

# TROPICAL FOREST COMMUNITY MAPPING INITIATIVE

A GLOBAL PLATFORM  
FEASIBILITY STUDY



CONCEPT NOTE



# TROPICAL FOREST COMMUNITY MAPPING INITIATIVE

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Based on this experience, and with support from the Ford Foundation and our sister organisations, Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) and Norway (RFN), the tropical forest community mapping initiative (TFCMI) will explore the feasibility of establishing a pan-tropical online interactive mapping database of forest peoples' lands and the desire by community representatives and allied civil society for such a facility

## THE POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES OF A GLOBAL APPROACH

A unified platform - or interlinked system of platforms – making community mapping data more widely available online could thus serve a number of purposes, including:

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### BOOSTING VISIBILITY OF AND ACCESS TO DATA ON COMMUNITY LANDS:

The existence of a credible, international entry point could boost the visibility of indigenous and other forest-dependent communities and provide stronger evidence regionally and globally of the extent of community occupation, usage, claims and rights over forests, thus helping to inform global policy processes (such as related to forests and climate change).

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### ADVOCACY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

Reliable data overlays (such as for logging, oil, and mining concessions, agro-industries and infrastructure projects in community territories) could help provide community organisations with information that they otherwise often find very difficult to access - helping them to develop advocacy strategies to better respond to threats.

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### PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY IN FOREST GOVERNANCE AND INVESTMENTS:

Such a spatial planning tool could reinforce the accountability of national governments around land allocations and could be used to monitor the implementation of international indigenous rights instruments such as UNDRIP and ILO 169. It could also be used to ensure that corporations or international finance institutions understand investment risks and include consideration of local community presence and tenure claims in their due diligence and FPIC processes.

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### A BASIS FOR FOREST MONITORING:

An important compliment to satellite forest monitoring systems, building contextual understanding of deforestation patterns, and provide a basis for community real-time monitoring of forests, biodiversity and global commodity supply chains.

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### A COMMUNITY-BASED PLATFORM:

Supporting communities and their organisations as the primary producers and owners of data will greatly enhance the credibility and value of the information conveyed by the maps.

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### DATA MANAGEMENT AND STANDARDISATION:

A management system enabling community and indigenous organisations to store, manage, update and secure community data, including historical maps, which could otherwise be dispersed or lost. Bringing together fragmented geo-referenced data and developing typologies/metadata could also support sampling and standardisation which allow for comparison at national, regional and global scales.



# THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

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The study scope will include indigenous peoples and other peoples living in similar communal arrangements living in the moist, equatorial forested countries, regardless of the legal status of their lands.

An extensive and highly participatory consultation of stakeholders and potential partners is envisaged, primarily with grassroots and representative organisations and networks engaged in mapping in different regions but also relevant NGOs, institutions and academics. Interviews will be conducted through personal visits and interviews in situ, supplemented with Skype meetings and email. Specific research areas will include:

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**1** Assess the potential demand for and specific purposes of such a platform by community representatives, and the different needs, interests, ideas and any potential concerns that would need to be addressed and factored into the design of such a platform

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**2** A baseline assessment of the state of community mapping in tropical forests, providing an inventory of what has been mapped, where, by whom, how and in which format it exists and where the data gaps are.

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**3** Based on these initial findings, examine the institutional, legal and technical feasibility of such a platform, such as:

- How to address any sensitivities around access, control and publication of community mapping or other data, including intellectual property issues.
- What kind of institutional and management set-up would be appropriate.

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## AN OPEN PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

Fragmentation of mapping initiatives is one of the greatest risks to efforts to scale up land rights globally and regionally. As such, the study actively explores links and synergies with other initiatives such as the Global Map of Indigenous and Local Community Lands, being led by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and Instituto del Bien Común (IBC).

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## PLANNED TIMELINE 2015

**February - April** - The first round of consultations to take place in Central and South America, South-east Asia and the Congo Basin.

**April 22** - Open event to present and discuss interim research findings at the offices of the Ford Foundation in New York during the fourteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples.

**May - July** - Second round of consultations and development of legal and technical assessments.

**September/October** - Publication and presentation of feasibility assessment, possible development of roadmap.



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## HOW TO JOIN THE DISCUSSION

If you or your organisation is interested in participating in this discussion, or to hear more about the tropical forest community mapping initiative:

[MappingForRights@rainforestuk.org](mailto:MappingForRights@rainforestuk.org) | +44 (0) 207 485 0193 | or visit [www.MappingForRights.org](http://www.MappingForRights.org)

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