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From Commitments to Action

ADVANCING COMMUNITY RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE
CLIMATE AND CONSERVATION GOALS



This brief is prepared by Jenny Springer and Alain Fr chet; with technical support by Teresa Paterson; and editing support by Madiha Waris Qureshi and Nicole Harris.

The brief's design and layout is by Ashley Young of Publications Professionals.

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INTRODUCTION

A large proportion of the world's remaining high-biodiversity and carbon-rich lands, forests and waters are held by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples, and a robust body of evidence demonstrates the positive environmental outcomes of their governance of these resources. Growing recognition of these roles and contributions is reflected in a range of international commitments, such as the new language on rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities adopted in the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF),¹ commitments regarding Indigenous and community rights in international forest and climate initiatives,² and significant funding pledges from climate and conservation donors.³

However, translating this emerging support into tangible actions with clear and practical meaning for local peoples remains a serious challenge. Long histories of colonialism, dispossession and fortress conservation have marginalized the rights, governance and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, leaving persistent structural barriers that risk undermining global efforts to advance human rights-based approaches to climate and conservation.

While paradigms have begun to change, more deliberate and concerted actions will be needed to overcome these barriers and elevate rights and community leadership in responses to the global environmental crisis. Without such transformations, the push to achieve climate and biodiversity goals risks following well-established top-down pathways, leading to further marginalization of those on the front lines, the continued infringement of their rights, and failure to stem climate change and biodiversity loss.

The purpose of this policy brief is twofold: (i) identify the structural constraints to rights-based climate and biodiversity action, particularly with respect to GBF Target 3 and UNFCCC Articles 5 and 6; and (ii) develop a concise action framework to help governments, development institutions, conservation organizations and the private sector realize their commitments for rights-based action in support of local peoples. In doing so, it identifies the gaps to be addressed and presents ways forward for rights-based interventions that can be used to mitigate risks and scale the adoption of good practices.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

International commitments to maintaining average global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030 while halting and reversing biodiversity loss cannot be achieved without rights-based approaches to

conservation and climate action that recognize and support the leadership roles of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Rights-based approaches (RBAs) to climate and biodiversity mean that “policies, governance and management do not violate human rights and that those implementing such policies actively seek ways to support and promote human rights in their design and implementation.”⁴ RBAs recognize that respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights are essential for the conservation and restoration of nature and that a healthy environment, in turn, is a human right that underpins the realization of many other human rights.⁵

“Community-led” calls attention to the need to recognize and support Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples as leaders and partners in climate and conservation efforts, going beyond safeguards to emphasize positive support in recognition of their outsized roles⁶ in stewarding the Earth. Together, these communities hold an estimated 50 percent of the world’s land area⁷ and a large proportion of the remaining natural areas on Earth⁸—including at least 22 percent of the extent of the world’s Key Biodiversity Areas.⁹ Indigenous Peoples’ lands contain 36 percent of intact forest landscapes¹⁰ and 35 percent of terrestrial areas considered essential for biodiversity and climate resilience.¹¹ Forests managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities also contain at least 22 percent of the total carbon stored in tropical and subtropical forests.¹²

Areas under formal governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities are associated with positive environmental outcomes, including significantly lower rates of deforestation, greater carbon density values, and improved biodiversity protection as compared with lands outside these areas.¹³ Research from several countries comparing Indigenous-managed lands with protected areas have found that they have equal or greater impacts in terms of biodiversity conservation¹⁴ and reduced deforestation or forest degradation.¹⁵ Across the global South, communities invest an average of US\$3.57 per hectare (one quarter of the value of global conservation financing) in the self-directed management, restoration and preservation of the natural systems they rely on.¹⁶

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT COMMITMENTS?

Growing awareness of these major contributions together with persistent advocacy by rightsholders and human rights organizations has resulted in increased recognition of rights-based and community-led approaches in international environmental policy frameworks.

Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 2010 Cancun Agreements call upon all Parties to fully respect human rights in all climate actions and, in particular, to respect the knowledge and rights of Indigenous Peoples and members of local communities—including their full and effective participation—in all REDD+ activities.¹⁷ Expanding on this, the preamble of the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, reminds States of their obligations to respect, protect and promote human rights when taking actions to mitigate or adapt to climate change.¹⁸

Accordingly, Parties to the Agreement are required, *inter alia*, to ensure: (i) equity, equality and non-discrimination, including respect for Indigenous Peoples’ rights and those of women; (ii) meaningful, informed, transparent and inclusive participation; (iii) accountability and effective remedies for human rights harms; and (iv) effective environmental and social safeguards—in all climate-related actions and decisions.¹⁹

The Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework,²⁰ adopted in December 2022, includes the strongest recognition of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights in the UN Convention on Biodiversity to date. Its significant provisions include:

- The cross-cutting “Considerations for implementation of the framework” (Section C) calls for all implementation to follow a human rights-based approach and ensure respect for Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights, traditional knowledge, values, and practices, with their free, prior and informed consent and full and effective participation in decision-making. It highlights that successful implementation will depend on ensuring gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, reducing inequalities and meaningful participation of younger generations.
- Significantly, Target 3 on effectively conserving and managing at least 30 percent of the Earth's ecosystems by 2030 (the “30x30” target) includes recognition of Indigenous and traditional territories, as applicable, together with protected areas and OECMs as actions towards this target (see Box 1). This option is critical for enabling Indigenous Peoples and local communities to choose the best form of recognition for their particular context.²¹ Additional Target 3 language on recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities provides a safeguard against the risks of displacement and rights infringements highlighted by many rights advocates in relation to expanded area-based conservation.²²
- A human rights-based approach is further enshrined in the Target 22 provisions to ensure full, effective, and equitable participation in decision-making for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, rights over lands, territories, resources and traditional knowledge, access to justice and protection for environmental defenders. A new free-standing Target 23 on gender aims to ensure gender equality in implementation.²³

While these international commitments create significant openings, advancing Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' leadership in climate and biodiversity action depends on how these provisions are taken up in national policies, strategies and implementation, and the extent to which Indigenous and community rightsholders have the voice, capacities and resources to determine them.

BOX 1: KUNMING-MONTRÉAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK TARGET 3

“Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 percent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories.”

—Convention on Biological Diversity 2022

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KEY ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR RIGHTS-BASED AND COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

Over the years, community-led efforts to advance rights-based approaches to climate and conservation have revealed a range of critical enabling conditions for their success and sustainability. These enabling conditions create foundations and incentives for rights-based and community-led action, while protecting against threats to people and nature. Key enabling conditions include:

- 1. Secure rights to collective lands, territories and resources** provide an essential foundation for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples to conserve the natural and cultural diversity of their lands and waters, realize their rights to traditional knowledge and development, and protect against arbitrary violations and forced displacement.
- 2. Legal and policy frameworks for community-led conservation and climate action** enable appropriate recognition and support for communities to take forward their own self-directed climate and biodiversity solutions and benefit from their contributions, while resolving conflicts with other land uses.
- 3. Government support for rights-based and community-led action** includes the duty-bearer roles of governments to protect against activities that could potentially harm communities and their environments, as well as positive actions to create enabling policies, programs and dedicated financial and/or technical assistance for community-led action.
- 4. Empowered community-led governance** enables Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples to take forward their own self-determined conservation and climate solutions, while protecting against threats and securing related rights and enabling conditions.
- 5. Fit-for-purpose financing to rightsholder organizations** distributes increased, equitable, sustained, and effective financing to rightsholders to support the climate and conservation leadership roles they currently (and historically) play with very limited outside support.²⁴
- 6. Monitoring and accountability** ensures that safeguards against negative impacts are established and adhered to, grievances are heard and redressed, and good practices are documented, shared, and expanded.

Despite increasing clarity on the meaning and implications of rights-based approaches and the strong body of evidence supporting the above conditions, structural barriers to effective implementation continue to impede global climate and biodiversity commitments to human rights.

The following sections briefly describe key challenges to the realization of these enabling conditions. We conclude with a concise action framework for overcoming barriers and advancing rights-based action.

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CHALLENGES TO REALIZING RIGHTS-BASED AND COMMUNITY-LED CLIMATE AND CONSERVATION ACTION

SECURE RIGHTS TO COLLECTIVE LANDS, TERRITORIES AND RESOURCES

In recent decades, many countries have established legal frameworks that provide for collective tenure by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples.²⁵ The land and forest areas legally recognized for these groups have also grown incrementally since 2000.²⁶ Although these trends provide important foundations, progress to date remains inadequate for meeting the promise of rights-based conservation and climate action. Key gaps—as they pertain to UNFCCC and CBD goals and targets—include:

- **There are widespread limitations in legal frameworks for community tenure.** Even where community tenure frameworks have been enacted, persistent limitations include fragmented recognition of traditional territories, exclusion of subsurface resources, procedural restrictions on community use, governance and exclusion rights, inadequate provisions for FPIC,²⁷ weak recognition of women’s rights,²⁸ and/or reliance on long and cumbersome titling processes.²⁹
- **Implementation of community tenure laws remains weak.** Globally, while Indigenous Peoples and local communities traditionally hold and use approximately half of the world’s land area, they have legally-recognized rights of ownership only to an estimated 11.4 percent of the world’s land and more limited rights to manage another 7.1 percent—with much of it concentrated in a few large countries.³⁰ Lack of implementation of existing laws, through titling or other legal recognition of specific land areas, contributes significantly to this gap.³¹
- **Communities remain vulnerable to infringements from expanded conservation and climate mitigation activities.** In countries critical for biodiversity and land-based emissions reductions, the traditional territories and lands claimed by communities remain largely unrecognized. Across 10 high conservation priority countries, 49 percent of the combined area is claimed by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples, while only 8 percent has been legally recognized.³² And across 31 countries holding almost 70 percent of tropical forests, only half of the total area traditionally held by these groups was legally recognized as of 2021.³³ Given the minimum global land area estimated to meet climate commitments³⁴ and safeguard biodiversity, the risk of infringements on communities’ lands and livelihoods will only increase in the absence of secure tenure rights.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR COMMUNITY-LED BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

Against a history of highly exclusionary forms of conservation, new paradigms have gradually emerged.³⁵ These include protected area types that integrate sustainable use,³⁶ recognition of diverse forms of protected area governance (including governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities),³⁷ recognition of the effective contributions of areas not established primarily for conservation purposes (“other effective area-based conservation measures” or OECMs),³⁸ and—with adoption of the GBF—recognition of “indigenous and traditional territories, as applicable...”.³⁹

In addition, communities have taken initiative to advance their own biodiversity and climate solutions, such as through Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs)⁴⁰ and Amazon Indigenous REDD+.⁴¹ However, state-managed protected areas remain the norm and many national frameworks do not yet create space for robust and widespread community-led climate and conservation action.

Specific gaps and challenges include:

- **Few countries have the requisite legal frameworks for recognition and support of community-led conservation.** While Indigenous and community protected and conserved areas have seen significant development in some countries, such as Australia⁴² and Canada,⁴³ most do not yet recognize community rightsholders as environmental authorities or enable them to pursue self-determination actions to establish conserved areas or designate parts of their territories for inclusion in Protected Area (PA) systems.⁴⁴ These limitations on rightsholders’ ability to secure formal recognition of their conservation contributions, including as a basis for technical and financial support for their stewardship, constitute critical stumbling blocks to the realization of rights-based ambitions. OECMs are intended to create space for more flexible conservation alternatives, including for community-led conservation,⁴⁵ but are not yet defined in most countries;⁴⁶ thus, the opportunities they may provide are not yet clear. The significant openings created by the new GBF language on Indigenous and traditional territories must now be negotiated and defined in national contexts.
- **Ongoing conflicts between protected areas and community lands block opportunities for community action.** In many countries, protected areas were established before the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities were recognized in statutory laws, resulting in overlaps that infringe on community rights and undermine support for conservation measures and partnerships.⁴⁷ National legal frameworks for community tenure and protected areas often remain incompatible, limiting options for resolving overlaps and enabling rightsholder-led conservation. For example, among 21 countries (including all 17 “Megadiverse” countries) assessed in 2015, fewer than half (10 countries) provide legal options for recognizing the ownership of community lands within protected areas and—where they exist—implementation of these provisions has often been weak.⁴⁸
- **Few countries provide critical foundations for communities to engage in and benefit from land-based emissions reduction schemes or pursue their self-determined approaches.** For example, a 2021 study of 31 countries holding almost 70 percent of tropical forests found that recognition of community carbon rights is not yet in place in most countries,⁴⁹ and none of the safeguard systems developed by multilateral institutions and independent voluntary standards require the definition of such rights.⁵⁰ Similarly, few countries have defined how carbon and non-carbon benefits are to be shared,⁵¹ as required by jurisdictional REDD+ approaches.⁵²

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR RIGHTS-BASED AND COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

Governments are central actors in the development and implementation of national climate and conservation policies and initiatives. Under international human rights frameworks, they are also the primary duty-bearers responsible for ensuring that human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled, including as they relate to climate and conservation actions. However, persistent gaps and challenges in many countries include:

- **Political support and government capacity to secure community tenure rights remain insufficient.** Among 20 countries assessed in RRI's 2021 Opportunity Framework analysis, national political willingness to secure community tenure rights—as an essential foundation for rights-based conservation and climate action—was satisfactory in only five countries (with eight partially adequate and seven unsatisfactory). Sub-national government willingness was satisfactory in only seven of the countries studied. Moreover, government capacity to implement community tenure rights was satisfactory in only three countries (with 13 partially adequate and four unsatisfactory).⁵³
- **Indigenous and human rights issues are not yet well-integrated in government-led climate and conservation planning.** Studies show that communities have had limited participation in the development of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the climate convention and are rarely recognized adequately in them.⁵⁴ An IWGIA study found few references to Indigenous land rights in the second round of NDCs up to May 2022, although general references are more numerous.⁵⁵ Similarly, National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) as a whole do not adequately integrate human rights in biodiversity policy and planning.⁵⁶ National process to update NBSAPs, following adoption of the GBF in 2022, present a key window of opportunity to advance rights-based approaches.
- **Many governments continue to promote or approve activities that threaten community rights and environments.** Over 25 percent of customary territories are threatened by commodity-driven development globally, such as large-scale logging, agriculture, mining, and other processes leading to forest loss and land use and cover changes.⁵⁷ Indigenous, local, and Afro-descendant communities are increasingly confronting resource development projects with negative impacts on both their substantive rights (such as rights to life and lands) and procedural rights (including to FPIC).⁵⁸ Many community leaders voice skepticism about the motives of governments with regard to their lands as well as concerns that the political situation in their respective countries will worsen for them in the coming years.⁵⁹

EMPOWERED COMMUNITY-LED GOVERNANCE

Indigenous and community governed areas are the dominant form of sustainable management of global commons,⁶⁰ demonstrating the strength and effectiveness of their local governance institutions. Rightsholders are also increasingly connected, coordinated, and mobilized to effectively engage national and international constituencies, advance their self-determined priorities, pursue collective actions, and hold public and private actors and institutions accountable for their actions.⁶¹

However, growing demands for lands and resources combined with persistent tenure insecurity and insufficient government support threaten to further disempower and marginalize rightsholder communities and organizations. Key challenges include:

- **Communities are facing acute threats to their safety and security.** Increasing pressures and insufficient protection leave Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community environmental defenders vulnerable to lethal attacks—with 1,733 defenders killed from 2012 to 2022—as well as attempts to silence them through

tactics like death threats, surveillance, gender-based violence and criminalization.⁶² Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women particularly face broad and systemic forms of discrimination and human rights violations that hinder their substantial contributions to the stewardship of community lands.⁶³ Many community leaders report increased harassment, criminalization, and threats to personal security, while their organizations face discrimination, marginalization from political decision-making and constraints on civic space.⁶⁴

- **Rightsholders are calling for increased support for mobilization, networking and organizational strengthening.** Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community leaders stress the increasing need to grow and consolidate their movements and networks, including to influence global agendas, learn from one another, and strengthen communication and accountability among their members.⁶⁵ Meeting community livelihood needs requires further development of local resource-based economies,⁶⁶ while securing increased and fairer proportions of international donor financing is prompting the growth of new institutions and capacities for fund management.⁶⁷ With regard to tenure reforms, of 20 countries assessed in RRI's 2021 Opportunities analysis, community capacity to advance tenure reforms was found adequate in nine countries and partially adequate in 11—indicating both a strong foundation for the realization of RBAs and clear capacity strengthening needs.⁶⁸
- **Support for self-determined land and resource governance priorities remains insufficient.** Programs funded by international donors have played an important role in empowering communities to secure and protect their rights but have also been criticized by some leaders for not addressing Indigenous priorities.⁶⁹ In particular, the roles and contributions of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women and girls to rights-based climate action and biodiversity conservation are poorly recognized and supported at both national and international levels.⁷⁰ Current funding systems and channels are such that formal conservation and climate initiatives are often driven by outside NGOs or government agencies and implemented through top-down modalities; a rights-based approach would require reversing these dynamics.⁷¹

FIT FOR PURPOSE FINANCING TO RIGHTSHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to structural barriers at the national level, the international finance architecture is structured to support governments and NGOs, with very limited channels for direct support to rightsholder organizations on the front lines of change. While growing rightsholder advocacy and research have spurred awareness and donor responses, actions to adapt and scale-up financing to rightsholders remain nascent. Key challenges and gaps include:

- **Only a small fraction of international climate financing goes to rightsholder organizations for their self-determined priorities.** Community tenure and forest management activities received less than 1 percent of Official Development Assistance for climate change mitigation and adaptation between 2011 and 2020.⁷² Moreover, only 17 percent of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' tenure and forest management funding mentioned an Indigenous Peoples' organization, indicating that a low share is under the leadership of such organizations, with funding to women's organizations especially limited.⁷³ The Forest Tenure Funders Pledge of US\$1.7 billion over five years has been a welcome response but is still in early stages of implementation, consists of previously allocated as well as unallocated funding⁷⁴ and is only a first step in providing funds commensurate with needs on the ground.⁷⁵ Reporting as of 2022 on the Forest Tenure Funders Pledge noted that just 7 percent of year 1 pledge financing went directly to organizations led by Indigenous Peoples or local communities, while around 50 percent went via international NGOs.⁷⁶
- **There is currently a mismatch between the cultures and systems of most donors and those of rightsholder organizations that impedes the flow of funding commensurate with communities' contributions.** Frequently voiced constraints include:
 - Issues in the design of funding programs (short-term, inflexible, not incorporating local priorities);
 - Organizational capacity challenges across donors, intermediaries and rightsholder organizations; and,

— Issues with grant management practices, such as in proposal preparation, financial management, reporting and other requirements that do not align with local organizations’ strengths and working conditions.⁷⁷

■ **Sustainable financing options for community-led climate and biodiversity actions are limited.**

Despite the emergence of rightsholder-led funding mechanisms⁷⁸ and enhanced commitments by donors and philanthropies,⁷⁹ community access to sustained, long-term sources of financing to support their climate, conservation, and sustainable development priorities is limited and global initiatives have tended to prioritize market-based approaches. While the projected growth of voluntary markets for climate⁸⁰ and biodiversity⁸¹ credits is substantive, investments to date have yet to resolve persistent social⁸² and environmental⁸³ integrity challenges that undermine their credibility and contributions to community rights and livelihoods.

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Proactive monitoring and responsive accountability mechanisms are necessary to secure rights-based approaches. Monitoring provides transparency on the extent to which measurable human rights outcomes are being realized and supports adaptive responses to strengthen them. Accountability mechanisms—across multiple levels and duty-bearing actors—work to prevent harm, resolve grievances and redress negative impacts. Existing monitoring and accountability frameworks provide foundations for community-led and rights-based approaches, but are limited in significant ways. Challenges include:

■ **Global environmental monitoring frameworks are generally non-binding and give limited attention to human rights linkages.**

Monitoring frameworks under the UNFCCC and GBF set important standards and expectations but are generally non-binding, with responsibility for upholding their standards—including critical safeguards such as the Cancun Safeguards for REDD+—left primarily to the political will of state Parties.⁸⁴ The monitoring framework for the post-2020 GBF is still being developed but has been criticized for lacking attention to human rights, gender, social and economic dimensions of biodiversity policy.⁸⁵ Many questions remain as to how compliance of conservation programs with internationally-recognized human rights will be monitored, by whom, and what happens in case of non-adherence to these obligations.⁸⁶

■ **Crucial national monitoring and accountability systems are not yet fully protecting community rights and interests.**

In accordance with national government leadership and accountabilities under the CBD and UNFCCC, national safeguard systems, reporting and participatory review processes play especially important roles. However, in RRI’s 2021 study of 31 REDD+ countries, just over half of the countries had developed feedback and grievance redress mechanisms to support engagement in REDD+ and protect communities to ensure fair transactions, and only two of these were operationalized.⁸⁷ And while national and regional judicial processes have helped communities to secure protections and redress against infringements of their rights and damage to their environments, state implementation of judicial rulings is often lacking.⁸⁸

■ **Accountability mechanisms for conservation and voluntary climate projects remain inadequate.**

Non-governmental actors involved in supporting or implementing area-based and other conservation actions must ensure strong institutional safeguards and their effective implementation. While several of the largest international conservation organizations have adopted safeguard systems,⁸⁹ and many voluntary climate projects submit themselves to verification from established standards,⁹⁰ experts and rightsholders alike point to serious implementation gaps that undermine the value of such frameworks.⁹¹ Most voluntary climate standards are designed to do no harm,⁹² as opposed to setting a race to the top,⁹³ and their efficacy in terms of consistently protecting and advancing the rights of IPs, LCs and ADPs remains to be proven.⁹⁴

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Global climate and biodiversity goals fundamentally depend on the world's ability to uphold human rights and pursue actions that prioritize equity, justice and inclusion. Overcoming barriers to the realization of rights-based approaches is feasible, and experiences to date point the way forward.

Drawing on lessons learned from community-led initiatives and solutions, this section identifies the key actions needed to move from current commitments to concrete actions on RBAs.

■ **Build and amplify rightsholder-led agendas for rights-based approaches.**

- Create spaces for rightsholders to further develop and amplify their visions for RBAs to climate and conservation, building on established principles and standards such as the Land Rights Standard.⁹⁵
- Assess the state of play on RBAs at national levels and create space for rightsholders and allies to forge context-specific strategies for advancing rights-based and community-led approaches.

■ **Secure collective rights to lands, territories and resources.**

- Increase concerted actions with stepped up contributions from the climate and conservation sectors to strengthen legal frameworks for community-based tenure rights—including robust protections for community governance, women's rights, FPIC and territorial integrity.
- Expand implementation of community-based tenure through enhanced collaboration and support for community-led initiatives, prioritizing countries with existing legislation but limited implementation to date.
- Ensure community tenure rights are secured in areas with potential for conservation and/or REDD+ investment, to safeguard rights and provide a foundation for community-led action.

■ **Promote legal and policy frameworks for community-led conservation and climate action.**

- Inclusively develop clear national frameworks and pathways for community-led conservation, grounded in the legal recognition of customary tenure rights and governance institutions.
- Reconcile protected area legislation with Indigenous and community tenure rights.
- Ensure that new OECMs and other frameworks provide opportunities for appropriate recognition and support for rightsholders' self-determined conservation approaches.
- Resolve overlaps and conflicts in existing protected areas through land restitutions and/or devolved management or co-management systems.
- Advance national recognition of community rights to carbon and emissions reduction credits.
- Ensure benefit-sharing plans are transparently and inclusively developed with rightsholders.

- **Strengthen government action and support for rights-based approaches.**
 - Increase government capacities and support for community tenure recognition and security.
 - Revise NBSAPs and NDCs through inclusive processes with Indigenous, local community, and Afro-descendant rights organizations, including those focused on women, to prioritize rights-based and community-led approaches.
 - Leverage commitments under the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement and the CBD/GBF (such as Target 14)⁹⁶ to shift economic development away from industries with impacts harmful to the environments of community lands.
 - Strengthen frameworks for and implementation of FPIC rights in all actions with potential impacts on customary collective rights.

- **Enhance protections and responsive support for rightsholders' institutions and communities.**
 - Protect against threats and increase support to environmental defenders by enhancing measures such as rapid response systems, legal assistance, increased awareness and monitoring, and access to justice.
 - Support the continued growth and consolidation of rightsholder organizations and networks—including to build common agendas and share experiences on rights-based and community-led conservation and climate action.
 - Provide more responsive support to communities' organizations in technical capacity, mobilization, networking, and advocacy based on their self-determined needs and requests.

- **Increase direct access to flexible, long-term and inclusive financing for rightsholders' leadership and action.**
 - Increase the scale of international and national financing that supports the climate and conservation leadership roles and self-determined priorities of rightsholder organizations and communities.
 - Increasingly channel funding directly to rightsholder organizations, including by supporting the development of rightsholder-led funds.
 - Adapt public and private donor funding systems to make them more “fit for purpose,” that is, channeled in ways that are relevant and appropriate for Indigenous Peoples and local communities and ensure funding engagements are led by their organizations, are flexible, long-term, gender-inclusive, timely and accessible, and promote mutual accountability between donors and rightsholders.⁹⁷

- **Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms and their consistent implementation.**
 - Adopt clear and robust human rights indicators within the GBF monitoring framework.
 - Implement outcomes-based monitoring approaches to GBF Target 3, only recognizing areas as fully contributing to 30x30 when they meet positive biodiversity and human rights outcomes.⁹⁸
 - Ensure rightsholder involvement in monitoring conservation and climate RBA commitments, whether through inclusive national monitoring platforms, peer reporting mechanisms and/or community-based monitoring approaches.
 - Further develop and strengthen grievance mechanisms for conservation and climate initiatives at all levels, including projects and site-based work, national processes, and international frameworks.
 - Strengthen accountability policies and mechanisms for conservation NGOs, including with concrete targets, public reporting, and multi-stakeholder monitoring platforms.
 - Adopt and apply the [Land Rights Standard principles](#)⁹⁹ in all landscape investments.

ENDNOTES

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ABOUT THE RIGHTS AND RESOURCES INITIATIVE

The Rights and Resources Initiative is a global Coalition of 21 Partners and more than 150 rightsholders organizations and their allies dedicated to advancing the forestland and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples, local communities, and the women within these communities. Members capitalize on each other's strengths, expertise, and geographic reach to achieve solutions more effectively and efficiently. RRI leverages the power of its global Coalition to amplify the voices of local peoples and proactively engage governments, multilateral institutions, and private sector actors to adopt institutional and market reforms that support the realization of their rights and self-determined development. By advancing a strategic understanding of the global threats and opportunities resulting from insecure land and resource rights, RRI develops and promotes rights-based approaches to business and development and catalyzes effective solutions to scale rural tenure reform and enhance sustainable resource governance. RRI is coordinated by the Rights and Resources Group, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC. For more information, please visit www.rightsandresources.org.

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