

Beyond Land Rights: RRI Vision to advance Indigenous, community, and Afro-descendant aspirations for self-determined economic development.

*“We need to be responsive and sensitive to specific needs within a moment in time in the context of communities’ long-term, indeterminate struggles for land rights. **You need to survive today to fight for land rights tomorrow.**”* Kimaren Ole Riamit, Maasai Leader

I. Purpose of the Document

This document presents a collective vision for the RRI Coalition to support the self-determined economic and development aspirations of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples (IP, LC, and AD), including community women and youth, to fully realize their customary rights to their lands, territories, and resources. Empowering IPs, LCs, and ADs to achieve their livelihood needs and priorities is foundational to the realization of collective tenure rights, the establishment of community-based governance institutions, food security, and the pursuit of global climate, biodiversity and sustainable development targets – including the 2030 goals of the RRI Coalition.

II. Background and Context

The last 15 years have yielded important progress in recognizing the land tenure rights of IPs, LCs, and ADs. Between 2002 and 2017, communities gained rights to 150 million hectares of forests globally; many international mechanisms now foreground human rights in relation to investments and landscape-wide interventions on community land¹; and a strong consensus has emerged within the scientific community, recognizing that IPs, LCs, and ADs with secure land tenure rights are the most capable stewards of the biodiverse ecosystems they have customarily managed for generations. Over \$1.7 billion was committed by public and private donors at the UNFCCC CoP26 in Glasgow to support the recognition of Indigenous and community tenure and to directly support rightsholders to manage and conserve tropical forests and biodiversity. Moreover, the Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed at CBD CoP15, explicitly recognizes the importance of Indigenous and traditional territories, and contains targets to protect and encourage customary sustainable use by Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Despite such progress, evidence shows the legal recognition of communities’ land rights does not consistently result in increased community self-determination or material well-being. While many companies and investors have [committed to respecting community land rights](#), their actions to date have not translated into positive changes for local peoples and women at scale, nor have they mitigated global supply chain impacts on the environment. IPs, LCs, and ADs remain among the poorest and most marginalized peoples in the world, and their poverty manifests in diverse ways, including insecure land and property rights, and vulnerability to climate change, food insecurity, socio-economic disparities in

¹ See e.g. FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGTs): <https://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>; and the Committee on World Food Security’s Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems: <https://www.fao.org/3/au866e/au866e.pdf>

health, education, and numerous other forms of institutionalized discrimination. These systemic injustices have also been compounded by COVID-19, deepening the vulnerabilities of these communities.

RRI's engagement at the intersection of land tenure rights and economic development – i.e. livelihoods - has thus far implicitly rested on the assumption of a linear relationship: that as communities receive title (or other forms of legal recognition of land rights), they will gain tenure security and thus be able to pursue their self-determined livelihoods activities. Recent research, as well as the experience of communities on the ground, has problematized this linear assumption: formal land title has not been a reliable indicator of land tenure security, and many communities with formal land title still struggle to establish their self-determined economic or development initiatives. On the positive side, recent evidence suggests that livelihood security can strengthen tenure security, even in contexts where communities' land ownership rights have not yet been recognized.²

The struggle for land rights is inter-generational, long term, and at times indeterminate while livelihood needs are a question of everyday basic survival. Livelihood security relates directly to local peoples' abilities to meet immediate needs and to provide a viable future for generations to come, thus affecting their capacity to pursue other goals and priorities, including advocacy for, and defense of, their land rights. Conversely, land tenure security shapes communities' livelihood opportunities, and the possibility of just and equitable outcomes or agreements with third parties.

Amidst increasing support for rights-based actions and investments, as well as growing demand for changes in the conditions that inhibit the realization of community rights and capabilities, RRI aims to outline strategies for engagement to advance the livelihoods aspirations of IPs, LCs, and ADs that build upon securing land rights. This question has been increasingly raised by the Coalition in recent years and now is the time to give it dedicated attention given the momentum for community land rights recognition globally, and the drive for rights-based approaches in investment, conservation, and other landscape-wide endeavours. The emergence of global funding commitments and direct financing mechanisms to support IPs, LCs, and ADs to manage and govern forests and rural landscapes, for example through the Community Land Rights and Conservation Finance Initiative (CLARIFI), is an additional impetus.

This document outlines the ambition and niche of the RRI Coalition beyond securing community land rights and describes a strategy for engagement that is aligned with RRI's Fourth Strategic Program (2023 to 2027) and ongoing RRI initiatives in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is the result of Coalition-wide consultations undertaken during 2022, where over 75 participants and experts from all regions shared their understanding, experience with, and priorities for supporting the economic and development visions of IPs, LCs, and ADs at the country, regional, and global levels.

² Larson, A. M., Monterroso, I., Liswanti, N., Herawati, T., Banana, A. Y., Canturias, P., ... & Mwangi, E. (2019). *Models for formalizing customary and community forest lands: The need to integrate livelihoods into rights and forest conservation goals* (Vol. 253). CIFOR.

III. Defining “Livelihoods”

RRI members refer to those rights and initiatives that determine how land supports and sustains communities’ socio-economic endeavors, well-being, and socio-cultural identity, which in turn supports communities’ self-determination.

Livelihoods are the foundational driving force for securing land rights. The realization of land rights is given meaning by how land supports and sustains communities’ socio-economic endeavors and well-being, which in turn supports communities’ self-determination. Understanding of what constitutes a “livelihood” has been the subject of decades of debate in development policy and practice. Core elements typically associated with the idea of “livelihoods” include:

- The capabilities, assets (including material, cultural and social resources) and activities required to sustain a way of life.
 - Livelihood assets include human, financial, physical, natural, and social capital, which individuals and communities leverage to pursue monetary income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, and more sustainable uses of the natural resource base³.
 - Livelihood activities constitute a complex web of interactions that emphasises the diversity of ways people make a living. This may be associated with defined activities such as agriculture, wage labour, small scale enterprises, etc. In many instances people engage with a complex portfolio of activities in pursuit of livelihood pathways across time and scale⁴.
- A livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it maintains or enhances the local and global biophysical assets on which the activity depends and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. A livelihood is socially sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and provide for future generations.⁵
- Communities’ land and resource use practices and governance institutions, which have been shaped by their local circumstances, including norms, values, and experiences over time, as well as by climate and biophysical factors.

This understanding of livelihoods includes the conceptualization of land in a non-static form for mobile communities such as pastoralists. Beyond providing basic material needs, livelihood activities form the core socio-cultural identity markers of different communities, which in turn define socio-ecological relationships and the means used to manage, use and govern human-environment interactions. The recently conducted [Blue Skies process](#) has further expanded the Coalition’s thinking on livelihoods to be undergirded by the principles of living freely and without fear; eating well; living

³ Christensen, I., & Pozarny, P. (2008). Socio-Economic and Livelihood Analysis in Investment Planning, FAO Policy Learning Programme. *Socio-Economic & Livelihood Module*, 3.

⁴ Scoones, I. (2009). Livelihoods perspectives and rural development. *The journal of peasant studies*, 36(1), 171-196.

⁵ Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. Institute of Development Studies (UK).

in peace; and protecting and preserving ways of life and all the riches within community territories for posterity.

“Living in peace with the territories preserved, with all the biodiversity, with water...To live well is also to think about a change in the economic model, from one of unbridled exploitation, as it is today, in the end based on greed to exploit wood, minerals, waters. So, this economic model needs to be changed and have another logic that is not so predatory. It is necessary to democratize access to land, distribute land to small farmers to do family farming, agroecology. [It will mean] that we can plant food without poison and eat well. It is necessary to use natural resources also for income generation, but not on a large scale, through monocultures. [It involves] use in a sustainable way of what already exists in nature and, of course, free from invasions by prospectors, loggers. What I imagine to be living well is this, it is not utopia, and it is not romanticism: it is to think of the territory with all its riches and people with their ways of life and cultures, preserved and protected.” Indigenous leader. Brazil

The term “livelihood” is broadly rooted in concepts of social justice, culture and identity. It refers to the abilities of individuals and/or communities to harness natural resources and other ecosystem services from local landscapes and ecologies to meet their needs and aspirations. In this understanding, livelihoods relate to community property rights, indicating dignity, control, empowerment, and sustainability apart from income generation⁶.

IV. How is the concept of livelihoods linked to RRI’s goals?

Advancing the ability of collective rightsholders to advance their self-determined economic and development aspirations is critical to achieving [RRI’s core institutional goals and targets](#). The concept is also embedded in the achievement of the Strategic Directions, results, and indicators outlined in [Strategic Program IV 2023 to 2027](#).

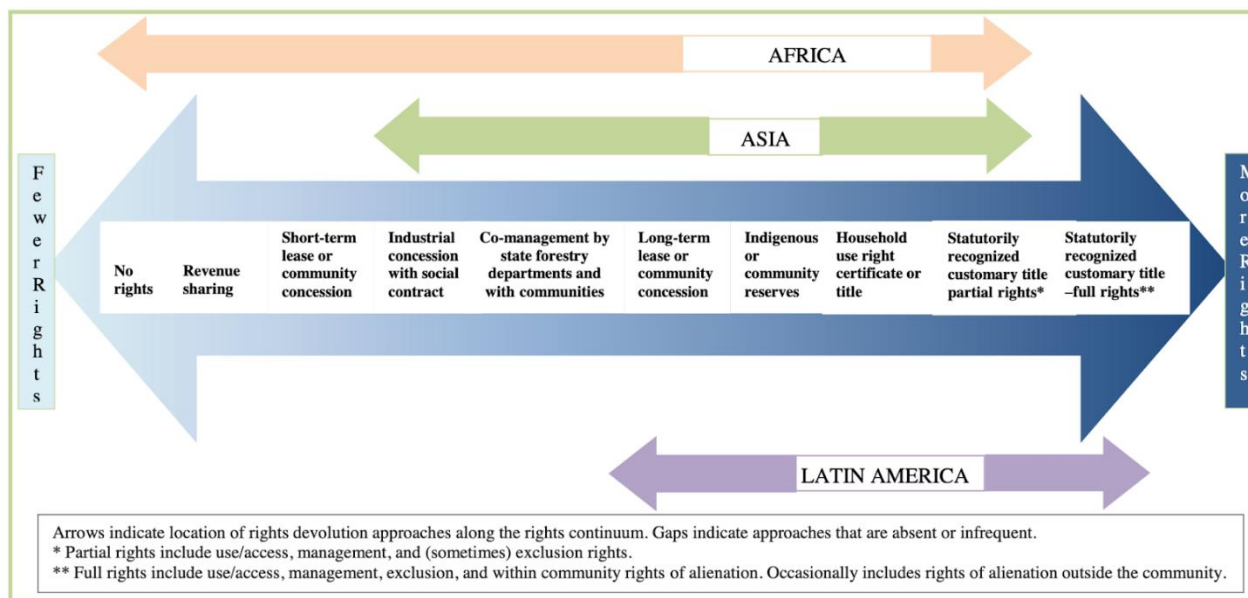
<p>RRI Institutional Targets:</p> <p><i>Target I:</i> At least 50% of lower- and middle- income country forest area is owned by or designated for use by IPs, LCs and ADs by 2030.</p> <p><i>Target II:</i> IPs, LCs, ADs, and women within those groups, have recognized rights to manage, conserve, use and trade forest products and services in 100% of the area under their ownership or designated use by 2030.</p>
<p>Goals Strategic Program IV 2023 to 2027:</p> <p><i>Goal I:</i> Advance the legal recognition of community land and forest tenure rights, raising the total area owned by or designated for IPs, LCs, and ADPs by at least 400 million hectares by 2030..</p> <p><i>Goal II:</i> Secure the rights of IPs, LCs, ADPs, and particularly the women within these groups, to manage, conserve, use, and trade all ecosystem products and services in areas under their control, and ensure they are protected from rollbacks, land grabbing, and criminalization. .</p> <p><i>Goal III:</i> Mobilize at least \$10 billion of new funding—prioritizing local initiatives and organizations— to advance the above targets over the 2023–2030 period in tropical forest countries.</p>

⁶ | Chanchani, A., & Ranjan, R. (2019). Accessing Community Rights and Livelihood Through Tourism: A Community-Based Tourism Initiative in Kumirmari, Sundarban. In *Environmental Impacts of Tourism in Developing Nations* (pp. 182-204). IGI Global.

V. Theory of Change

RRI’s livelihoods and economic self-determination theory of change (ToC) argues that efforts to advance, strengthen and secure the livelihood rights and socio-economic wellbeing of rural peoples can be pursued at all stages of the tenure continuum, whether lands and forests are government owned, designated for communities, or legally held by them. It rests on the proposition that the self-determined economic interests of communities, especially those of women and youth within these groups, can be realized through tenure-appropriate interventions grounded in locally defined priorities and collaboratively identified entry points. Progression from subsistence use to more intensive forms of land management, including the pursuit of long-term development prerogatives or conservation goals, follows the establishment of requisite enabling conditions, which can in turn be strengthened and/or accelerated through confidence-building early-stage livelihood investments and proof points.

Figure 1: The Tenure Continuum



Opportunities to advance community-led economies and land-use strategies thus depend on associated efforts to: (i) leverage the existing state of play; (ii) identify and redress context-specific technical, financial, and/or legislative gaps; (iii) foster strategic coordination and engagement across sectors and hierarchies to build support and overcome roadblocks; (iv) mobilise investments and financial support; and (v) seize emerging windows to influence the policies, laws, and markets that affect the land and livelihood rights of IPs, LCs, ADs, and women and youth. As community rights and capabilities expand to reflect increased tenure security, governance rights, market access and freedom to exercise their self-determined priorities, so too does their ability and capacity to generate equitable and sustainable benefits for current and future generations.

VI. Niche of the RRI Coalition

RRI is unique in its position as a rightsholder-led solidarity network with the legitimacy to convene and collaborate with stakeholders (private sector, governments, donors, etc.) who hold the power to accelerate progress towards the realization of the self-determined social, cultural, and economic aspirations of IPs, LCs, and ADs. Together with the distinct contributions of its Partners and Collaborators, the RRI Coalition has a long history of research, advocacy, and on-the-ground experience to advance legal and policy reforms, mainstream and scale-up community-led enterprises and economic alternatives, and support engagement in key policy arenas at local, national and international levels. As such, RRI is well-positioned to leverage its proven operational modalities and strategic networks to build on existing experiences and catalyze the transformations needed to build enabling conditions for the advancement of the rights of IPs, LCs, and ADs to self-determination, the pursuit of their livelihoods priorities, and the realization of their land and forest tenure security.

VII. Objectives

The objectives of RRI's commitment towards the livelihoods of IPs, LCs, ADs, women, and youth are to:

- Improve enabling legislative, policy, and market environments at national and subnational levels, to strengthen the rights or opportunities of IPs, LCs, ADs, and women and youth within these groups, to pursue their self-determined economic priorities and advance their collective tenure rights;
- Identify and leverage strategic pathways and political opportunities to accelerate progress towards collective tenure security;
- Formalize and accelerate community access to direct financing opportunities for the advancement of their land governance, capabilities, and livelihood needs;
- Define, validate and actively target core elements of the Transformation theory (or pathway) within the Path to Scale and Opportunity Frameworks;
- Empower RRI Partners, Collaborators, and grassroots communities to advance their own advocacy and efforts to support locally-led economic development through the provision of strategic funding, analysis, and networking;
- Mobilize new funding and support needed to deliver the elements of Strategic Program IV 2023 to 2027.

VIII. Outcomes Sought

Expected outcomes of RRI's contributions to the advancement of the livelihood needs and priorities of IPs, LCs, ADs, women, and youth are as follows:

- Key land, forest, and investment policies supporting the recognition of IP, LC, and AD rights to use, manage and benefit from customarily-held lands and forests are advanced in Opportunity Framework countries;
- Rights-based economic investment and development models are mainstreamed in national and international support mechanisms, policies, and operations;

- Transformative partnerships between governments, regional institutions, the private sector, donors, NGOs, and other stakeholders are catalyzed to advance the collective rights agenda.

IX. Proposed Thematic Areas for Engagement

The RRI Coalition defined and prioritized key thematic dimensions of the strategy where support is needed to empower IPs, LCs, ADs, and women, to advance their self-determined livelihoods initiatives. These thematic areas for engagement and associated indicative activities were gathered during Coalition-wide dialogues held during 2022 and the Blue Skies consultation process. Emerging thematic areas are outlined below and indicative activities are presented in Section XI.

Thematic Area 1: Conflict and livelihoods

*“I see a Blue Sky when land and forest rights holders make a tremendous effort to self-mobilize on issues such as **peaceful conflict resolution**, equitable benefit sharing, local governance, management of financial resources, dialogues, acquisition of negotiating skills with the private sector” Community Leader, Congo Brazzaville*

For many communities, the biggest threat to livelihoods is conflict over land use. It destroys resources and discourages investment from different actors. Conflicts emerge when there are competing and/or divergent land uses or claims between different actors, including governments, conservation agencies, and the private sector. Conflicts can also be internal e.g., conflicts between elites and the rest of the community. Conflict resolution at different scales is therefore vital in securing community land rights and livelihoods, between men and women, and between different sub-cultural groups within communities, among others. When communities have control over their lands and resources, they are able to effectively negotiate with external actors from a position of power and resolve internal conflicts through community-led processes. This would be supported by the establishment of conflict resolution mechanisms at different scales (local, national, regional).

Thematic Area 2: Food Sovereignty and Security

“Food security is different from food sovereignty. Food security is like saying I have a secure food supply because I go to the supermarket and can buy the food and eat it. But food sovereignty is different. Food sovereignty is eating like Achuar, it is eating like Shuar, it is eating like Kichwa, because we do know how to sow...The problem is the people who come to our territories bringing us food, giving us rice, giving us canned food. They are people from outside. So, now also Indigenous people themselves bring in food from outside. Many communities are losing their food sovereignty.” Woman Indigenous leader, South America.

The food insecurity and vulnerability of many communities has been highlighted in recent years by shocks including pandemic-related lockdowns, hurricanes and floods, disrupted forest product sales and exports, disrupted national food supply chains, and attempts by corrupt police or military to use food scarcity as a means of coercion. The provision of food is one of the most fundamental uses of land and the most vital livelihood activity for communities.

Strengthening Indigenous and local community food sovereignty can address these immediate threats to food security by building community capacity to determine how food is produced and consumed in their communities. Efforts to pass down ancestral production methods and cultural knowledge of local resources bolster communities' food sovereignty as well as increasing their resiliency to the shocks of national, regional, and global food systems.

Thematic Area 3: Women and Youth

“If we could massively support and establish forest-based enterprises, the current trend of out migration would stop and youths who are out for the job would return to the village. This will also make rural women more confident and economically empowered.” Indigenous leader, Nepal.

“The role of indigenous women is to guide and orientate – this we already do, although historically the woman has been hidden, anonymous, but the decisions in meetings, in villages, in territories, are usually guided by women. Now, we are also overcoming the little view that women cannot occupy spaces of leadership, meetings, decision-making. Women's participation today is in a moment of transition where we have come away from watching through the window and have passed through the front door now up on to the stage.” Woman Indigenous Leader, Brazil.

Women have differentiated livelihood needs and are disproportionately impacted by insecure tenure regimes and large-scale land use interventions. Patriarchal gender norms and institutions often limit women's voice and participation in decision-making processes, as well as women's access to critical livelihood resources, including land. Yet, community women are often the creators, custodians, and transmitters of the ancestral knowledge and practices that directly support the resilience of their communities.

Insecure land tenure and/or lack of livelihood opportunities also leads to outmigration of youth from rural areas, which in turn disrupts the cultural continuity that is needed to sustain and govern the land into the future. Therefore, in order to be sustainable, the pursuit of community livelihoods must be inclusive and must engage women and youth in landscape management and governance.

Thematic Area 4: Community-led Economies

“The loss of our land and forest is compensated by our poverty. This is what we have as reality. We want a future where we are left with our ancestral land and forests for our subsistence activities, even if we remain materially poor. Our spiritual wealth is in the forest. If our forests are returned to us, the spirits of our departed ancestors will come back to save us.” Community leader, DRC.

“We will have agreed international principles that guide how finance operates in our territories, a new alternative style of IPLC finance that is not bureaucratic. In our territories we will have strong local networks and governance structures, based on our collective values, with financial administrative capacities and social controls”. Community leader, Central America.

Economic self-determination is one of the central pillars of collective land justice movements across the world. Conversely, land injustice is one of the key historical and ongoing causes of depressed livelihoods

among many communities. The promotion of community-led economic initiatives and enterprises seeks to position communities as the primary decision makers and thought leaders on socio-economic interventions in their territories. True community self-determination is dependent on strong, community-based governance institutions and mechanisms that are accountable to all community members, including women and youth. It is through community-led economies that collective rightsholders can re-think the dominant models of development that have harmed both people and the planet, and can forge new pathways that are compatible with local visions of livelihoods and land use.

X. Proposed Activity Areas

The following activity areas are proposed, in line with RRI's niche, theory of change, established ways of working, and priority areas of engagement, to implement the livelihoods strategy:

Strategic Analysis

RRI will support dedicated research on rights and livelihoods to expand global understanding, strengthen dedicated interventions, and empower communities to advance their rights and self-determined priorities. Analysis would complement RRI's core datasets on tenure.

Indicative interventions include: 1) The development and piloting of a methodology and framework to establish national-level baselines of the enabling policy and capabilities needed to advance community-led economies. Indicators resulting from the analysis would complement the RRI tenure data set and support targeted advocacy to influence national law and policy inhibiting the advancement of community-led economic development initiatives; and 2) Standardised data collection from RRI's locally-led economic and livelihoods initiatives to facilitate knowledge-sharing across the Coalition.

Convening and Connecting

RRI will support the creation of platforms and opportunities for exchange at the country and regional level, and for multi-stakeholder networks to strategize and collaborate to advance community-led economies and socio-cultural infrastructure.

Indicative interventions include: 1) Efforts to leverage existing networks like the Interlaken Group, Megaflorestais, and Path to Scale to expand awareness, build bridges, and support engagement with rightsholders; and 2) Catalyze platforms of exchange between women and/or youth from different regions to share their experiences and lessons advancing land rights reforms and livelihoods.

Advocacy

RRI will support the collectively defined priorities of the Coalition to advance advocacy at the country, regional, and global levels, taking advantage of windows of opportunity to influence the policies, laws, and markets that affect the rights and livelihoods of IPs, LCs, ADs, and women and youth.

Indicative interventions include: 1) Country level engagement with policy makers and other relevant stakeholders to pilot, support, and socialize innovative community, women, and/or youth-led livelihoods and land rights initiatives; and 2) Outreach to international climate and development financing institutions

and impact investors to accelerate direct support and adapted credit lines to locally-led livelihood initiatives.

XI. Next Steps: Validation of the Vision and implementation

The anticipated timeline for finalizing the proposed strategy is as follows:

April 2023: The final document will be shared with the RRI Network for review and comment, including at least one Zoom meeting where Network members and experts will be able to suggest ways of strengthening the strategy or proposed interventions.

May 2023 and beyond: Once validated, the elements of the Vision will inform and help the Coalition prioritize activities and budgets during annual planning exercises. The Vision will be periodically reviewed and adjusted as the Coalition learns lessons from more dedicated and coordinated engagement to advance IP, LC, and AD livelihoods.

XII. Alignment of livelihoods with Strategic Program IV

Advancing the collective vision of the RRI Coalition to support rural livelihoods is integrated directly into the Outcomes, Outputs, and Indicators in Strategic Program IV.

Key Results	Indicators
Impact 1A. IP, LC, and AD tenure rights over land and forests are secured and scaled up.	# of community-based tenure regimes that ensure women's access, use, ownership, and decision making over collective lands in focus countries
Impact 1B. IPs, LCs, and ADs, and women within these groups realize their self-determined priorities.	# of community-led climate, conservation, or sustainable development initiatives supported or sanctioned by local/national governments
Output 1.4 Analytical support to IPs, LCs, ADs, and women within these groups is expanded to better track and monitor progress, identify gaps or opportunities, strengthen synergies, and bolster advocacy and engagement.	# of IP-, LC-, and AD-led analyses and scoping studies realized
Output 2.3 Rightsholder-led advocacy and engagement is supported to advance reforms and accelerate rights-based actions	# of rightsholder-led interventions conducted at national, regional, or global scales
Outcome 3. Public and private financing institutions raise ambitions, strengthen coordination, and harmonize funding streams in support of rights-based interventions and the pursuit of IP, LC, and AD tenure and livelihood rights.	Total funding allocated to (a) building enabling conditions for rights-based interventions, and (b) advancing IP-, LC-, AD-, and women-led projects and initiatives