

Spokespersons Profiles

Andy White, Coordinator, RRI

Andy White is Coordinator of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI). He also serves as President of the Rights and Resources Group, the nonprofit coordinating mechanism of the RRI Coalition based in Washington, D.C. Before co-founding RRI in 2005, Andy served as Senior Director of Programs at Forest Trends and Natural Resource Management Specialist at the World Bank, as well as worked as a consultant to the International Food Policy Institute, Save the Children Federation, and the Inter-American Foundation. He has worked extensively in Haiti, Mexico, and China. As Coordinator of RRI, he advises policy research, advocacy, and engagement in Asia, Latin America, and Africa and leads initiatives and networks to advance RRI's mission. His research and publications have focused on forest tenure and policy, forest industry and trade, as well as the role of forests, communities, and institutions in climate change. Andy has a PhD in forest economics, an M.A. in anthropology from the University of Minnesota, and a B.S. in forestry from Humboldt State University.

Kundan Kumar, Asia Program Director, RRI – REPORT CO-AUTHOR

Kundan has a PhD in Resource Development (2010) from Michigan State University and a Post Graduate Diploma in Forest Management from Indian Institute of Forest Management (1990). He worked with NGOs and the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in India on community forestry, bank financing of forestry projects, watershed development, and micro-credit. He has also been closely involved with social and environmental mobilizations in India, including the enactment of India's landmark Forest Rights Act. Before joining RRI in 2014, he worked as a faculty member at University of Toronto for five years, teaching and researching forest governance (specifically forest tenure), environmental justice, and social movements. He has published work in natural resources governance, forests and land tenure, and social and environmental movements. He speaks English, Hindi, and Odiya.

Patrick Kipalu, Director, Africa Program,

Patrick KIPALU coordinates and leads RRI's engagement in Africa. He has a strong background in natural resources management and human rights in Africa. He has experience supporting civil society organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa, including on human rights, natural resources exploitation (lands, forests, and mines), and climate change. Before joining RRI, Patrick worked as Country Manager for Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Before that, he worked for the Africa Program at Bank Information Center (BIC), and for the Equity and Governance Program (EGP) at World Resources Institute (WRI). Patrick has a Master's degree in Global Environmental Policy from the American University (AU) in Washington DC, and a bachelors' degree in Environmental Sciences and Natural Resources Management from the University of Kinshasa in DRC. He speaks English, French, Lingala and Kikongo.

Omaira Bolaños, Director, Latin America & Gender Justice Programs,

Omaira Bolaños is the Director of the Latin America & Gender Justice Programs at Rights and Resources Initiative. She holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Florida. Omaira has 23 years of professional experience throughout Latin American working on topics related to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities' collective tenure rights, sustainable development, gender justice, watershed management, community forestry, forest policy, community-based conservation, applied research and capacity development. She has developed research on Indigenous Peoples land rights struggles in the lower Amazon Brazil and Community forestry in Bolivia. In the last seven years, she has worked to strategically prioritize and support the regional afro-descendant movement in consolidating their collective tenure rights. She joined RRI in 2009.

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