Reducing Inequality in a Turbulent World

Scaling-up strategies to secure indigenous, community, and women’s land rights

Stockholm, Sweden
October 4–5, 2017

CONFERENCE REPORT
Reducing Inequality in a Turbulent World:

Scaling-up strategies to secure indigenous, community, and women’s land rights

On October 4-5, over 300 people from 58 countries gathered in Stockholm, Sweden to raise awareness of community land rights as a prerequisite to decrease inequality and deliver on global goals, assess the status of promising instruments to secure community rights, and encourage greater action, support, and commitment from key stakeholders. Participants hailed from indigenous and community organizations, the private sector, civil society, and governments.

This was the third in the conference series, following conferences in Interlaken in 2013 and Bern in 2015. The series was designed to take stock of the global state of indigenous, community, and rural women’s land rights, raise awareness of the importance of these rights, catalyze new partnerships, and develop a shared path forward to scale up rights recognition.

Research launched on the eve of the Stockholm Conference found that 61 percent of land-based conflicts between companies and communities since 2001 are unresolved. Securing community and indigenous land rights is vital to mitigating and preventing these devastating conflicts, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the commitments of the Paris Agreement, and ensuring peace and justice.

Broad discussions on these issues started the day before at a Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Development Talks, which marked the official launch of the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility. The Tenure Facility is the world’s first and only funding institution dedicated solely to supporting Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ efforts to secure their rights over their forests and lands. It has already supported six successful pilot projects in Mali, Indonesia, Peru, Cameroon, Panama, and Liberia to advance recognition over almost 2 million hectares of land.

At the conference, three strategy sessions—on rural and indigenous women’s rights and leadership in collective lands, strategies and mechanisms to scale-up implementation from local to national level, and connecting and leveraging international support structures to advance indigenous and community land rights—developed action plans to increase recognition of community land rights. All sessions included speakers from the private sector, whose recommendations were highlighted in a plenary session on the second day of the conference.

This followed a meeting of the Interlaken Group—a network of private sector and civil society leaders. The Group presented a new Vision and Agenda for what is required from all actors—including companies and investors—to scale up action on indigenous and community land rights. For the first time, the conference also included an “Innovation Zone,” which highlighted technology and other innovative strategies being used to secure rights.

There is growing recognition of the importance of community land rights both as a matter of human rights and as a crucial solution to global goals, including inequality and climate change. There is also unprecedented momentum and growing commitment from all sectors to secure and respect these rights. Conference participants identified ways to connect and leverage global and grassroots efforts to drive forward change.

The conference was co-organized by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), Sida, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Swedish International Agriculture Network Initiative (SIANI), and the International Foundation for Science (IFS). It was held in collaboration with the Land Rights Now alliance, the Interlaken Group, and LandMark. Devex was the media partner.
“The lands that have been taken over by governments are the ones that are most devastated. The lands where there are trees still remaining are indigenous lands. When Indigenous Peoples are denied access to their lands, they lose the source of their identity, culture, and worldviews.”

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Simon Marainen, Joiker, artist, and reindeer herder, opened the conference with a Joik, a traditional form of Sami singing. Designed to inspire action, this opening session provided an overview of the ways in which communities’, Indigenous Peoples, and rural women’s land rights pave the way for peace and prosperity in this era of both unprecedented global commitments to respect rights as well as tremendous challenges like inequality, climate change, and the increasing violence against land rights defenders.

Annika Åhnberg, Chairperson of conference co-organizer SIANI, noted that development initiatives are not going in the right direction: conflict is increasing and world hunger is on the rise again as a result of climate change. But securing the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women will lay the base for a new global development model across the world. She called on participants to share experiences, listen, and encourage one another so that all return home with inspiration to act, knowing that we are not alone but part of a global movement of increasing power.

Åsa Wallton, Lead Policy Specialist for Peace and Security at Sida, emphasized the link between secure community land tenure, climate change, and peace. It is one thing to have something in an agreement or law and another to have political will and courage to implement it, she added.

RRI Coordinator Andy White noticed three major changes since the conference series began in 2013: a bigger and more diverse group, a completely new set of opportunities for advancing change, and greater attention to women’s land rights. RRI estimates that if we implement laws on the book in only 5 countries, we would recognize the rights of 500 million people over 200 million hectares of land. There is a huge implementation gap—but also a huge opportunity.

On the first panel, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz stressed that respecting Indigenous Peoples’, communities’, and rural women’s land and resource rights is also a matter of justice: “The lands that have been taken over by governments are the ones that are most devastated. The lands where there are trees still remaining are indigenous lands. When Indigenous Peoples are denied access to their lands, they lose the source of their identity, culture, and worldviews.”

Katia Maia, Executive Director of Oxfam Brazil, said that inequality is at its highest level, even though we have never seen so much wealth. Land rights are connected to a host of other rights, and we must work together to tackle these issues, she concluded.

Peter Holmgren, Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research said that the SDGs were a framework for the future and should be used as a “common language” for setting local goals.

Katja Iversen, CEO of Women Deliver, said that if we are serious about progress, we must be serious about investing in women’s rights. This includes recognizing the leadership of indigenous and rural women. If we had gender equality, she said, it would add 26 percent to global GDP.

Avrim Lazar, Advisor at Private Sector Sustainability Initiatives, said that we are on the cusp of real transformation. We are somewhere between a “false spring,” where the world accepts indigenous and community land rights as a social norm but only makes small, symbolic gestures, and a “real spring,” where people move to action, implementation, and enforcement. We have new norms in the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and SDGs, yet there is always a risk of complacency and rollback, succumbing to the power of business as usual. He urged participants to focus on creating enough momentum to keep pushing forward, and cautioned that we cannot simply talk about why things must change, but must focus on how, or we risk missing this moment.
“When women have rights to lands, their status in the household and decision-making improves. Women who own land are eight times less likely to experience domestic violence.”

Katja Iversen, CEO of Women Deliver
Rapporteurs from each strategy session, and private sector representatives participating in each strategy session, offered highlights and lessons from their session to the plenary on the afternoon of Day 02. Each shared key takeaways, recommendations, and next steps at the global level to support scaling-up recognition of indigenous, community, and women’s land and resource rights.

**STRATEGY SESSION 1: RURAL AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND LEADERSHIP IN COLLECTIVE LANDS**

**Co-leads:** Asia Indigenous People’s Pact; Center for Indigenous Peoples’ Autonomy and Development (Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Nicaragua); and the Rights and Resources Initiative

**Co-organizers:** Center for International Forestry Research; Federation of Community Forestry Users Users, Nepal; Landesa; Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú; African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests

Indigenous and rural women are leaders, food providers, keepers of traditional knowledge, and land and forest managers. But they are hampered by a lack of capacity and resources; poor visibility in development agendas; a lack of legal protections and weak implementation of existing policies and laws; and discriminatory practices. This session aimed to take stock of what evidence, laws, tools, and grassroots networks exist to secure women’s rights and community land rights, and determine what is needed from the international community to secure and scale up women’s community land rights.

There was a strong consensus on the need for better coordination between global tools, and stronger links to local-level initiatives. Participants suggested focusing on the SDGs as the most promising political platform to advance these rights, and agreed that it is still necessary to “make the case” for why recognizing women’s rights within communities is integral to development agendas.

The group proposed creating a multi-sector partnership to address challenges and seize opportunities for securing land rights on a larger scale. Their action plan proposes to:

- Develop a “go-to hub for resources” for information sharing, documentation of case studies, consolidating a strategy for advocacy around the SDGs, and developing key messages.
- Capitalize on examples of women’s leadership by documenting case studies and creating opportunities for learning exchanges between women leaders.
- Focus on growing a diverse enough partnership that political actors will engage on this issue.
- Advocacy for inclusion of gender perspectives and women’s voices in efforts to update private sector due diligence and gender guidance within development finance institutions and multilateral banks.
STRATEGY SESSION 2:
STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS TO SCALE-UP IMPLEMENTATION
FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL LEVEL

**Co-leads:** The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility and the Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the Archipelago, Indonesia

**Co-organizers:** Center for International Forestry Research; Indian School of Business; Vasundhara; Forest Trends; Center for Environment and Development; and the Sustainable Development Institute

As of 2015, Indigenous Peoples and local communities only had legally recognized ownership rights over 10 percent of the world’s land, despite having customary rights to over 50 percent. Many governments have legal frameworks calling for the respect of indigenous and community land rights, but implementation at scale is a common challenge across the world. This session aimed to **assess the status of rights and legal frameworks, identify opportunities, constraints, and key players** to scale up rights recognition, analyze **successful strategies** for closing the gap between customary rights and legal recognition, and **determine what needs to be done differently**.

The group agreed on the importance of empowering communities to pressure governments, and ensuring that government officials are knowledgeable on land rights issues—particularly women’s rights to community lands. They also discussed the importance of creating spaces for dialogue among different stakeholders and developing partnerships to drive forward progress.

The group proposed to:

- Leverage the SDGs, as indigenous and community land rights are key to achieving global goals and commitments.
- Assembly inclusive political coalitions at all levels.
- Prioritize direct community representation.
- Improve donor coordination and education and share experiences at international donor meetings.
- Promote national-level donor coordination in recipient countries.
- Create government champions to advocate for land rights recognition.
- Fundraise to support these efforts.
Lead: Global Call to Action on Indigenous and Community Land Rights

Co-organizer: Landesa

There is growing awareness of the importance of community land rights both as a matter of justice and as a key part of achieving global climate and development goals. Yet this global understanding often fails to translate to change at the national and local levels: Indigenous Peoples and local communities still lack secure rights to the vast majority of their territories and continue to suffer human rights violations. The session aimed to take stock of international structures for securing indigenous and community land rights, including those of women and youth, identify challenges and gaps that need to be addressed, and explore strategic opportunities for collaboration.

Participants agreed that international agreements such as the VGGT, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the SDGs serve as a common reference point to build constructive dialogue between civil society, indigenous and community organizations, governments, and the private sector. They identified a number of gaps in the international architecture: international mechanisms are all non-binding; there is a need to better connect regional and national tools with the international architecture; and indigenous and community voices must be better heard on these issues. The session also discussed the importance of corporations addressing legacy land issues. They agreed on the need to ensure awareness, capacity, and access to technology among community organizations.

The group proposed the following areas of work and action items:

- **Data and monitoring of land rights and land tenure**: Support the inclusion of the proposed indicators on land tenure in the SDGs through a common position paper and other advocacy; organize coordinated events to raise awareness of the importance of land rights to achieve the SDGs; and establish a Working Group for collection and dissemination of data on collective land rights and women’s land rights.

- **Navigating the landscape of social license**: Work with communities and companies to strengthen their capacities to engage with each other; and ensure that both are fully aware of communities’ right to withhold consent for projects on their lands.

- **Raising awareness and mobilizing for change**: Establish a working group on campaigning for land rights; and work together through the Land Rights Now campaign to support six national campaigns in 2017-2018.

- **Global advocacy on land rights**: Strengthen protection mechanisms for human rights defenders; use strategic litigation to strengthen frameworks for respect and recognition of land rights; build connections between local organizations and national coalitions; and use global ambassadors to amplify community voices.
Private Section Report Back on the Strategy Sessions

Private sector representatives attended each of the strategy sessions, and reported back to the plenary on lessons learned and the path ahead. They identified a gross power asymmetry between local communities and companies as a key problem to ensuring respect for Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ land rights. Other problems include weak governance and companies not knowing how to address women’s rights issues in the areas where they work. Participants pointed to inertia as a significant obstacle to bringing the private sector to the table and ensuring that companies address these issues. Most private sector actors do not yet understand the need for a “social license” to operate, and many of those who do struggle to obtain and maintain it. Furthermore, the profusion of global, voluntary, non-binding instruments does not always prepare the private sector for addressing local issues.

They identified the following actions and recommendations to leverage private sector action:

- **Embed gender sensitivity.** Ensure that private sector efforts to secure community land rights—including through mapping and leasing community lands—are sensitive to and inclusive of the rights of women. This might be supported by a gender-sensitive free, prior, and informed consent process, the collection of gender-disaggregated data, and toolkits informed by international norms and frameworks like the VGGT, which describe the responsibilities of stakeholders to respect the rights of women.

- **Address the global to local implementation gap.** Support dialogue spaces in countries to bridge the implementation gap between high-level policy commitments and action on the ground, including through monitoring and capacity-building. Increase accessibility and availability of accountability mechanisms for private sector implementation of commitments.

- **Support community first-responders.** Increase and maintain support to local communities, including education on their rights, protection for land defenders, and building negotiation skills. For example, foster a community of practice of first-responders who can share skills, build capacity, address power dynamics, and respond quickly.

“Forests are vital for communities. It’s where they live, where they find their food. It’s where they find their culture and their education, and it is in these forests that they find everything that is indispensable for their lives. If we chase them from their traditional forests, they become beggars, they become people without roots, and they lose their culture and their way of life. They are condemned to die.”

Jean de Dieu Wasso, Africapacity Coordinator
Unearthed:
Plenary on Emerging Experience of Leading Companies & Investors to Support the Recognition of Community Land Rights

This plenary session explored cases of investor and company efforts to improve due diligence, invest in the recognition of community land rights, and work toward more inclusive development models. Moderated by Mark Constantine, Principal Strategist of the Agribusiness and Forestry Department at the International Finance Corporation and co-chair of the Interlaken Group, this plenary focused largely on what lessons could be drawn from these promising, initial efforts by some corporations.

- **Anna Turrell, Public Affairs Manager for Social Impact at Nestlé**, described the corporate implementation gap between policy and practice and what Nestle is doing to try to understand and close that gap. Challenges faced by Nestlé and other corporate actors include weak human rights, land rights, and wages in many of the countries where they source productions. Turrell used the oil palm supply chain in Indonesia to explain that it was not sustainable for either the local households or for Nestlé.

- **Kate Matthias, Group Development Consultant for Illovo Sugar**, said that land and people are at the foundation of their business, which is the largest sugar producer on the African continent. Lessons learned included the importance of respecting community land rights and their conclusion that Illovo needs more of a gender lens to its work. Communication with affected communities and developing collaboration is key, she noted, and remains a major challenge for companies—who need to learn from civil society to address this challenge.

- **Simon Norfolk, Director of Terra Firma Lda**, described a case in Mozambique where a company—Portucel—faced challenges after acquiring a concession with only cursory consultation with affected communities. Terra Firma approached Portucel about formalizing local land rights, and is working with communities to ensure recognition of community rights so that families and communities can both ensure protection of their lands and better negotiate with the company.

- **John Nelson, Mentor at TFT-The Forest Trust** described how TFT members are adhering to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). He also explained a new initiative, Kumacaya, that allows companies to invest in a blind trust that provides grants to local civil society organizations (CSOs) to monitor and verify compliance with company commitments on the ground. Because investors cannot influence decisions regarding the grants, this progress enables companies to have independent and credible information regarding their performance.
For the first time, the conference featured an “Innovation Zone,” an open area of the conference designed to promote information sharing by demonstrating promising strategies, tools, and practices to scale-up recognition of Indigenous Peoples', communities', and rural women’s land rights. Nine Innovation Zone Partners were selected through a competitive application process to host a space throughout the conference, and present an 8 minute “flashtalk” to demonstrate their innovative solutions. They also participated in a talk-show style plenary session on the opening day of the conference, moderated by Coimbra Sirica from Burness Communications, to share how their innovations could drive forward progress on securing community land rights. Innovation Zone Partners (and their presenters) included:

- **Africapacity (Jean de Dieu Wasso Milenge):** The traditional approach to conservation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—and much of the world—is to establish national parks that strongly restrict local communities’ activities and even displace them from their homes. Africapacity introduced a new model, working directly with Itombwe communities in DRC to redefine the Itombwe National Reserve using participatory mapping and free, prior, and informed consent.

- **Amazon Conservation Team (Mark J. Plotkin):** This precedent-setting program provides technical support, training, and capacity-building for indigenous communities to utilize innovative ICT, GIS, and high-resolution satellite imagery to establish and expand indigenous reserves throughout Colombia. It builds the capacity of indigenous communities, with an emphasis on women, to manage the complex legal processes required to establish or strengthen the legal status of their reserves.
• **Center for Environment and Development (Samuel Nguiffo):** CED designed a report card to help communities assess the performance of the state, conservation projects, and private sector actors who are using land and resources in the vicinity of their villages. It aims to put communities in the driver’s seat of making decisions about their land by analyzing the legal obligations and best practices of investors and allowing for comparison of different investors’ performances in different locations or at different times.

• **Forest Trends (Beto Borges):** Forest Trends has been working with the Yawanawa and Surui people of the Brazilian Amazon to develop Life Plans, collective long-term visions for socio-economic development, cultural management, and conservation of Indigenous Peoples’ lands. The Yawanawa Life Plan has already resulted in a 10 percent increase in family income and a 15 percent increase in women’s participation in community decision-making processes.

• **Indonesia Community Mapping Networks (JPKK) (Dewi Sutejo):** JPKK developed a mapping portal called Tanahkita.id, which shows a consolidated map of tenure conflicts in Indonesia. It combines spatial datasets of mapped indigenous and community claims, forest areas eligible for community rights recognition, areas where community tenure exists, concession maps, and conflict locations. The data was collected through a bottom-up approach and the platform is open and free for researchers, media, and the general public.

• **Terra Firma (Simon Norfolk):** The Community Land Value Chain (CaVaTeCo), developed by Terra Firma, provides necessary tools—such as satellite imagery, Open Data Kit forms, Fusion Tables, and Postgres/QGIS data management—for implementing a new approach to secure community land rights in Mozambique. It leverages elements of the Mozambican legal framework that allow local community associations to certify the land rights of their members, providing legal protection that is equal to that of a state-issued title.

• **TIMBY (This is My BackYard) (Anjali Nayar):** This suite of digital tools helps communities report, verify, and tell stories about rights violations safely through an encrypted mobile app collection device, an investigation dashboard, and a drag and drop storytelling tool. TIMBY has been working with international NGOs, CSOs, health institutions, UN agencies, and policymakers to refine the tools for secure long-term monitoring and easy information sharing with journalists, policymakers, and government officials.

• **We Effect (Nasieku Kisambu):** We Effect’s “Towards equitable access to land and sustainable management of natural resources” initiative aims to blend informal and formal structures to better promote and protect women’s land rights in Tanzania. This community-led, transparent, and participatory approach is now being scaled-up through advocacy at the national level.

• **WeRobotics (Adam Klaptocz):** WeRobotics aims to transfer the latest robotics technology to the developing world and apply it for social good. The goal is to bring drones out of the lab and into the hands of the people who need them most, whether for humanitarian aid, conservation, or industry.

An extended Innovation Zone on Day 02 included interactive displays from the Global Call to Action’s Land Rights Now campaign, the Land Portal Foundation, Rainbow Environment Consult, Tetra Tech, The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), and the Thomson Reuters Foundation.
Evidence shows that securing community land and resource rights represents a vital and necessary first step toward climate change mitigation and conservation. This side event on Day 01, moderated by Fred Nelson, Executive Director of Maliasili Initiatives, brought together conservation organizations and indigenous and community leaders to discuss promising strategies for improving conservation outcomes by scaling recognition of indigenous and community land rights.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz noted that conservation organizations agreed in 2003 to adopt a human rights approach, but that implementation has been poor. She said there were three important points to keep in mind: that conservation organizations should use their political power to advance human rights causes within governments, that Indigenous Peoples are conservationists, and that there is inadequate support for Indigenous Peoples who have been evicted from national parks and are struggling for restitution.

Rukka Sombolinggi, Secretary General of the Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), told a story about how efforts to conserve orangutans treated animals better than communities of people, and said that conservation areas are rendering communities food-insecure.

Rane Cortez, Strategy Director for the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities program at The Nature Conservancy, said that there should be greater emphasis on making the economic case for secure community land tenure, as well as capacity-building so Indigenous Peoples and local communities can effectively participate in international arenas.

Josefina Braña-Varela, Senior Director at the World Wildlife Fund, said that Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ land rights are being incorporated into the international architecture through the Paris Agreement, the Cancun safeguards, and other mechanisms. She said that the World Wildlife Fund has developed guidance on free, prior, and informed consent and encouraged governments to follow these protocols.

Chris Filardi, Senior Scientist at Conservation International, said that plants and animals do not have a voice, because the voice of those who steward them is ignored. Indigenous Peoples and local communities are conservation’s greatest hope.
Following the report back from the three concurrent strategy sessions, a closing panel moderated by Alan Robbins, Global Head of Partnerships at Devex, discussed next steps as identified by a select set of conference participants.

Eleni Kyrou, Senior Social Development Specialist at the European Investment Bank, explained that inputs from the conference will feed into the gender strategy that the Bank is developing. She noted that development finance institutions respond very well to advocacy and to the business case for community land rights. She added that in her experiences with the Interlaken Group, she has seen that communities and companies can find common ground on these issues.

Jose Martinez Diaz, Campaigns Director at Purpose LLC, referenced the gross asymmetry of power and the need to shift it back to communities. He noted that many new tools—such as those profiled in the conference’s innovation zone—can be used to accomplish this, as well as the importance of campaigns and communications efforts.

Jenny Wik Karlsson, CEO of the Swedish Confederation of Swedish Sami, also highlighted the power of campaigns and communications, noting that Sami communities had stopped consuming palm oil in order to show solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the tropics. She added that even in Sweden, a very developed and socially progressive country where Indigenous Peoples such as the Sami have high capacity, there are still great challenges.

Samuel Nguiffo, Founder of the Center for Environment and Development, said that many African governments still see concessions as “development,” and that it is crucial to show them that respecting land rights is another path to development.

Lars Løvold, Special Advisor at Rainforest Foundation Norway, explained how much the conversation has changed over time. Twenty-seven years ago, the issue of rainforest protection and collective rights was a curious issue for a small group. Now all world leaders are aware of these issues, and a much wider diversity of actors is involved. This progress gives him hope.
In the closing remarks from conference co-organizers, speakers called participants to action. **Annika Åhnberg, Chairperson of SIANI**, said that we need to work at all levels to advance community land rights. By fighting for land rights, she continued, we create a strong base for the struggle for gender equality, peace, and real sustainable development.

**Ola Möller, Senior Policy Specialist for Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development at Sida** added that land rights are a necessary condition for development, poverty eradication, and long term social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. He underscored the importance of engaging youth in particular who are the future leaders in communities, governments, and companies. Things are moving in the right direction, he concluded.

**RRI Coordinator Andy White** concluded the conference by recalling why we gathered and what we aimed to achieve. The conference series was initiated for three reasons: to raise global awareness, develop new tools and instruments to scale up, and encourage greater action and commitment. He was heartened to see so many new and different actors working together on these issues. He also challenged participants to think about their dreams of progress and what stories they want to bring back and share two years from now.

For more information, please see [communitylandrights.org](http://communitylandrights.org).

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“I am sure two years from now we will have more to share. We will have more stories of stronger communities, more stories of indigenous lands that are secured, and more stories of fair and equitable ideas between companies and communities. We will also have new losses, new sorrows, new pain... but I am confident that we will prevail because we are growing, we are together, and by working together we are stronger.”

**Andy White, RRI Coordinator**

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