Our vision is that governments formally recognize and actively protect the land and natural resource rights of indigenous peoples and communities, including land held under undocumented customary tenure arrangements. Companies and other private investors recognize legitimate landholders and operate in ways that are consistent with international standards on land rights.

As a result, indigenous peoples and communities around the world have secure land and resource rights. Strong rights help communities protect their land from irregular acquisitions and inappropriate expropriation. Secure tenure also creates incentives for communities to invest in the long-term management of their land. Such investments contribute to improved livelihoods, healthy ecosystems and sustainable development.

Land and resources lie at the heart of social, political and economic life for more than two billion people in the world. They are primary sources of nutrition, income and employment, and are the basis for security, status, social identity and political relations.

As global demand for food, fiber and other commodities rises, so does competition over land and resources. Indigenous peoples and communities, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America are losing their land to governments and private enterprises for economic development and commercial investment purposes. Many also face restrictions on how they use their land, threatening livelihoods and triggering conflicts. Even when compensated for their losses, people who are involuntary resettled often fall into deep poverty.
OUR APPROACH

WRI’s Land and Resource Rights (LRR) Initiative partners with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), private enterprises and other actors to strengthen land and resource rights as a path to poverty reduction, sustainable development and sound environmental management. We conduct research on critical property rights issues, contribute new information to policy reforms, develop online information platforms and other tools, and provide technical assistance and institutional support to partner organizations.

OUR WORK

- **Policy Research.** LRR conducts cutting-edge research to generate new information and change the discourse on securing land rights. We are currently examining the relationship between community land rights and forest cover change, with a focus on the implications for mitigating climate change.

- **Legal Reviews.** LRR reviews national laws and company policies to contribute to reforms and improve legislation. We are reviewing the compulsory land acquisition laws of 33 countries around the world against 39 indicators of the security of land rights. LRR is also reviewing the land policies of almost 1100 companies to assess their consistency with international standards.

RECENT OUTCOMES

- LRR helped a major food and beverage company develop its first land policy. The policy is consistent with international standards—recognizing all legitimate landholders and having zero-tolerance for their displacement.

ABOUT THE GOVERNANCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

The Governance Center of Excellence at the World Resources Institute (WRI) works with civil society, governments, development agencies, businesses, and other institutions to improve decision-making processes and legal frameworks. Our goal is to empower people and strengthen institutions to foster environmentally sound and socially equitable decision-making.

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ABOUT WRI

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization spanning more than 50 countries, with offices in the US, China, India, Brazil, Europe, and Indonesia. Our more than 450 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain our natural resources—the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being.