Regional

- The African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) held the Second Regional Workshop on Gender and Land and Forest Tenure in Africa on October 9-14 in Ouagadougou, **Burkina Faso**, in collaboration with FPP. This workshop strengthened the capacity of over 50 participants from approximately 15 African countries on human rights mechanisms, gender concepts, climate change (including REDD), and ongoing legal reforms on forests and land that are taking place across the African continent. Participants developed a formal network-wide statement on REDD and country-level work plans to advance women’s rights. Contact [Cécile Ndjebet](#).

Country-Level

- In **Cameroon**, FPP’s work to train Baka communities in the Ngoyla Mintom to map their lands culminated in formal presentations of the maps and dialogue to local government authorities at Mintom (October 24-25) and Lomié (November 15-16). At the local level this has resulted in the training and empowerment of Baka communities, and the education of local authorities on Indigenous Peoples’ rights. These processes and the maps and recommendations by the Baka are being used to feed into CED, FPP and Okani’s work on the [revision of the 1994 Forest Code](#) to help reshape national policy on forests and forest peoples. Contact [Justin Kenrick](#).

- On November 13 in **Mali**, HELVETAS-Swiss Intercooperation held a validation workshop with grassroots associations and local government to review a study on tenure security and increasing farmland acquisitions by urban elites in three communes of the Kati circle, just outside Bamako. Following validation of the study, participants adopted recommendations including follow-up meetings and development of an agreed upon action plan. Contact [Célestin Dembélé](#).
- In **Liberia**, the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) held a conference for representatives of communities affected by palm oil companies, Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum, in Bopolu City from November 27-29. Following discussions, the participants made a formal declaration of principles to which future oil palm development must adhere. Contact [Jonathan Yiah](#).

Latin America

Regional

- In the South American sub-region, Instituto Latinoamericano para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos (ILSA) led a series of analyses and workshops to define a strategy for influencing Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) and other investments in the region, particularly through the South American Council on Infrastructure and Planning (COSIPLAN) which implements IIRSA projects. These activities culminated in a regional workshop held November 12-13 in **Bogotá** with participation from Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario (CEDLA), national and international indigenous organizations, and regional NGOs with expertise on the themes of the workshop. Participants agreed on the various common challenges they face due to the lack of civil society participation in the allocation of BNDES and COSIPLAN investments, and reached fundamental agreements for advancing an advocacy strategy to open space for civil society participation and influence in the associated governance mechanisms. These agreements were summarized in the workshop outcome document. Contact [Hector Moncayo](#) or [Omaira Bolaños](#).

Country-Level

- In **Guatemala**, Ut'z Che' finished developing a methodology and preparing series of case studies to systematize experiences in collective lands management and recognition across the country. The results of the studies and systematization were shared with communities, and the information was used as an advocacy and discussion tool by the National Alliance of Community Forest Organizations. A public forum on the results was organized by Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén (ACOFOP) on October 24. [Click here](#) for more information. Contact [Víctor López](#), [Silvel Elías](#), or [Iliana Monterroso](#).
- In **Guatemala** on November 12, Centro de Investigaciones y Proyectos para el Desarrollo y la Paz (CEIDPAZ) held a second meeting with representatives of public institutions to present a new tool for monitoring the ongoing cadaster process, as well as the results from the first test of the monitoring tool during the implementation of the cadaster in communal lands and its

consistency in respecting collective land tenure rights of indigenous communities. The presentation of these findings was preceded by a meeting to solicit feedback from indigenous, *campesino*, and other civil society organizations on October 30. Contact [Sergio Funes](#) or [Iliana Monterroso](#).

- In **Bolivia**, *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (CEJIS) published a legal proposal promoting integrated development in the Amazon region, with participation from indigenous communities to present their positions on the legal frameworks for development policies in the Bolivian Amazon. The proposal has been widely disseminated and was presented in the Bolivian national legislative assembly. Contact [Monica Lijerón](#) or [Omaira Bolaños](#).
- In **Bolivia**, Instituto Para el Hombre Agricultura y Ecología (IPHAE) compiled its work with communities and territorial organizations during 2012 in two documents detailing the findings and proposals for autonomous territorial governance and the existing legal limitations for territorial governance in Bolivia. An additional document created a methodology for analyzing territorial governance and titling reforms with a gender perspective, and used it to analyze the Bolivian context. Contact [Aymara Llanque](#) or [Omaira Bolaños](#).
- In **Nicaragua**, Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo NITLAPAN prepared a training course for indigenous, afro-descendant, and *campesino* peoples on territorial governance, which included inputs from experts and representatives from academic, indigenous, and development organizations in **Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala**. Participants identified opportunities and strategies for implementing the modules contained in the training course, providing a base for advancing governance capacity building for local forest communities across the region. Contact [Ceferino Wilson](#) or [Omaira Bolaños](#).

New Publications

- [Undemocratic and Arbitrary](#): Control, Regulation and Expropriation of India's Forests and Common Lands.
- [Ensuring that Poor Rural Women Benefit from Forestland Reforms in China](#): Fieldwork Findings and Policy Recommendations.
- [A Case for Farmers and Rural Communities' Rights to Compensation under China's National Forest Protection Program](#). (*Chinese translation coming soon – contact [Naomi Basik](#)*).

Recent and Upcoming Events

- **February 5, 2013: London, UK – The State of Rights and Resources 2012-2013**: Landowners or Laborers? A Panel on the rural development choices facing the leaders of developing countries. [Event Details](#)

- **March 5-7, 2013: Yaoundé, Cameroon – Thirteenth RRI Dialogue on Forests, Governance and Climate Change:** Harmonizing Tenure and Resource Policies in Central and West Africa's Changing Landscape. [Event Details](#)
- **March 21-23, 2013: Bogotá, Colombia — Fourteenth RRI Dialogue on Forests, Governance, and Climate Change (Latin America):** Extractive Industry, Communities and territorial rights: Implications for the reduction of poverty and climate change. Details coming soon. Contact [Claire Biason](#).

[See all events](#)>>

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