



Partners for Change:
10 years of Global
Programme Responsible
Land Policy –
from closing to continuity

LandHub 2025 –
Learning from experiences,
adapting to present
and future challenges

Berlin, Germany, 15 October 2025

Shaping the Future of Land Governance: A Global Call to Action for Food Security and Fair Life for All

Closing Declaration of the Berlin Land Week 2025



Foreword

Land is the foundation of livelihoods, development and human dignity. Secure and equitable land rights are fundamental for food security, social cohesion and resilience in the face of environmental crisis. They are not only a matter of justice but also a prerequisite for transformation of agricultural and food systems – an essential priority of German development cooperation.

In many countries, access to and control over land and water remain unclear or poorly regulated. This can lead to disputes, exacerbates poverty, and deepens inequalities. Transparency and inclusive participation are crucial to preventing corruption and irregularities in land allocation. For the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), recognising and safeguarding land rights—particularly for local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and women—is a strategic priority for fostering equitable and sustainable development.

This declaration is both timely and forward-looking. It provides practical recommendations to advance responsible land governance at local, national, and global levels. By doing so, it offers vital guidance for political dialogue and collective action at a time when land is increasingly recognised as a strategic resource for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to shaping this declaration: government representatives, civil society, private sector actors, researchers, and international organisations. Your engagement, expertise, and dedication underscore that land governance is not an abstract issue but a daily reality for millions of people whose futures depend on it.

On behalf of the BMZ, I warmly welcome this declaration and commend the governments, civil society organisations, private sector actors, and international partners who collaborated in its development. Their joint efforts have resulted in a document that reflects lived realities and outlines pathways for future engagement. Germany will actively integrate this declaration into its international positioning and policy dialogue, including in forums such as the upcoming meeting of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20).



Paul Garaycochea

Director – Sustainable supply chains; agricultural and food systems

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

1 Executive Summary (Policy Brief)

Multilateral platforms provide spaces for assessing progress and challenges in the transformation of agricultural systems. Upcoming fora should refocus the global agenda on land governance, pushing for more ambitious, accountable, and just reforms to support equitable development, food sovereignty, and environmental sustainability. It is in this context that the Closing Declaration of the Berlin Land Week 2025 is asking decision-makers:

Act now to embed secure land rights into agricultural, environmental, and social policies. By recognising customary tenure, investing in modern land administration, and ensuring inclusivity, states can unlock pathways towards food security, climate resilience, and equitable growth. The land reform agenda needs to be revitalised and consider learnings from the past years of implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT).

State Institutions

- Harmonise statutory and customary systems, ensuring gender-responsive recognition of collective and customary rights. Institutionalise inclusive governance models that combine statutory and customary mechanisms.
- Scale up land registration and land use planning efforts by allocating dedicated funds from national budgets.
- Establish sustainable financing models for maintaining land services that are accessible to rural populations.
- Modernise and digitalise land registries, with interoperability across sectors (planning, justice, environment, etc.), to support the protection of overall rights and ensure data security.
- Guarantee women's equal rights to access, inherit, and transfer land through enforceable legal reforms.
- Integrate gender-sensitive procedures, such as joint titling, into land administration systems.
- Institutionalise fit-for-purpose (FFP) land administration across government processes.
- Integrate land rights approaches into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Action Plans (NAPs), and other environmental frameworks, applying land use plans to ensure alignment.
- Decentralise and strengthen local-level land institutions with clear roles and performance benchmarks.
- Valorise traditional practices, mediation committees, and transparent justice systems in land conflict resolution.

Civil Society

- Advocate for the recognition of customary rights within national and international frameworks (Rio Conventions).
- Raise awareness and challenge discriminatory norms, especially around land rights of women and marginalised groups.
- Act as watchdogs: monitor land acquisitions, create observatories, generate citizen data, and demand accountability.
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue, mediating between communities, state, and investors to prevent conflicts.
- Build community capacities to use digital systems and engage with decentralised land services.

Private Sector

- Support cost-efficient, technology-based land registration that includes customary rights, and co-invest with governments in digital infrastructure and inclusive service provision along value chains.
- Ensure that land-based investments respect Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and international principles, e.g. Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI), by translating them into internal regulations which foster rights-based approaches and community protocols – beyond corporate social responsibility.
- Design financial products that mitigate risks for smallholders and expand access to credit.

Academia and Research Institutions

- Co-develop participatory research agendas with policymakers, civil society organisations (CSOs), and the private sector.
- Provide applied, action-oriented research (e.g. on women's land rights, farmer-herder conflicts, soil productivity).
- Improve communication strategies by translating research into accessible policy briefs and tools.
- Strengthen networks such as the Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) to promote cross-country learning and align national reforms with AU frameworks.
- Partner with CSOs for grassroots evaluation and with governments for policy diagnostics.

Development Partners

- Align support with national systems, legal tenure processes, and continental frameworks (e.g. African Union (AU)).
- Advocate for governments to invest in technical infrastructure (Geo and Land Information Systems (GIS, LIS)).
- Support long-term, adaptive and integrated programming, co-designed with governments, CSOs, and technical partners.
- Facilitate cross-country knowledge exchange and fund scalable, low-cost land registration approaches.
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) for resource mobilisation, communication, and advocacy strategies.

2 Introduction

The call to action highlights the critical link between land governance, food security, and global agendas. It emphasises inclusivity and gender equality with a clear focus on a liveable future.

The question of how land is governed is inseparably linked to the challenges of global food security, climate resilience, and social stability. With more than 700 million people still affected by hunger, and 90 per cent of the world's food production depending directly on land, the urgency of securing responsible and sustainable land use has never been greater. At the same time, mounting demographic pressure, soil degradation, climate change, and migration have deepened the competition for productive land. New demands from private investment, carbon markets, and renewable energy further intensify this pressure. As a result, livelihoods across the globe are increasingly vulnerable, and the lack of secure, transparent land rights continues to undermine both human security and sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, the **Global Programme Responsible Land Policy (GPRLP)** was launched in 2015, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and co-funded by the European Union. Over ten years, the programme has achieved remarkable progress: more than 650,000 households in eleven countries across Africa, Latin America and Asia have gained improved access to land. Importantly, women have been placed at the centre of these achievements, with 64 per cent of secured land rights registered in the names of women or jointly with men, marking a crucial step towards gender equity.

The complementary **Global Programme Strengthening Advisory Capacities for Land Governance in Africa (SLGA)** was commissioned by BMZ to capacitate the next generation of African land professionals. SLGA has achieved numerous successes, with the establishment of NELGA being the most important. NELGA research projects have informed more than 12 land policies in line with the AU Agenda on Land. Furthermore, more than 3,500 land experts were trained and continue to advise decision-makers at the local, national, regional, and continental level.

The **Partners for Change (P4C) network**, launched in 2023, builds on this momentum by connecting global agendas to ground-level realities. It brings together political partners, practitioners, and thought leaders to foster transformation in agricultural and food systems. Through South–South exchange, joint policy contributions, and collaborative learning, P4C has quickly become a dynamic platform for advancing the BMZ core topic of transformation in agriculture and food systems. Its outcomes – including the post-Malabo consultation memorandum at the AU level – demonstrate the power of collective advocacy in shaping global agendas.

The 2025 conference **Partners for Change: 10 Years of the Global Programme Responsible Land Policy – From Closing to Continuity** – also known as the Berlin Land Week – provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements, learn lessons, and chart the way forward. Taking place from 13–15 October 2025 in Berlin, and followed by the **9th LandHub Conference** on 16 October, this event brought together 150 participants, including programme partners and representatives of governments, CSOs, academia, multilateral organisations, and the private sector. The discussions focused particularly on agriculture and food systems, the nexus of soil protection and equitable land access, and the institutional frameworks required for resilience and sustainability.¹

Through knowledge-sharing, strategic reflection, and joint recommendations for action, the conference not only marked the end of a successful decade of the GPRLP but also set the stage for continuity. Its **closing declaration consolidated insights from the two Global Programmes GPRLP and SLGA**, ensuring that the lessons learned are carried forward into future interventions. In doing so, the declaration aims to establish responsible land governance as an indispensable pillar of sustainable development, contributing to food security, social cohesion, and climate resilience for generations to come.

¹ The declaration is therefore in line with the BMZ core topic *Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems*.

2.1 Objective of the Declaration

The declaration seeks to engage the global land governance community by sharing scalable good practices as well as lessons from failures, presented as **actor-specific recommendations**. By consolidating knowledge, the declaration aims to **inform key continental and global platforms**, from the AU to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), **and guide future policy** on the transformation of agri-food systems in upcoming consultations in forums such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20) and the Rio Conventions' Conferences of Parties (COP), thus combating desertification, climate change, and loss of biodiversity.

2.2 Contributions

The declaration is the result of a collaborative effort by the global programmes' partners, representing key architects of functional land governance structures: government, civil society, and the private sector. State representatives set the policy frame by ensuring that national priorities and regulatory realities were well reflected. Civil society actors contributed by sharing lived experiences from the ground in order to embed the declaration in people's realities and social justice. The private sector added practical insights on responsible investment and innovative approaches. Complemented and supported by academia, particularly the NELGA network, and by implementing partners, all stakeholders ensured that the declaration is both grounded and forward-looking.

Special thanks go to the **writing committee**, who spearheaded the write-up:

- Mr Woldu Tadesse Reda, representing the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia
- Ms Iantefana Rajenarison, representing the Ministry of Decentralization and Land Planning in Madagascar
- Professor Rose Mediebou, representing NELGA/University of Yaoundé in Cameroon
- Dr Faridah Dosso, representing NELGA/University of Parakou in Benin
- Ms Carol Namuzimule, representing UCOBAC/Stand for Her Land in Uganda
- Ms Valérie Cromer, representing Meridia in Côte d'Ivoire
- Mr Moïse Mbimbe Nlom, representing the International Land Coalition (ILC), Africa Coordination Unit.

3 Background and Context

For the past decade, African governments and institutions as much as land actors in the international community have partnered with the GPRLP and SLGA to work actively on the improvement of land governance in Africa. These collaborations have strengthened capacities to enhance responsible land governance in our partner countries.

The declaration has great significance as it aligns with both national and continental priorities of sustainable development, food security, climate resilience, and social stability and justice. In Africa, land is not only a strategic economic resource but also a cultural and identity marker. However, demographic pressure, rapid urbanisation, and the effects of climate change are intensifying competition and tensions over land access and use, ownership and control.

Enhancing **responsible land governance is therefore an urgent task**, as it

- secures land rights for vulnerable communities, particularly constituency groups living on and from the land, such as women and youth, Indigenous peoples, pastoralists and farmers,
- improves agricultural productivity, which is particularly crucial in African countries where economic development heavily relies on agriculture,
- contributes to attracting sustainable investment by creating a climate of trust and security,
- enhances incentives for sustainable land use practices, thereby helping to build communities' resilience and capacities to adapt to climate change,
- supports the achievement of the SDGs, especially by sustaining agri-food systems, reducing poverty and inequalities, and building climate resilience, and
- fosters dialogue and the opening of the civic space and helps prevent land-related conflicts, which remain a major source of political fragility in several countries.

Despite the progress achieved through the GPRLP and SLGA programmes, several challenges remain:

- **Inadequate or incomplete legal frameworks:** In many countries, land legislation remains outdated, out of step with socio-cultural realities (as many legal frameworks build on colonial rules), or poorly enforced.
- **Limited institutional capacities:** Local administrations often lack the technical, financial, and human resources needed for effective land management.
- **Lack of harmonisation:** Customary practices and modern legal systems frequently coexist without clear articulation, creating insecurity and confusion.
- **Persistent inequalities:** Women, young people and other constituencies whose livelihoods depend on land, such as Indigenous communities, farmers and pastoralists, continue to face limited access to, ownership of and control over land, despite political commitments.
- **External pressures:** Large-scale land acquisitions by investors and unplanned urban expansion exacerbate vulnerabilities. External pressures can also include protracted conflicts or wars, leading to migration, which has an impact on host and refugee communities, post-conflict land allocation and national land governance systems overall.
- **Low citizen participation:** Local communities are still insufficiently involved in decision-making processes and land governance. The shrinking of the civic space also makes it challenging for land rights defenders to advocate for their issues and those of the communities they represent.
- **Cumbersome processes and risk of bad governance:** Corruption and lack of transparency and accountability constitute a major bottleneck for land governance in Africa. In addition, processes are often inefficient (time, cost, bureaucracy, multiple stakeholders).

4 Land Governance as an Enabling Factor for the (Green) Transformation of Agri-food Systems

The experiences documented across African countries and within global land governance initiatives have generated practical lessons that directly inform the **key recommendations** of this declaration, targeted to the three **architects of functional land governance structures**: 1) state actors, which play a key role in land governance through their ability to legislate, regulate, and deliver land services; 2) CSOs, which are both watchdogs and facilitators in land governance; 3) the private sector, which contributes to the transformation of land governance primarily through innovation, investment, and service delivery.²

4.1 Land Administration and Land Service Provision

State

- Formulate effective (intersectoral) policies which recognise, promote, and protect customary and collective land rights based on good practices, with a specific focus on gender responsiveness. Harmonise statutory law and legal frameworks with customary systems, ensuring that rural and Indigenous communities are not excluded from the benefits of modernised land governance.
- Establish enabling legal and institutional frameworks for FFP land administration.
- Adopt FFP land administration methodologies, tailored to diverse local contexts, with interoperability and varying degrees of accuracy based on the needs for functional land markets.
- Build efficiency into government processes (land contracts, local conventions, etc.) to enhance integration of land registration into other administrative systems such as land use planning, ecosystem protection.
- Modernise and digitalise land registries to improve transparency, reduce corruption, and make land transactions more accessible to citizens. Strengthen and review legal frameworks in response to modernisation needs in land administration and enhance citizen trust.

² Academic and research institutions underpin all three domains by generating evidence, evaluating reforms, and providing training for land professionals. By embedding evidence-based approaches in policy and practice, academia ensures that land governance reforms contribute effectively to the transformation of agri-food systems. Development partners play a critical role as enablers. Their human, financial, and logistical support is a key factor in achieving people-centred land governance. Specific recommendations are elaborated under 5 for successful design.

- Allocate dedicated funds from national budgets for land administration, service provision, awareness-raising, and ongoing capacity development.
- Set up mechanisms for sustainable financing, enabling land services to be continuously accessible to rural communities and scaled to cover initial and recurrent land transactions.
- Leverage networks of academia and civil society for applied research and dissemination.

Civil Society

- Disseminate best practices across countries and enhance capacities and awareness at the community level to support engagement in land governance processes and foster behavioural change.
- Demand accountability from state institutions or fill data gaps through citizen-generated data.
- Create advocacy coalitions for inclusive land rights, bringing grassroots movements, national actors, and global campaigns together.

Private Sector

- Partner with governments and civil society to accelerate the deployment of digital infrastructure, while ensuring that these innovations align with inclusive and sustainable development objectives.
- Support standardised, technology-based, and cost-efficient registration. Partner with government on demand-driven services for smallholders.
- Recognise documentation of customary tenure in procedures and develop specific financial products which mitigate risks for smallholders.

Lessons Learned

Sustainable and scalable land registration requires the creation of an enabling environment with inclusive policies and legal frameworks, cost-effective and accessible processes, robust safety standards, digital innovations, and learning. While contexts vary, countries face similar barriers such as limited finances, weak institutions, and low awareness. Reforms have been most successful where governments invested in applied research and structural capacity development, combined with strong civil society engagement and private sector innovation. Digital land registries, for instance, were feasible when supported by donor-funded capacity development, but their sustainability depended on their being embedded in national policy frameworks and citizen access being ensured at the local level, as decentralised services can also generate revenue through land services.

Decentralisation remains a challenge as capacities at lower land administration levels are a constraint, and roles are not specifically spelled out or measured against performance. Awareness-raising triggers a demand for tenure security, but services must be delivered efficiently to meet it. Digital land administration systems and tools, for instance, can drastically cut the costs and time required to register land rights, while also enabling data-driven policymaking. At the same time, land registration systems draw on foreign principles, making it difficult to reflect contextual uniqueness and ensure that rights are recognised and protected. Contextualised FFP solutions, strong engagement by government at all levels, cross-sectoral partnerships and sharing experiences between countries help to refine tools, strategies, and implementation, increasing adaptability and sustainability.

Customary and collective land rights (in all their complexity) are essential for long-term tenure security for rural populations. By ensuring that reforms remain people-centred and data-driven, civil society strengthens the social legitimacy of land governance systems by monitoring transparency in land administration, raising awareness of citizens' rights, and advocating for marginalised groups, especially women, Indigenous communities, and young people, who are often excluded from formal land services.

Technology companies, for instance, provide digital solutions such as geospatial mapping tools and mobile applications that expand access to land services. Access to reliable and transparent land data supports decision-making on land transactions. The private sector requires clear points of access and systems that are efficient, transparent, and preferably digital, and acknowledges the important role of land tenure registration in strengthening traceability systems. Financial institutions and agri-business actors also rely on secure land administration systems to expand the provision of credit and insurance and support sustainable value chains.

Evidence box 1: Ethiopia – Easing Land Transaction Service Provision

The Ethiopian Rural Land Certification Programme has improved tenure security by issuing certificates across all nine regional states, supported by 506 districts and 12,255 sub-district offices. With 30 million parcels digitised in the National Rural Land Administration Information System, it is one of Africa's largest land databases. Over 70,000 landholders accessed loans using certificates, boosting rural livelihoods. However, long procedures and average travel distances of 19 kilometres limited access. To address this, the Ministry of Agriculture piloted mobile services in Meskan District. Expert teams brought IT tools to remote villages, cutting processing time from 22 days to 1 day, service duration from 40 days to 1 day, travel to 2 kilometres, and costs by 100 per cent. This innovation marked a shift from bureaucratic hurdles to accessible, efficient land administration. → [Factsheet Mobile Back Office](#)

Evidence box 2: Côte d'Ivoire – Land Partnership for Digitalised Land Registrations

The Côte d'Ivoire Land Partnership (CLAP) advances digital land registration by modernising the local land documentation system with tablet-based fieldwork and digital signatures. In a public-private partnership with the cocoa industry and technically supported by Meridia and Audace Institut Afrique, the government has developed a platform to collect, analyse, and store land data nationally after the adoption of legal reforms on land certificates. With an app that is now managed by the National Land Agency (Agence Foncière Rurale – AFOR), standardised land contract templates are freely accessible. The initiative delivered more than 6,000 land documents – over 40 per cent to women. These digital tools will now be scaled nationwide, benefiting millions of farmers. → [Practical Guide CLAP](#) → [CLAP case study](#)

Evidence Box 3: Regional – Land Administration Tools

The Teaching Essentials for Responsible Land Administration (TERLA) initiative addressed local officials' capacity-building needs and was developed to strengthen training in land governance by providing a comprehensive framework for universities and training institutions. TERLA is a joint endeavour involving the Global Land Tool Network, the International Federation of Surveyors, the University of East London, and the Namibia University of Science and Technology. TERLA learnings were published as a book in 2023 and were developed further into a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in 2025. → [TERLA book](#); → [TERLA MOOC](#)

4.2 Investment, Soil Productivity and Food Security

State

- Align government priorities on limited land to stimulate investment in the agricultural sector, carefully assessing opportunities for land consolidation.
- Design, implement, and monitor (incentive) policies and regulatory frameworks that secure land rights but also encourage sustainable investment in compliance with international frameworks for responsible land investment (CFS RAI principles).
- Use data from physical planning to direct rural infrastructure (roads, irrigation) and agricultural subsidies towards soil fertility management and environmentally friendly practices in agricultural zones for productivity enhancement, avoiding land use changes and encroachment.
- Regulate and monitor land speculation and create committees which oversee the implementation of the VGGT.

Civil Society

- Integrate awareness campaigns for farmers on land tenure with sustainable land use practices (e.g. soil fertility practices such as composting, use of cover crops).
- Act as facilitators between investors, communities, and governments – while amplifying community voices.
- Monitor land acquisitions, advocate for responsible investment, and secure land rights against land grabbing.

Private Sector

- Develop inclusive value chains and invest in technical and social innovations (improved seeds, bio-fertilisers, digital tools) that are locally applicable and support technology transfer.
- Enhance engagement, invest in sustainable land management by smallholders and public-private partnerships, and offer decent employment opportunities.

Lessons Learned

Food security in Africa is closely tied to sustainable land management and the improvement of soil productivity. Agricultural and forestry land investments can boost food security, income generation, and employment when designed responsibly. Targeted and coordinated investments are crucial to address the challenges of land degradation, climate change, and demographic growth, while monitoring of land investments ensures alignment with sustainable production practices, preventing environmental degradation and promoting efficient natural resource management. Responsible land-based investment needs to consider tenure security, inclusivity, and grievance mechanisms, facilitate endogenous ownership mechanisms, promote livelihoods, enhance food security, and preserve natural resources, biodiversity, and climate. Progress in land governance, soil productivity, and food security relies on concerted engagement by state actors, civil society, the private sector, and academia. For example, research shows that geo-referenced data can have a significant impact on the accuracy of fertiliser recommendations and the monitoring of soil conditions. However, knowledge dissemination remains challenging.

Partnerships with the private sector can enhance market access, technology transfer, and sustainable value chains for agricultural producers. On the other hand, the private sector – as the example of investment by eight chocolate and cocoa companies in Côte d'Ivoire highlighted – has a strong interest in creating synergies between their corporate operations and the sustainability programmes implemented by public stakeholders. Responsible land-based investment requires access to alternative sources of finance and the adoption of transparent market-driven strategies, as well as robust regulatory and monitoring systems in line with recognised frameworks.

Evidence Box 4: Ethiopia – Land-Linked Loans

In Ethiopia, rural landholders can now use land certificates as collateral to access formal credit, a reform that has transformed rural finance. Today, 18 banks and microfinance institutions provide loans across more than 400 woredas, reaching over 70,000 landholders with a total loan value of 6 billion birr (approximately 40,000,000 euros). Women account for 35 per cent of lending, and when given access, they tend to channel loans into practical long-term farm investments – such as seeds, drying and storage facilities, crop protection, and soil improvements. Overall, borrowers increased agricultural investment by 26 per cent, boosting yields by 33 per cent, while women reported stronger roles in household financial decisions. → [Scaling Land linked Loans](#)

Evidence Box 5: Togo – Securing Community Land Rights in the Planned Agricultural Zones

A participatory mapping guide has been developed in Togo to strengthen land security in Planned Agricultural Development Zones (ZAAPs). While overall ZAAP boundaries are known, internal parcel demarcation often lacks precision, risking disputes and undermining investments. The guide, developed by the National Land Coalition (NLC) of Togo with contributions from landowners, farmers, women, young people, local authorities, and technical service providers, is a tool for defining boundaries, securing rights, and fostering cohesion. Over 15,000 producers are already benefiting, promoting trust, sustainable agriculture, and inclusive land governance. → [Boundaries for Peace in Togo](#)

Evidence Box 6: AU – Guidance to Enhance Land Rights in Agricultural Investment

To boost agricultural productivity, African governments have focused on attracting foreign investment in agriculture and promoting internal agricultural development through National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs). However, to achieve inclusive growth, ensuring no one is left behind, governments must also guarantee that their citizens have secure access to and ownership of land. The African Union Commission, supported by university experts from NELGA, developed good practices for the integration of land rights into NAIPs. As a result, land rights are now featured more prominently in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

→ [CAADP Action Plan 2026-35](#) → [NELGA on NAIP](#)

4.3 Reduction of Land Conflicts and Improvement of Social Cohesion

State

- Reduce land conflicts and strengthen social cohesion, institutionalising inclusive and transparent land governance frameworks that integrate statutory, customary, and community-based mechanisms.
- Valorise traditional practices by establishing decentralised land tribunals or mediation committees that uphold the role of traditional institutions in dispute resolution, ensure impartiality, and prevent elite capture, while benchmarking good practices and developing clear referral pathways to formal justice systems.
- Leverage academic research and investment in digitalised data systems and geospatial technologies to identify conflict hotspots and overlapping claims and improve conflict monitoring
- Improve transparency and reduce corruption for evidence-based decisions and allocation of land.
- Foster justice institutions by upholding the separation of powers principle and facilitate timely delivery of justice.

Civil Society

- Empower local communities, especially women, youth, Indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers, pastoralists and other vulnerable groups, to participate in land allocation and dispute settlement processes.
- Mediate between communities, raise awareness of land rights, and facilitate dialogue to prevent escalation of conflicts.

Private Sector

- Apply effective FPIC and binding codes of conduct in responsible private investment.

Lessons Learned

Land conflicts remain one of the most significant sources of instability in Africa, often rooted in overlapping land rights, weak governance structures, rapid demographic growth, and competing pressures between agricultural, urban, and industrial uses.

Climate change increases human mobility (temporary and permanent migration) and hence the risks of conflict. More flexible systems for securing and planning land access are therefore required.

Effective land governance plays a critical role in preventing disputes, fostering dialogue, and strengthening social cohesion. Hybrid governance models, integrating customary dispute resolution with statutory mechanisms, are resilient, reduce delays, and increase community acceptance. Institutionalising local governance structures, such as land charters and conflict resolution mechanisms, enhances efficiency and sustainability in conflict management. Digitised land records and cadastres support transparency and have led to a reduction in overlapping claims, thereby increasing public trust.

At the same time, multi-stakeholder dialogues have proven effective in opening the democratic spaces for exchange, building trust between stakeholders and mediating, preventing and mitigating conflict. At household level, intergenerational dialogues within families and joint land certification for spouses can do much to improve inclusion of vulnerable groups and promote recognition of young people's land-related needs, significantly reducing intra-household disputes.

Evidence box 7: Uganda – Overcoming Landlord-Tenant Conflicts on Mailo Land

Mailo land in Central Uganda is highly conflict-prone: land is held by landlords (under historical titles), while tenants occupy and cultivate it without formal recognition, creating disputes over boundaries, overlapping ownership, *Busulu* payments (annual rent), and inheritance. The EU co-funded the Improvement of Land Governance in Uganda project, which addressed these tensions by mapping tenant parcels using GPS, producing Land Inventory Protocols, raising awareness of land laws, and mediating conflicts through local structures. By the end of 2025, 100,000 households had benefited from the project. The intervention strengthens dispute resolution, supports negotiations and buy-outs, and reduces social tensions, providing a scalable model for Mailo land governance. → [Securing Land Rights for Mailo Land](#)

Evidence box 8: Livestock Tracking Tool / Land Charters in Burkina Faso and Niger

Land charters serve as pivotal tools for resolving conflicts between pastoralists and farmers. These charters delineate grazing corridors and agricultural zones, fostering mutual respect and reducing disputes. A notable initiative is the *Réseau de Communication sur le Pastoralisme* (RECOPA), which has developed a digital database of livestock corridors and grazing areas across 27 municipalities. This platform aids local governments and pastoralist communities in managing land use and preventing encroachments. Digital livestock tracking tools, such as GPS-enabled collars and mobile applications, enhance the monitoring of herd movements and land use. Combining land charters with digital tracking is a comprehensive approach to managing land resources, promoting sustainable practices, and mitigating conflicts in Burkina Faso's evolving agricultural landscape. [→ RECOPA Bulletin](#) [→ Local Land Charters in Pastoralism](#)

Evidence Box 9 – Central Africa: The Land Conflict MOOC

Central Africa faces increasing land disputes that threaten local stability and development. In response, NELGA Central Africa, with support from German development cooperation and the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*, launched the Land Conflict MOOC. This innovative online course is designed to be user-friendly and easily accessible. By linking academic training with practical skills in land governance, the MOOC contributes directly to building local expertise, strengthening conflict mediation capacity, and promoting peace and stability across the Central African region.

[→ NELGA MOOC](#)

4.4 Sustainable Land Use and Secured Land Rights for the Protection of the Climate and Sensitive Ecosystems (Forests, Wetlands, Drylands, Savannah)

State

- Integrate land rights-based approaches into national strategies and planning (NDC / NAP), while including international fora (e.g. Africa Group at the COPs) to highlight security of customary land tenure as a precondition for reaching environmental conservation targets.
- Strengthen legal frameworks and recognition of community-based, collective land rights as a foundation for effective forest landscape restoration and climate-smart land management.
- Prepare and implement detailed land use plans for sustainable resource use at national, regional and local / community level, with due regard for accountability – and establish the basis for individual and communal documentation of land (use) rights.
- Scale with mass mobilisation, reforestation and conservation efforts and align them with customary tenure regulations and local livelihoods; at the continental level, the African Union and regional economic communities should harmonise policies and scale up successful initiatives (e.g. AFR100, Great Green Wall) that link tenure security with ecosystem restoration and climate resilience.
- Adopt incentive-based conservation strategies which facilitate access and benefit-sharing for local communities, particularly women. Establish links between customary land rights, climate funding, payment for ecosystem services, and REDD+ mechanisms, so that local communities, including women and young people, can directly benefit from these resources and contribute to sustainable land management.

Civil Society

- Lobby and advocate for stronger linkages between customary land rights and the objectives of the Rio Conventions to ensure that land rights are recognised.
- Mobilise communities for participatory forest management and monitoring of deforestation and land grabs.
- Support the integration of land rights in policy processes related to the Rio Conventions, while building on indigenous knowledge.
- Ensure that women and young people in particular are informed and actively involved in the climate conversation, and make technologies and know-how accessible, empowering them to adapt to climate change effectively as a contribution to long-term food security.

Private Sector

- Promote sustainable value chains (timber, non-timber forest products), and support reforestation projects that respect local land rights.
- Carefully assess carbon offset schemes against the risk of “green grabbing” or land banking in the context of carbon markets.

Lessons Learned

Secure land rights are a cornerstone for promoting sustainable land use and protecting ecosystems. Therefore, they must be systematically integrated into national and continental strategies for sustainable land use, forest conservation, and climate protection. Multi-stakeholder approaches are essential to align reforestation and conservation efforts with local livelihoods and ensure inclusive decision-making. Academia and research support these decisions with evidence and modelling of the impacts of deforestation and future land use scenarios in the context of climate change, and develop innovative restoration techniques adapted to African ecosystems.

Evidence box 10: Madagascar – Communal Forest Management

In Madagascar, a pilot initiative for forest land tenure security has introduced transformative changes in governance and conservation. By addressing legal inconsistencies and creating interministerial dialogue, the initiative has established new frameworks which now guide land and forest management. Innovative reforms, based on appropriate regulations on the security of large land areas such as protected areas, natural resource management transfer sites and reforestation sites, are being implemented through digital demarcation. This is accompanied by efforts to establish a reliable land information system and land registry. Regional implementation in 15 communes has secured 147,000 hectares through Local Land Occupation Plans. More than 25,000 households are benefiting, including 45 per cent headed by women and 25 per cent from marginalised groups. This approach integrates formal, customary, and informal forms of land tenure, preventing land grabs and protecting forest resources. By recognising local land use and value creation, it strengthens community rights while advancing sustainable forest restoration. → [Good Practice](#)

Evidence box 11: Burkina Faso, Liberia, Tanzania and Togo – Incorporating Land Rights into the NDCs

With support from the Global Land Catalyst, National Land Coalitions in Burkina Faso, Liberia and Togo, together with government institutions and the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre, assessed how land rights are reflected in NDCs 2.0, and developed strategies for stronger integration in NDCs 3.0. In Tanzania, NELGA experts supported the government in drafting land rights-sensitive NDC targets. In Liberia, where NDC 3.0 has been finalised, land rights were recognised as a cross-cutting issue, with the Land Authority joining the Climate Change Steering Committee and women's land rights identified as systemic barriers to climate action. → [ILC Global Land Catalyst](#)

Evidence box 12: NELGA – Climate Change and Land Governance in Africa

The Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) hosts an online short course on Climate Change and Land Governance in Africa as part of the NELGA network. The course prepares African actors for global climate negotiations, including COP 30 in Belém. Africa, highly vulnerable to climate and land use pressures, often sees these issues being treated separately in negotiations. The course addresses this gap through six themes: land-based climate policies; community rights and conservation; green agendas and appropriation; critical minerals; climate finance responsibilities; and equitable implementation. It strengthens African voices on land/climate justice and ensures more integrated global debates. The pilot course targeted 55 participants from 20 African states. A fully accredited course will be developed in 2026. → [PLAAS](#)

4.5 Women's Land Rights and Inclusion of Marginalised Groups

State

- Systematically ensure the participation of marginalised groups, including women, young people, Indigenous communities, pastoralists, and displaced populations, in land policy reforms, decision-making processes, and land administration services.
- Adopt legal reforms that guarantee women equal rights to access, use, inherit, and transfer land, while ensuring that these rights are effectively enforced through gender-sensitive land administration systems.
- Integrate gender-sensitive procedures into land administration systems, including joint land titling and simplified registration processes.
- Ensure the involvement of women and vulnerable groups in the formulation of land policies.

Civil Society

- Raise awareness and challenge discriminatory norms, empowering women to strengthen their knowledge, skills, and agency required for effective participation and defending and advocating for women's land rights.
- Involve women and men alike to avoid men's fear of having their own rights diminished, which can lead to strong opposition to women's rights.
- Use digitalisation for data-driven advocacy. For example, efforts to increase funding for the sector are informed by system-generated data on the number of land transactions and how much money the sector generates.

Private Sector

- Invest in inclusive value chains and promote innovations that increase women's access to land-related services, credit, technologies, and markets.
- Ensure that land-based investments do not exacerbate gender inequalities; integrate gender equality into land-based investment strategies.

Lessons Learned

In many African countries, constitutional guarantees of gender equality coexist with discriminatory customary practices. Experience shows that laws guaranteeing equal access to land for women are necessary, but are ineffective if not accompanied by enforcement mechanisms and community-level awareness. Access to land is central for women's economic empowerment, and empowerment strengthens their ability to claim and use land rights. To support empowerment, land rights must be linked to productive, land-based activities – beyond tenure. But gender equity interventions must consider overlapping vulnerabilities (e.g. poverty, customary norms).

Men's active participation, in particular in engaging traditional and local authorities, is essential for transforming gender norms. Programmes that work with chiefs and community leaders to recognise women's rights tend to achieve higher legitimacy and acceptance.

Research must focus on practical, women-centred solutions and inform policymaking, while documenting best practices and designing locally adapted solutions for implementation.

Inclusive land governance cannot be achieved unless the needs and rights of marginalised groups, whose voices are often overlooked in policy and practice, are addressed. Participatory approaches – including land-use planning that accounts for internally displaced persons (IDPs), joint land certification mechanisms, and targeted awareness campaigns – can provide practical and feasible pathways for securing land rights for displaced or marginalised groups.

Evidence Box 13: Cameroon – Inclusive Land Governance for Women and IDPs

In Cameroon, land access is a key driver of stability and livelihoods for women and IDPs. By June 2025, Cameroon was hosting over 2.1 million displaced individuals, including more than 1 million IDPs. In the north of the country, 73,400 people, including 40,000 women, require land and housing assistance, while 52 per cent of displaced women lack land access, with 98 per cent owning none. Positive change has emerged through multi-stakeholder approaches, including parliamentary engagement with universities, REPAR-facilitated debates, and targeted government initiatives. Measures such as tailored displacement and resettlement plans, temporary land access arrangements, and enforcement of customary and formal land rights have strengthened tenure security. Legal reforms and inclusive frameworks help IDPs rebuild their lives with dignity, fostering social cohesion and sustainable development.

→ [Policy Brief Cameroon Refugee-host nexus Uganda](#)

Evidence Box 14: Niger – Inclusive Land Governance for Young People and Women

In Niger, land conflicts threaten vulnerable populations. The GPRLP project supports *Jeunes Sentinelles du Foncier*, engaging 100 young people (52 per cent female, 18–35) across ten villages to monitor land use and prevent conflicts. Activities include participatory diagnostics, awareness-raising, and sensitisation on rural land policy. Women and young people participate in decision-making, with 35 per cent of allocated plots reserved for women. Traditional authorities, local commissions, civil society, and the media support adoption and sustainability. In contexts of limited state presence, self-organisation and civil society engagement are vital. Expected impacts include conflict prevention, transparency, social cohesion, and replication in other regions. → [Good Practice](#)

Evidence Box 15: Empowering the First Youth-led Land Organisation

The SLGA project capacitates the first youth-led land organisation, the Youth Initiative for Land Governance in Africa (YILAA), through organisational development support. YILAA, which also hosts the Youth and Land Multi-stakeholder Platform in Africa, has initiated the International Youth and Land Conference in Africa, co-organised with the ILC, as a standing platform on land issues on the African continent. Over the years, YILAA has become a recognised voice for young people, advocating for inclusive land governance at COPs and other important international fora. → [Yilaa](#)

5 Effective Programming

Changing cultures and norms takes time and requires long-term programming and funding.

5.1 Development Partners and Alignment

Recommendations

- Support cross-learning on land registration frameworks: Implementing partners and government institutions engage in cross-learning on suitable frameworks to promote the rollout of systematic land (use) registration in the context of climate change and gender-transformative approaches.
- Review and provide information on capacities developed over the past decade at the individual, organisational, and institutional levels.
- Expand and institutionalise capacity-building initiatives and MSPs to enhance coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability in land governance practices.
- Design sustainability and phase-out strategies from the start.
- Support integration with national systems and legal tenure processes.
- Facilitate cross-country knowledge-sharing and collaborative research.
- Fund scalable, low-cost, and simple land registration approaches.
- Despite shrinking budgets, use integrated approaches in programming (with agriculture and forest landscape restoration) to keep land governance on the agenda.

Multi-stakeholder coordination

- Inclusive multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral platforms: CSOs and the private and public sectors create/improve MSPs to generate synergies, monitor the implementation and sustainability of good practices, and enhance inclusive and meaningful community participation.
- Alliance-building and network enhancement for effective collaboration: Develop and foster the realisation of a common vision and understanding to create a sense of urgency on land governance, thereby motivating key stakeholders to establish active modes of collaboration and stay engaged in

the platform. These alliances should involve CSOs, government, media, the private sector, and academia while creating safe spaces for the vulnerable.

- Strengthen and sustain academic networks and partnerships, prioritising NELGA.
- Donors, implementing partners and technical cooperation should support platforms in developing resource mobilisation / advocacy / communication strategies and build capacities accordingly – particularly in the fields of digital infrastructure and CSO skills.

Lessons Learned

Experience shows that sustainable progress in land governance depends on shared responsibility and coordinated investment. Development partners play a crucial role by advocating for and supporting government investment in technical infrastructure such as geodetic networks, GIS, and LIS, while also strengthening continuous capacity-building and knowledge transfer for institutions and practitioners. Donors should adopt flexible, adaptive programming and co-design projects with implementing partners and civil society to ensure relevance and ownership. At the same time, platforms must explore innovative financing models – pooling resources, public-private partnerships, membership contributions, or social enterprises – to ensure long-term independence. Effective upscaling requires governments, CSOs, the private sector, and donors to act as equal drivers of change.

5.2 Academia and Accompanying Research

Recommendations

- Proactively initiate collaboration with policymakers to revive or accelerate stalled reform processes, supporting data generation and analytical frameworks for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of land policy reforms.
- Foster academic networks and connect scholars across Africa to build a cohesive research community.
- Strengthen MSPs to co-develop participatory research agendas and build consensus.
- Improve communication strategies to ensure uptake of research – particularly by translating findings into accessible formats such as policy briefs.
- Take stock of existing knowledge, support its dissemination, and align research with diagnostic studies.
- Generate demand-driven research and support knowledge dissemination, guided by the AU Agenda, while continuing the mainstreaming of land governance in continental frameworks (e.g. AU).
- Partner with CSOs for evaluation research, recognising their grassroots access and ability to track impacts.

Lessons Learned

Academic institutions can play a catalytic role in shaping and sustaining land policy reforms. Through strong policy/research linkages, the legitimacy, inclusivity, and effectiveness of land governance can be enhanced. The role of academic institutions is therefore cross-cutting: they supply governments with policy-relevant research, collaborate with civil society to document local experiences, and support the private sector in testing and scaling innovative solutions.

It is important to focus on developing curricula for the next generation of land champions. Action-oriented and interdisciplinary research (e.g. on women's land rights, farmer-herder conflicts) leads to more relevant policy outputs. However, research results need to be communicated in the right way. Weak communication of research limits its impact, which is why accessible formats and continuous dialogue are essential. When brought together in multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms made up of researchers, MPs, CSOs, and policymakers, policy recommendations have a higher chance of uptake in reform processes.

Regional platforms like NELGA provide valuable structures to integrate continental frameworks into national policy and academic practice.

Evidence Box 16: MSPs with Academia

Multi-stakeholder engagement has proven essential for knowledge-sharing, inclusiveness, and social legitimacy. Lessons demonstrate not only what has been achieved, but also where and how such practices can be scaled up. They also provide evidence that is clearly linked to established good practices, aligning with VGGT and the African Union Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy. This confirms the importance of embedding inclusivity, transparency, and accountability at all stages of land governance reform.

Evidence Box 17 – Cameroon: Academia Engages Traditional Chiefs in Land Governance

In rural Cameroon, over 70 per cent of households depend on undocumented customary tenure, and more than 60 per cent of disputes are handled by customary authorities whose rulings often lack formal recognition. In February 2021, NELGA Central Africa partnered with the Network of Traditional Chiefs to convene over 80 stakeholders, including 45 chiefs, for dialogue on land conflict management. By mobilising research, training, and facilitation, academia bridged gaps between statutory and customary systems, strengthened chiefs' mediation capacities, and fostered coordination with state actors. This illustrates how academic networks can catalyse inclusive dialogue, evidence-based reform, and sustainable land governance.

Published by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn,
Germany Global Project Responsible Land Policy
Friedrich Ebert Allee 32 + 36
53113 Bonn, Germany
T +49 228 44 60-0
F +49 228 44 60-17 66
E info@giz.de | www.giz.de/en

Responsible: Maraile Görgen, Nanny Wiechert
Berlin, October 2025

Authors:

Mr Woldu Tadesse Reda, representing the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia
Ms Iantefana Rajenarison, representing the Ministry of Decentralization and Land Planning in Madagascar
Professor Rose Mediebou, representing NELGA/University of Yaoundé in Cameroon
Dr Faridah Dosso, representing NELGA/University of Parakou in Benin
Ms Carol Namuzimule, representing UCOBAC/Stand for Her Land in Uganda
Ms Valérie Cromer, representing Meridia in Côte d'Ivoire
Mr Moïse Mbimbe Nlom, representing the International Land Coalition (ILC), Regional Coordination Unit Africa
This conference declaration was supported by a GIZ conference secretariat and partially drafted with AI tools.

Design and layout: MediaCompany

URL links: www.giz.de/en

Responsibility for the content of external websites linked in this publication always lies with their respective publishers. GIZ expressly dissociates itself from such content.