Global Goals
CONSULTING

Rights and Resources Initiative
Independent Monitoring Report 2018

Executive Summary

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1. Executive Summary

Last year's independent monitoring report referred to 2017 as a year of transition for RRI. That is still true for 2018, as many of the trends observed last year have continued during the current year under review. This report presents an assessment of RRI's implementation of its 2018 work plans as contained in the *2018 Program Book (PB'18)*, and consequently of the progress towards the achievement of the *Third Strategic Program 2018-2022 (SP III)*. 2018 is the first year of its implementation, and hence the work now aligns to a new results framework. The goal of *SP III* is to catalyze the legal recognition of an additional 150 million hectares of lands and forests, benefitting over 370 million people, using RRI's system-wide approach of combining evidence, advocacy, interaction and capacity.

RRI occupies a strategic niche in the area of forest and land rights advocacy and remains an important global player in the eyes of external stakeholders. RRI is regarded as an authoritative source of research and data, not least due to its work on tenure tracking. RRI's recent analysis titled "At a Crossroads" reveals significant gains in the legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as forest owners and designated rightsholders over the past 15 years; however, the pace of recognition has generally remained slow since 2008. In some instances, positive change can be directly traced back to RRI's efforts, as in the case of the Global Climate Action Summit, where RRI's work resulted in international foundations joining a growing coalition of land rights defenders and pledging $4 billion in support.

The Coalition's work spans from the global to the local level, which is of critical importance for many issues, not least climate change. The "Global Baseline on Carbon Storage in Collective Lands" report reveals that Indigenous Peoples and local communities manage at least 17 percent of the total carbon stored in the forestlands of assessed countries. The report's significance is also due to the fact that it allows other development actors, including government agencies and international organizations, to better understand, plan and measure the effects of their interventions. How better analysis can trigger action is exemplified by the report on the Democratic Republic of Congo's Mai-Ndombe province, which convinced other development actors to reframe and realign country-level REDD+ interventions to better protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and rural women.

Multi-stakeholder platforms play an increasingly important role in light of the 2030 Development Agenda with its Sustainable Development Goals. The Interlaken Group is one such platform bringing together companies, activists, investors and global organizations to develop new tools and approaches to engaging the private sector on land tenure.

Since research and advocacy are not sufficient to trigger large-scale change, the maturation of the Tenure Facility is a significant accomplishment to strengthen local capacities on land tenure issues.

The *PB'18* contains five *Priority Objectives*, a total of 83 *Outcomes* belonging to different thematic and geographic areas, as well as associated programmatic *Outputs* and *Activities*.[1] At the outcome level, RRI's performance during 2018 appears to lag behind the previous two years, with only 45 percent of outcomes achieved or on-track, compared to 73 percent for 2017 (see Chart 1). 23 percent of outcomes were never attempted, which is the highest number over the last few years. A similar picture emerges at output and activity levels, with significantly fewer reported achieved and a higher percentage not attempted during 2018.

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[1] Several outcomes and activities are shared across work plans, so there are fewer unique outcomes. See section 5.2.3.

Based on interviews and in-depth analysis, two major issues impacted the level of achievement in 2018:[2]

o The level of ambition has increased in certain work plans compared to 2017. At the same time, the number of activities per outcome is approximately 12 percent lower in 2018, which means that a single, not attempted activity more frequently triggers a whole outcome to be rated as not attempted.

o Implementation with collaborating partners started late and was structured differently compared to previous years.

Over the course of five years, the intention is that progress builds up and delivers on the three **Log-Frame Outcomes (LOs)** defined in *SP III*. From the first year of implementation it is clear that not all LOs are pursued with equal intensity, with most effort dedicated to LO1 on peoples' capacity, leadership and rights (70 percent), compared to LO2 on governments scaling up legal recognition (53 percent), and LO3 on investors and companies adopting international standards (36 percent) as illustrated in Chart 2.[3] In any given year, not all Log-Frame Outcomes are expected to be pursued equally; however, future year's planning exercises need to be cognizant of this.

The 2018 work plans reference the three LOs to various extent (see Chart 3). Except for the Africa work plan, LO1 is the dominant outcome in all reviewed work plans. Meanwhile, LO3 is missing completely in the Africa and the Gender Justice work plan.

Chart 1: Outcome Performance Program Book 2018
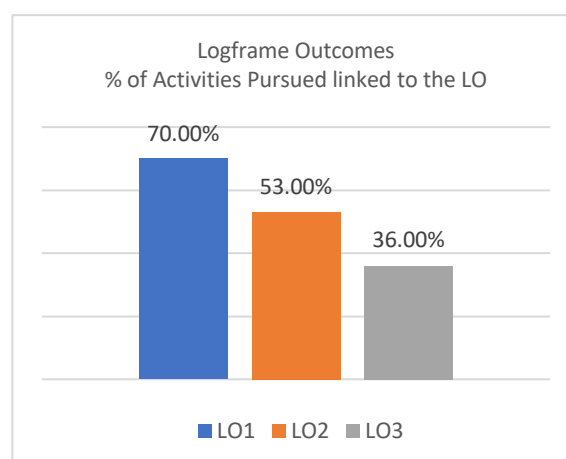
Chart 2: Activities Linked to Log-Frame Outcomes

Any assessment of progress needs to confront the counter-factual question: would the results have been achieved even without the activities under review? There is ample anecdotal evidence that RRI has been instrumental in catalyzing change; however, any attempt to quantitatively capture RRI's contribution is handicapped by the fact that *PB'18* includes no measurable performance targets at any results level. While *SP III* contains 30 indicators at the sub-result level, no measurement methodologies have been defined, so any determination of progress would remain subjective.
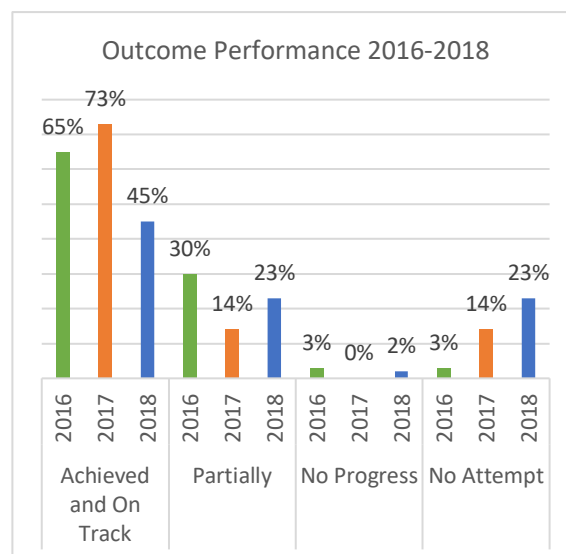
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[2] This IM report is based on 8 out of 12 work plans with slightly more than 20% of outcomes remaining unassessed. In addition, 8% of assessed outcomes have not been classified due to missing or ambiguous reporting.

[3] Since individual activities frequently reference several LOs, the total exceeds 100%.
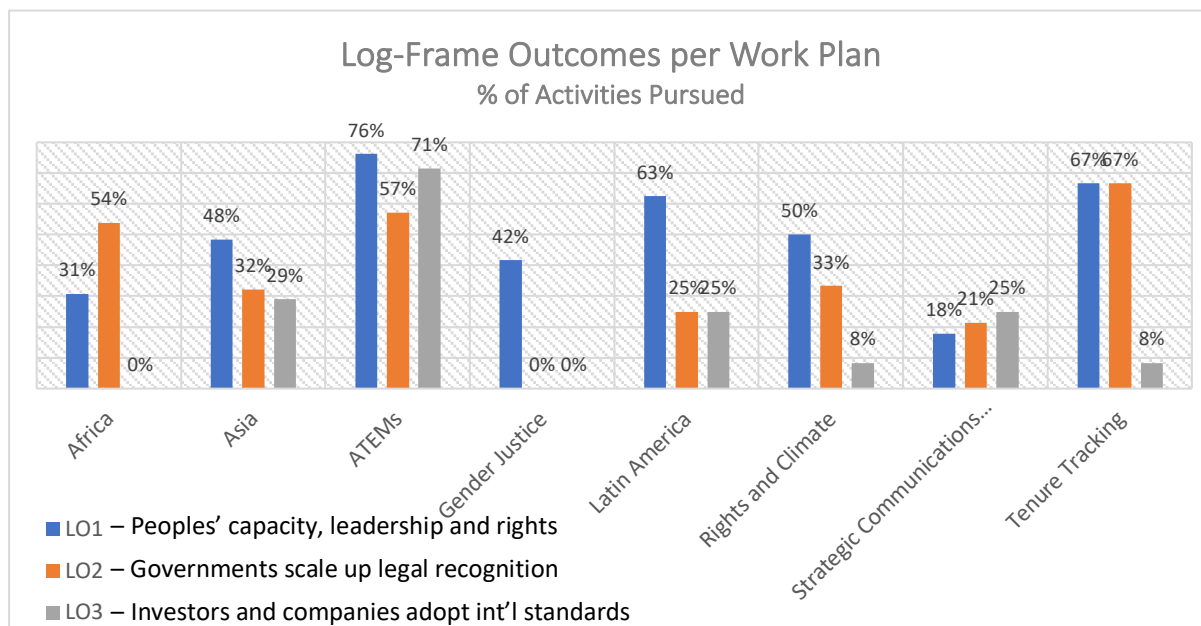
Log-Frame Outcomes per Work Plan
% of Activities Pursued

Chart 3: Log-Frame Outcomes Referenced in individual 2018 Work Plans

- LO1 – Peoples' capacity, leadership and rights
- LO2 – Governments scale up legal recognition
- LO3 – Investors and companies adopt int'l standards

As a by-product of the independent monitoring exercise, a number of key observations were made:

- o **Trust of partners:** In interviews, both funding and collaborating partners expressed trust in RRI and the quality of its work. Within the Coalition it is agreed that one of RRI's comparative advantages lies in its ability to convene and coordinate a multitude of stakeholders at country, regional and global levels. The IM country visits provided first-hand evidence of the crucial work conducted during the annual planning meetings to form, maintain and leverage sustainable collaborations, including personal relationships. RRI does not consider itself a funding or grant-making institution; still, for several of its collaborating partners it represents a significant source of income, and the annual planning process is a critical communications opportunity. A review of available grant funding indicated that the amount has reduced by half between 2013 and 2017, which coincided with the maturation of the Tenure Facility. Once the Tenure Facility is no longer part of RRG's financial reporting, the drop of grant funding to collaborating partners will become more visible.

- o **Leadership and communication:** RRI's leadership and communication on land rights is recognized by partners and has been proven effective. RRI's comparative advantage on the substantive issues was identified in several interviews. RRI experienced the extended absence of several key leaders during 2018, which would be a challenge for any organization. The lesson here is the need to empower RRG staff to step into the breach, while external stakeholders are kept abreast, to avoid a leadership vacuum.

- o **Level of ambition:** RRI set itself important goals and created a thoughtful five-year strategy with a detailed results architecture. However, given RRI's size and scope, the level of ambition is too high with too many outcomes that risk fragmenting RRI's response, particularly in the face of tightening resources. How day-to-day decision-making are influenced by the strategy is unclear.

- o **Ownership of work plans:** When looking at the result frameworks, leadership internally is well anchored for individual work plans, but less clear for RRI-wide results. However, the Coalition's ability to leverage strategic collaboration and decision-making is limited by its

bottom-up approach, which permeates too unfiltered into the results frameworks, resulting in fragmentation of RRI's planning, programming and operations. The communication work plan somewhat compensates, as it plays a key coordinating role across the whole *PB'18*. While the activities under the communication work plan are quite distinct, most of its results are shared with other work plans, as in the case of the Mai-Ndombe report included in the Africa work plan, which makes results and progress delineation challenging. However, it remains unclear who is accountable for tracking and achieving RRI's contribution to *SP III* results.

o **Results architecture:** The work plans contained in the *PB'18* represent both a regional and a global/thematic logic. Since RRI's planning process is largely bottom-up, similar/same results appear in different work plans. In several cases outcomes are cross-referenced and funding is generally only provided once as part of either a regional or global work plan. However, due to the lack of a "master plan", several inconsistencies appear across individual work plans, with shared results and activities and differing assessments of progress by different RRG managers as part of year-end reviews. Success is hard to measure without a clear indicator measurement methodology and a consistent logic how *SPIII* results are referenced in work plans.

o **Agility and responsiveness**: Strategic Response Mechanisms (SRMs) are regarded as important tools to increase flexibility and responsiveness. SRMs are designed to enable flexible, rapid response to unforeseen but strategic opportunities. They need to meet five criteria in order to be approved, which include a "political window of opportunity" and "new or newly expanded activities". 9 SRMs were approved and contracted during 2018 for a total of $438,560. However, in some instances the purpose and value of SRMs has to be questioned. The Nepal SRM, for instance, had the objective to "convene, train and orient local government representatives" following the election. The fact that an election would occur was well known, and the Asia work plan already included an activity to "conduct local, regional and national meetings with elected local government" with the very same organization. Moreover, the 2017 Independent Monitoring Report already mentions that several workshops on "local level government's role in community-based forest management" were held, so the activity was not new.

o **Ongoing management change:** The introduction of a new Enterprise Resource Planning system is an important step to improve the tracking of activities and budgets. At this stage, RRI's project management tools do not allow the independent monitor to match financial performance with results performance. It is not realistic to expect that results can be observed within the same calendar year for which activities were planned. Due to donor commitments, RRI increasingly needs to track multi-year obligations based on multi-year activities. activities that could not be funded or completed should generally carry over into the next calendar year. All of this points to the need to strengthen the project management culture in RRI.

As part of its 2017 Annual Narrative Report, RRI reflected on its efforts to scale back from 15 focus countries to seven in response to the 2015 Mid-Term Evaluation:

> "*RRI's in-country engagement is vital to the success of its global analytics, outreach, and advocacy. While RRI's Coalition structure allows it to remain engaged in countries where it does not fund work, there are significant opportunities for advancing change at the national level that RRI is unable to meet due to funding constraints on country-level work.*"

There will always be more opportunities than the Coalition can take advantage of, and it is undoubtedly true that making choices is tough. RRI remains a highly relevant and respected institution that can leverage a broad set of stakeholders in support of its mission. The Coalition faces a number

of challenges to its strategy due to political changes at global, regional and local level; to its funding model due to increasing restrictions and earmarking; and to its structure due to changes in RRG's systems and staffing. All of these transitions present the Coalition with opportunities to readjust for the future and to secure and build on its success.

To access the full 2018 Independent Monitoring Report, please contact Jenna DiPaolo Colley at jdipaolo@rightsandresources.org.