



Land rights matter for people and the planet

An options paper for raising awareness on responsible land governance for combatting desertification, land degradation, and drought

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Executive Summary

In September 2019, Parties to the UNCCD adopted decision 26/COP14 on Land Tenure at the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP14), requesting the Secretariat explore options, to be presented at the upcoming 15th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15), on how to increase public knowledge of responsible land governance as a key aspect of combating desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) among all stakeholders, and particularly among vulnerable populations. This paper addresses that request, offering options for how to increase awareness of land tenure and responsible land governance to catalyze inclusive, coordinated, sustained, adequately resourced, urgent, and transformative action towards land degradation neutrality (LDN).

Tenure security is a crucial enabler for land degradation neutrality. Without rights to property, communities lack the security to invest in the ecosystems on which they depend, which can hinder uptake of sustainable management practices even when support for them is offered. As climate change further degrades natural resources, clear tenure can reduce resource conflicts and strengthen livelihoods increasing climate resilience. Efforts to secure tenure must include gender equality and social inclusion to be just, effective, and sustainable.

Effective awareness-raising on the role of land tenure in LDN initiatives depends on the equitable representation and leadership of vulnerable groups in awareness-raising efforts, from design through implementation, at all levels of engagement. To ensure this representation and leadership, the perspectives, interests, and unique challenges of vulnerable groups must be understood, and power dynamics between members of dominant groups and vulnerable groups must be understood and intentionally addressed to support meaningful and inclusive participation.

Partnerships amongst actors at all levels of governance are essential in this awareness-raising, both amongst actors carrying out awareness-raising activities as well as vulnerable groups most affected by land degradation and tenure insecurity, who should be included in all steps of awareness-raising as equal partners. Any interested person or organization can utilize the options paper, and specific resources are provided to engage with key stakeholder groups: Parties to the UNCCD, UN bodies and international organizations, development partners, subnational and local government actors, civil society organizations, private sector actors, women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth, pastoralists, migrants, and persons with disabilities.

Successful awareness-raising is possible only through strong partnerships, investment of resources, and building on the existing foundation of global agendas, best practices, and ongoing initiatives. Key actors at UNCCD COP15 can start this process, but diverse stakeholders from international organizations to local actors must also be engaged and mobilized in support of awareness-raising across the world.

The paper outlines a four-step process for designing an effective, inclusive awareness-raising strategy:

STEP 1: Draft an action plan – Stakeholders evaluate their context and select from awareness-raising activity options to build their own awareness-raising action plan. Options for awareness-raising activities range from hosting conferences to developing locally-relevant skits to be played on radio, television, or live. A decision tree and stakeholder-specific guides propose activities according to actors' resources, expertise, and networks.

STEP 2: Identify and partner with target audiences – Stakeholders identify their target audiences and use a gender equality and social inclusion approach to tailor the design of awareness-raising activities to reach and meaningfully include those audiences as partners and key knowledge-holders. A checklist for creating an inclusive environment presents opportunities for meaningful inclusion and partnership.

STEP 3: Adopt key messaging – Stakeholders select from high-level messaging options or draft their own context-specific messaging to raise awareness on the most salient issues at the nexus of land tenure and degradation. Communications tips and sample messages are provided:

- ✓ Secure land tenure rights encourage sustainable land investments and good land stewardship.
- ✓ Secure tenure provides a foundation for lasting solutions for life on land.
- ✓ Placing inclusive land rights at the center of efforts to combat land degradation will enable countries and communities to set the course for a more sustainable planet where all can thrive.

STEP 4: Evaluate success, learn, and adapt – Stakeholders develop a plan to monitor the efficacy of their awareness-raising activities and integrate learnings into their ongoing activities. Stakeholders can use sample indicators in developing their monitoring and evaluation strategy for adaptive management.

For additional guidance: The technical guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the UNCCD and Land Degradation Neutrality demonstrates the feasibility of improving land tenure security in pursuit of LDN and offers blueprints for the way forward. The technical guide offers nine action-oriented pathways to contribute to LDN and land restoration commitments that focus on common land tenure challenges and potential solutions in the context of national plans, legal frameworks, strategies, and action programs.



Photo by Debbie Espinosa

Introduction

With wide support from Civil Society Organizations, Parties to the UNCCD adopted decision 26/COP14 on Land Tenure at the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP14), acknowledging the importance of addressing tenure in the context of the Convention. In the decision, Parties requested the Secretariat explore options, to be presented at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15), on how to increase public knowledge of responsible land governance as a key aspect of combating desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) among all stakeholders, and particularly among vulnerable populations, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This paper addresses that request, offering options for how to increase awareness of land tenure and responsible land governance to catalyze inclusive, coordinated, sustained, adequately resourced, urgent, and transformative action towards land degradation neutrality (LDN).

The Parties requested that awareness-raising is inclusive of vulnerable populations. While these vulnerable groups are often the most aware of land tenure related issues, they may not be thinking of the connections between these issues and the intricacies of LDN programming and they are often left out of initiatives related to both topics. Histories of marginalization and existing power imbalances make addressing land tenure and governance a complex challenge. Effectively raising awareness of the interlinkages between LDN and land tenure will depend on addressing these complexities: tensions between formal and customary frameworks, the ongoing effects of colonialism and imperialism on legal,

economic, and social structures, threats to Indigenous territories and other legitimate tenure rights from investments and infrastructure projects that do not abide by international standards, increasing inequalities in the way land is controlled overall,¹ and the entrenched patriarchal practices and customary norms that prevent women and girls from realizing equal rights to land.

This awareness-raising options paper seeks to support Parties and other stakeholders in promoting awareness of the importance of secure tenure and responsible land governance in the context of combatting DLDD. The paper presents options for carrying out awareness-raising efforts with an integrated gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approach and includes guidance on identifying target audiences, structuring awareness-raising initiatives, developing messaging, and considering which options are most suitable for each type of stakeholder.

The paper is structured to raise awareness for key stakeholder groups in a tiered approach, emphasizing the importance of leadership, commitment, and investment both from the top-down and bottom-up, as well as coordination between stakeholders. Key stakeholder groups include:

- **Parties** – Parties to the UNCCD are at the forefront of LDN commitments and initiatives at the national scale. By coordinating actions of national-level government actors, including departments and ministries responsible for finance, trade, labor, agriculture, land, environment, water, forestry, women’s affairs, Indigenous Peoples, human rights, and others, Parties, and particularly national focal points, can prompt awareness-raising of land tenure as a transformative solution to DLDD country-wide.
- **UN bodies and international organizations** – There are many international bodies whose missions will benefit from LDN and greater awareness of land tenure as a solution for land degradation and other environmental and socio-economic issues. These bodies can acknowledge the importance of tenure security and LDN to their existing agendas and support awareness-raising on a regional and global scale. Some relevant UN bodies and international organizations include Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Development Program (UNDP), UN World Food Programme (WFP), UN Habitat, UN Women, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and International Labour Organization (ILO).
- **Development partners** – Development partners’ and international funding institutions’ investments can add needed momentum to awareness-raising efforts. These actors should be involved in these awareness-raising efforts because tenure security and LDN are essential to many development priorities such as food security and rural development, and because development partners may be able to help address the power dynamics that limit progress on securing equitable tenure rights, and to support needed coordination efforts for Parties and other stakeholders.
- **Subnational and local government** – Subnational and local government actors have a major role to play in awareness-raising. These actors are locally engaged with land stewards, land administration, and LDN initiatives, and are familiar with local instances of land degradation, as well as practices and social norms that may impede different groups’ access to and use of land.

¹ Ward Anseeuw and Giulia Maria Baldinelli. (2020). [Uneven Ground: Land Inequality at the Heart of Unequal Societies](#). *International Land Coalition, Oxfam*. 6-68.

The involvement of these officials – from water, agriculture, land, land use planning, mapping, finance, and other departments at sub-national and local government levels – is key to connecting with local communities.

- **Civil society organizations** – Civil society organizations often drive initiatives at both national and grassroots levels, including awareness-raising efforts. They denounce and combat discrimination and unfair practices and norms. Civil society provides critical community, national, and transnational knowledge, expertise on GESI issues as well as on LDN and land tenure, and can provide support, publicity, mobilization, and coordination for awareness-raising activities.
- **Private sector** – Many private sector actors are dependent on soil health and reliable suppliers to successfully operate sustainable value chains in the agriculture sector. Combatting DLDD through tenure security can help private sector actors strengthen supplier relationships and increase sustainable production. Private sector actors have convening power—including sector-specific networks, relationships with farmers, and unique expertise to bring to this awareness-raising effort. Private sector actors are also uniquely placed to identify and address power dynamics that limit the implementation of secure tenure rights.

Actors that fall outside of these categories can still play important roles in these awareness-raising efforts. To facilitate the mobilization of other stakeholders, this paper offers a range of awareness-raising options that are adaptable to a variety of actors' abilities, audience, and reach. Ultimately, this paper's awareness-raising action tracks seek to support future implementation of secure land tenure and responsible land governance as a foundational and urgently needed component of successful LDN programming.

This options paper has three overarching objectives:

1. Raise awareness on responsible land governance for combatting DLDD among all stakeholders, and particularly among vulnerable populations, including women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth, pastoralists, migrants, and persons with disabilities.
2. Create pathways to engage with relevant partner institutions and civil society organizations in the countries affected by DLDD, as well as partners at regional and international levels, to build synergies and identify potential actions for joint impact.
3. Guide future efforts of the UNCCD Secretariat to promote awareness-raising on the issue of land tenure in the context of DLDD.

The short-term objectives of presenting this options paper at COP15 are:

- Guide and motivate UNCCD Parties and other stakeholders to implement awareness-raising options within national contexts.
- Present options on the ways and methodologies of how the Secretariat, in collaboration with other partners, can support awareness-raising of responsible governance of tenure at all levels: global, regional, national, and local.
- Clarify the need for resources to support awareness-raising on synergies between land tenure and LDN as an integral part of all phases of LDN initiatives, from design through implementation.

The theory of change for UNCCD awareness-raising on responsible land governance is included on page 4, which depicts how the different awareness-raising activities contribute to the overarching goal of integrating responsible governance of tenure in the UNCCD and LDN. A glossary of key terms is included at the end of the document.

Theory of Change: UNCCD Awareness-Raising on Responsible Land Governance for LDN





Background on Land Tenure and Land Degradation Neutrality

There are approximately 2.5 billion rural land users globally, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities (agricultural, coastal, and forest-dwelling).² These communities manage approximately 65% of the world's land and coastal ecosystems,³ and protect 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity.⁴ Fertile land is an integral part of the global food system, yet most of the 1.5 billion people who live on degrading land are smallholder farmers.⁵ Legal recognition of land rights is a necessary basis for significant investment in planning and implementing LDN initiatives. LDN has three pillars: conservation, sustainable management, and restoration. To be effective, LDN initiatives must include land users with particular attention to intersecting vulnerabilities faced by rural communities, women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), youth, and other vulnerable groups. This approach is both rights-based and pragmatic: land users' human rights are intertwined with land⁶ and achieving LDN will require a massive

CASE STUDY

In the Jinja Wetlands of Uganda, a collective of local wetland users jointly developed a by-law to establish a co-management system for regulating access and use of the wetland. The by-law, a municipal-level regulation, allows for appointment of a Wetland Custodian to regulate wetland use and continue a local customary tradition of custodianship.

² FAO. (2012). [FAO Statistical Yearbook, World Food and Agriculture](#). Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. 5-6.

³ Rights and Resources Initiative. (2015). [Who Owns the World's Land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights](#). Washington, DC: RRI.

⁴ The Editors. (2021). Biodiversity's Greatest Protectors Need Protection. Scientific American. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [Biodiversity's Greatest Protectors Need Protection - Scientific American](#)

⁵ J. D. Unruh, S. Akhobadze, H. O. Ibrahim, B. Karapinar, B. S. Kusum, M. Montoiro, M. S. Santivane. (2019). [Land tenure in support of land degradation neutrality](#). *Land Tenure Journal* no. 2-19. Rome. FAO. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

⁶ The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights will soon issue a General Comment on the right to land as a human right (2021). [Call for written contributions to the draft general comment \(No. 26\) on Land and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#). This is a landmark decision from a human rights treaty-monitoring body, summarizing decades of human rights precedent on the topic. See also Human Rights Council Thirty *United Nations General Assembly*. Agenda Item 3. (2017). [Report on the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#). *United Nations General Assembly*. Agenda Item 3.

mobilization of effort. To achieve a sustainable transformation, all land users should be equally able to and economically incentivized to co-design and lead these efforts,⁷ and secure tenure is an essential component of this engagement.

Tenure security as a crucial enabler for land degradation neutrality

Achieving land degradation neutrality requires halting new degradation of land by maintaining existing healthy land; reducing existing degradation by adopting sustainable land management practices that can slow degradation while increasing biodiversity, soil health, and food production; and ramping up efforts to restore and return degraded lands to a natural or more productive state. These actions are unlikely to occur without secure rights to land.

Without rights to property, communities lack the security to invest in the ecosystems on which they depend, which can hinder uptake of sustainable management practices even when support for them is offered. Tenure insecurity can also incentivize unsustainable land use as stewards seek to get as much benefit from the land as possible in the short term in case they lose it. Additionally, land users with insecure tenure may degrade land in an effort to claim it, like deforesting an area to create visible evidence for a claim. “Defensive farming”, a term used to describe the regular cultivation often practiced on insecure land to maintain a claim, depletes the soil.

Secure land tenure, however, can foster investment in sustainable land management approaches and technologies on both the smallholder and large-scale investment levels. Securing tenure rights can alleviate both risk and the perception of risk that land may be taken or encroached upon; and tenure rights support commitment to land into the future, reducing incentives to overuse resources or to migrate for economic reasons.⁸ Insecure land holders also have limited access to government extension and credit services, leading to lower technical capacity and financial capacity, both of which undermine investments. Those who hold secure tenure to their lands are better able and motivated to invest in sustainability and conservation practices with a view to the future health and productivity of their land.⁹

Improved tenure security is shown to increase investments in sustainable land management practices such as tree planting and soil conservation.¹⁰ Other long-term investments that demonstrate tenure security and safeguard against land degradation include soil

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGE

A “use-it-or-lose-it” government approach to land rights can exacerbate the negative effects of tenure insecurity on land degradation. Under these policies, farmers must cultivate land within a certain legal timeframe to maintain rights to that land. In some circumstances, employing ecologically healthy fallow periods could lead to redistribution of that land by the government. As secure tenure is paramount for farmers, they are likely to cultivate on the mandated timescale rather than prioritize soil conservation.

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGE

Laws that unduly restrict the movement of pastoral communities can result in overgrazing of the areas within the pastoral community’s territory and further degradation of rangeland.

⁷ Hannah Rundle. (2019). Indigenous Knowledge Can Help Solve the Biodiversity Crisis: People who live off the land depend on keeping ecosystems intact, and scientists are tapping into their unique expertise. *Scientific American*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from: [Indigenous Knowledge Can Help Solve the Biodiversity Crisis - Scientific American Blog Network](#)

⁸ UNCCD Conference of the Parties 14th Session. (2019). [New and Emerging Issues: Land Tenure, Note by the Secretariat](#). *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. Item 3, 2-13.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

stabilization, water harvesting, plugging gullies and ravines with embankments, terracing, installing permanent fencing, digging irrigation channels, and controlling for erosion.¹¹ Purposeful use of rotational and fallow land techniques are also indicators of tenure security that benefit soil and land health. When tenure security is absent, farmers will more often make shorter-term investments in land, such as simple fencing and boundary markers, poor agricultural practices, and simple building construction.¹² These longer-term investments and the benefits of land degradation neutrality can contribute to the mitigation of climate change and biodiversity loss as well.

Land rights can contribute to slowing or halting the degradation of land through a variety of ways: protecting tenure security for current landholders, amending laws to better recognize and secure legitimate tenure rights, tailoring dispute resolution mechanisms to the needs of local communities, carefully supporting reforestation schemes where appropriate, developing arrangements for multiple use of land, returning lands that have been taken from local communities, supporting customary decisions around land governance and management, enhancing financial and technical capacities, and considering mobile technologies for tenure management.¹⁴

This critical link between secure rights to land and land degradation has been recognized in several global agendas, including the Rio Conventions¹⁵ and the Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs 1, 2, 5, and 15 and others all rely on solutions to both land degradation and land tenure insecurity. The most recent reports from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform and Ecosystem Services (IPBES),¹⁶ the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 2019 report on land¹⁷ as well as the IPCC's most recent report¹⁸, a 2019 BioScience study¹⁹ (endorsed by 11,000 scientists from around the globe), and other mounting evidence²⁰ are all part of a growing consensus that the land tenure rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples are central to LDN, ecosystem restoration,

CASE STUDY

A 2019 study in Burkina Faso found that land tenure security had a substantial effect on the tree planting practices adopted by farmers. The study found that even the informal tenure security granted by the establishment of fences around plots had a positive impact on tree planting. This finding matches the findings of a survey on fruit tree planting practices in Nigeria and Cameroon that also found land tenure security as an influencing factor in tree planting decisions.¹³

¹¹ UNCCD, 14th Session.

¹² J. D. Unruh et al., 9-10.

¹³ Valette M, et al. (2019). [How diverse is tree planting in the central plateau of Burkina Faso? Comparing small-scale restoration with other planting initiatives](#). *Forests*, 10(3), 227.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Rio Conventions refer to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

¹⁶ E.S. Brondizio et al. (2019). [IPBES Global Assessment Report](#). IPBES. See e.g., Chapter 2, para 18. Leading economic policies (e.g., roads, credit, private rights) can be adjusted to lower degradation of nature and potentially at a low cost to affected economies (*well established*). Another core policy is establishing and enforcing clear tenure. Clarifying smallholder rights, including around customary tenure, can lower natural degradation. Further, it can spur greater investment in productivity, including within sustainable approaches.

¹⁷ Almut Arneth et al. (2019). [Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems](#). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 1-41.

¹⁸ IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. IPCC. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability | Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

¹⁹ Matt McGrath. (2019). Climate Change: 'Clear and Unequivocal' emergency, says scientists. BBC News. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Climate change: 'Clear and unequivocal' emergency, say scientists - BBC News](#)

²⁰ Liam Wren-Louis, Luis Becerra-Valbuena, and Kenneth Hounghbedji. (2020). [Formalizing land rights could reduce forest loss: Experimental evidence from Benin](#). *Science Advances*, 6(26).

biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The publications highlight that forest preservation and land restoration are crucial to these outcomes and identify rural land users as the group that can achieve this.

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGE

The national-level actors governing tenure regimes may operate in siloed ministries, engaging in land governance decision-making in isolation from other officials responsible for implementing LDN and climate risk frameworks.

Essential elements for tenure security

Tenure security is defined as the level of certainty that relationships and ensuing agreements within a land tenure system are upheld and recognized by others. Secure tenure rights are defensible against other claimants, viewed as clear and legitimate by the community, include access to dispute resolution mechanisms, and are recognized by the law, institutions, and society at large. While land administration is only one aspect of tenure security, it is telling that less than a quarter of countries maintain complete land administration records. Globally over 80% of farms are subsistence smallholdings, and rural smallholders often find themselves vulnerable to degrading land and insecure tenure rights.²¹

Land tenure governance structures vary widely, but tenure rights can be organized into two primary types: statutory tenure (formal, written, or official tenure) and customary tenure (informal, unwritten, unofficial, or traditional tenure). Overlapping tenure of land is not uncommon, and land can be held individually or communally, with layered uses and designations. When tenure rights are not recognized, these tenure types may be in tension, leading to disputes, tenure insecurity, and confusion. This is also acknowledged by the UNCCD Parties in Decision 26/COP14, which encourages Parties to “recognize legitimate tenure rights, including customary rights, consistent with the national legal framework.”

CASE STUDY

A study in Nepal found that groups with all-women executive committees had better forest regeneration outcomes than other groups, even when the areas they were working in were more degraded and smaller than other plots.²²

Secure tenure perceptions and institutional trust are in some contexts marred by profound, long-standing tensions, conflict, corruption, elite capture, and rampant economic, racial, ethnic, and gender inequalities. Parties face both urgency and an uphill battle to overcome the political, technical, financial, social, and cultural challenges of land tenure and governance. These challenges may be compounded by minimal awareness of existing land rights, often among both government officials and the communities they serve.

Solutions to improve tenure security can be similarly elusive. Often weak land tenure and governance go unaddressed because of limited resources, competing priorities, and poor awareness of the benefits of strengthened tenure. Amid these prioritization challenges, vulnerable populations (especially women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth, pastoralists, migrants, and persons with disabilities) are the ones most affected, experiencing extreme poverty due to a combination of insecure tenure and DLDD. These vulnerable populations are often unrepresented or underrepresented in decision-making

²¹ UNCCD Solution Brief. (2021). [Restored Land, Healthy People, Green Recovery](#). United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 1-6.

²² FAO Governing Technical Guide. (2013). [Governing Land for Women and Men](#). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 3-110.

related to tenure and DLDD; broader and deeper consultation with these groups would yield more effective, cohesive solutions and would fulfill human rights to participation.

In recognition of these unequal and compounding vulnerabilities, and of the need for global guidance on tenure, the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) in 2012. The VGGT “seek to improve governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests. They seek to do so for the benefit of all, with an emphasis on vulnerable and marginalized people, and with the goals of food security and progressive realization of the right to adequate food, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, environmental protection and sustainable social and economic development.”²³ Since their adoption, the VGGT have become internationally accepted advisory principles and standards for the good governance of tenure in land, forests, and fisheries.

Gender-equal and socially inclusive land rights

Land tenure interventions are not successful or sustainable without equitable representation and inclusion of vulnerable populations in their design and implementation at all levels, including in positions of leadership. Tenure reforms that fail to meaningfully include women and other vulnerable groups can entrench existing inequalities, exacerbating rather than alleviating poverty, land degradation, and social injustice. In the alternative, ensuring equal access to land and land tenure security can advance sustainable development, poverty reduction, and food security.

Some of the most effective actors in preventing degradation of land are also the most vulnerable to land tenure insecurity. For instance, agroforestry tree planting schemes are often adopted by the most disadvantaged populations, as they commonly work on and care for the land, subsisting often on degraded land with low agricultural productivity.²⁵ Hence the groups vulnerable to tenure insecurity are also those most motivated to address the impacts of land degradation on livelihoods, food security, and culture, heritage and identity. This includes women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), pastoralists, and people with disabilities, and others; it should be noted that vulnerable groups are context specific.

CASE STUDY

A 2003 study in Pakistan found that land use, land tenure insecurity, and land degradation all exacerbated one another, pointing out a need for land reforms to widen access to land resources and sustainable development options in Pakistan.²⁴

Despite the role of these groups in preventing degradation of land, women, youth, migrants, and persons with disabilities within these communities are particularly disadvantaged by tenure insecurity at the individual level. Existing power relations result in members of these vulnerable groups (who experience intersectional forms of discrimination) having less voice in decision-making and in defense of their rights, and fewer resources to cope with the impacts of DLDD.

²³ FAO. (2012). [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 1-41.

²⁴ Tarique Niazi. (2003). [Land Tenure, Land Use, and Land Degradation: A Case for Sustainable Development in Pakistan](#), *The Journal of Environment and Development*, 12(3), 275-294.

²⁵ J. D. Unruh et al., 14-15.

Land degradation and worsening climate impacts have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and pastoralists, and other disenfranchised populations and vulnerable communities overall; this in turn exacerbates the impacts of tenure insecurity at the community level. These populations are often the most marginalized and impoverished groups in society, leaving them with few social or financial resources to address DLDD and to cope with the impacts on their livelihoods and wellbeing. These inequalities can also lead to protracted land conflicts, which detract from LDN investments.

CASE STUDY

A 2016 study in Namibia found that, despite strong assumptions that communal tenure of rangelands led to overuse, there was no evidence of increased surface degradation in areas of communal tenure. Rather, in areas of private tenure, plant productivity trends were slightly worse than in open communal land.²⁶

For more detailed information on the topic of land tenure as a solution for land degradation:

- UNCCD and FAO, Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the UNCCD and Land Degradation Neutrality (forthcoming in May 2022)
- Note by the UNCCD Secretariat, [New and Emerging Issues - Land Tenure](#) developed for COP14
- UNCCD SPI Report, [Creating an enabling environment for Land Degradation Neutrality & its potential contribution to enhancing well-being, livelihoods & the environment](#)
- FAO paper in the Land Tenure Journal, [Land Tenure in Support of Land Degradation Neutrality](#)
- [UNCCD Solution Brief, Restored Land, healthy people, green recovery](#)

²⁶ Pablo Gilolmo & Agustin Lobo. (2016). [Colloquium Paper No. 43 On the Relationship Between Land Tenure and Land Degradation: A Case Study in the Otjozondjupa Region \(Namibia\) based on Satellite Data](#). *International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague*. 3-13.



Key Partners in Land Tenure and Land Degradation Neutrality Efforts

Incentives exist to motivate a wide array of stakeholders to raise awareness on land tenure and land degradation neutrality.

- **Parties** are uniquely positioned to elevate this topic to the attention of key national and local stakeholders in their countries. The actions taken by Parties will largely determine the effectiveness of this awareness-raising effort to reach local communities. To facilitate public awareness-raising, Parties can lead in the awareness-raising of their national, subnational, and local government counterparts as well as a financial and technical support role for private sector actors and civil society organizations who want to engage on these issues.
- **UN bodies and international organizations** are well-positioned to help Parties and other stakeholders to identify priorities, develop resources, and share best practices as they carry out awareness-raising activities around the world. Secure land rights advance a variety of priorities identified across UN frameworks and agendas, such as LDN, climate action, women's empowerment, sustainable development, human rights, and more. UN bodies and international organizations can play an advisory and coordinating role in maximizing the impact of awareness-raising efforts by aligning global priorities, connecting actors, sharing best practices, and broadcasting achievements. UN bodies and other international organizations have the capacity to carry out large-scale interventions with global scope and impact to increase the awareness of governments, civil society, private sector, and communities.

- **Development partners and international funding institutions** have the unique opportunity to set awareness-raising campaigns in motion through multi-country funding priorities. Aligning funding priorities with local initiatives to highlight the nexus between land tenure and land degradation is one of the most impactful effects that development partners can have on awareness-raising efforts, as funding for such initiatives within national, subnational, and local government can be difficult to secure. Furthermore, focusing funding on these issues can help to raise recognition of the dire and urgent importance of addressing DLDD, and can be particularly helpful in supporting coordination and convening, which can often be out of reach without additional resources.
- **Subnational and local governments** are the foundations of responsible land governance and institutional support for DLDD. Subnational and local government actors are connected with every community in their jurisdictions, giving them unique access to identify the needs and priorities of communities. They are also well-positioned to work with communities to raise and track awareness more systematically than a national government or civil society actor could. Subnational government actors can build on high-level resources supplied by the national government, civil society, or UN bodies to plan programming, while local government actors can draw on their strong understanding of local issues to strengthen any subnational or national planning and awareness of key issues.
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs)** often serve as connectors between communities and global agendas, stepping in to provide resources where needed and keeping abreast of developments in their fields, translating global agendas to communities and feeding ground-level realities, experiences, and innovations back into global agendas. Civil society actors frequently use awareness-raising as an advocacy tool, building trust and knowledge within the communities they work. These unique, trust-based relationships between civil society and local communities can be crucial in reaching populations that have distrust of government or other actors.
- **Private sector actors** involved in land sectors have their own incentives to help strengthen land tenure and reverse land degradation. Stronger land tenure reduces conflict, mitigates climate risks, and creates greater incentives for landholders to make long-term investments in the land. Private sector actors often have well-established networks within their sectors or trade networks through which they can raise awareness of these issues and set or encourage uptake of best practices. Many private sector actors, such as agribusinesses, forest-related companies, extractive industries, vendors, buyers, and natural resource management companies also work directly or indirectly with farmers, fishers, and forest users, providing products and knowledge that influence decision-making regarding how to manage their land. These existing relationships and information channels can be leveraged to efficiently spread awareness of the nexus of land tenure security and LDN. Private sector actors can work with communities to adopt responsible land governance approaches to extractives, infrastructure and development, and biofuel.

As new stakeholders enter the realm of awareness-raising on these topics, it is important to recognize existing networks, advocacy, and initiatives to identify how partnerships and collaborations can enhance ongoing efforts. Special attention should be paid to identifying actors and organizations within vulnerable groups that are leaders in this field and can be key partners in awareness-raising efforts.

Integrating a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Approach

Effective awareness-raising about the role of land tenure in LDN initiatives depends on the equitable representation and leadership of vulnerable groups in awareness-raising efforts, from design through

implementation, at all levels of engagement. To support successful outcomes, ensure inclusion, and support realization of rights for vulnerable groups, this paper recommends an integrated and intersectional approach for gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in awareness-raising. This approach requires gathering and coordinating contextualized knowledge and expertise, including engaging local GESI experts. Integration then requires supporting inputs on GESI throughout design and implementation, including via monitoring and evaluation processes. This intersectional GESI approach and integrated process requires commitment and recognition of its importance, particularly by those in dominant power positions. It also requires an investment of resources by all stakeholders engaged.

Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to apply a contextualized and integrated GESI approach in the design and implementation of LDN and land tenure awareness-raising programming. Numerous available resources can inform this type of approach and support contextualization.²⁷ Some considerations and steps to applying a contextualized and intersectional GESI approach include:

- **Identify vulnerable communities in your geographic context.** Many rural communities disproportionately experience tenure insecurity and face inequality in community decision-making. Indigenous Peoples and local communities, smallholder farmers, landless agricultural laborers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, migrants, displaced peoples, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, women and gender minorities, youth and persons with disabilities are just some of the groups that may experience barriers to accessing tenure rights. This list is non-exhaustive, and any minority groups can face unique challenges to tenure access according to their local context.
- **Consider the intersectionality of identity.** Individuals or communities typically hold more than one identity – a cooperative could be comprised of women of an ethnic minority background, for instance. Depending on the context, some identities could align with power and privilege, while the same identity elsewhere could be distrusted and disenfranchised. Individuals or communities holding identities from more than one vulnerable group may experience compounded barriers in accessing land, securing tenure rights, and participating in community decision-making bodies that differ from others within their broader identity group. For instance, widows and unmarried women often experience different, but related injustices within their broader community of women. Specific attention should be given to these intersectional identities and addressed throughout awareness-raising programming.
- **Consider specific challenges and needs of disenfranchised communities and individuals within target audience to identify potential barriers for participation in awareness-raising activities.** Achieving gender equality and social inclusion requires more than good intentions. For example, inviting all community members to a meeting does not afford each participant equal opportunity to participate. Cultural norms, language differences, gendered stereotypes, and other barriers can contribute to creating an unwelcome environment for some participants. These barriers can be minimized with thoughtful planning and intentional space-building.
- **Consider power dynamics between groups (e.g., organizers and target audiences).** To ensure representation and leadership, the perspectives, interests, and unique challenges of vulnerable groups must be understood, and power dynamics between members of dominant groups and vulnerable groups must be understood and intentionally addressed to support meaningful participation.

²⁷ See for example CIFOR's guide: [Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: A Revised Agenda and Action Plan for the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees, and Agroforestry 2020 - 2021](#) or USAID's guide: [West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change \(WA BICC\) Gender Equality and Social Inclusion \(GESI\) Guidelines \(2018\)](#)

To support integration of an intersectional GESI approach, this section offers background information on women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth, pastoralists, migrants and displaced people, and persons with disabilities as significant vulnerable populations who face unique barriers to land tenure security and are leading awareness-raising efforts at the intersection of land rights and sustainable land management. The section features common challenges and case studies as illustrative examples of their leadership. Each of these groups – and other identified vulnerable groups – should be engaged directly in the design and implementation of awareness-raising programming.²⁸

Women

Women are critical actors and allies in the fight against DLDD. While women are disproportionately impacted by climate change and DLDD, they are also uniquely positioned to act because of their role as natural resource managers. Women are particularly likely to invest in soil conservation and sustainable land management when women and men are given equal access to land tenure.³⁰ Human rights principles recognize women's rights to equality, non-discrimination, and participation in decisions that affect their rights. Increasing women's control over land increases their decision-making ability at the household and community levels and boosts their political engagement, increasing their influence as changemakers in advancing LDN and realizing their human rights.

CASE STUDY

In Lao PDR, the Lao Women's Union worked with the World Bank to address poor gender equality performance over the course of a land tenure registration project. To do so, the Women's Union held two gender information sessions in each community served – one with both men and women and another with only women. These trainings focused on rights under the law and benefits of land titles; after the trainings, Women's Union members joined titling brigades at the local level, further addressing the gender disparities seen in the project up to that point.²⁹

Unequal power dynamics between men and women pervade both statutory and customary systems in many societies, negatively affecting women's abilities to access land, practice sustainable land management, and make decisions about land use in their households and communities. Women often experience obstacles to accessing and owning land due to issues such as customary or statutory laws that preference the rights of men, reliance on male relatives for land access and use rights, lack of recognition as farmers or "value-chain" actors, and poor access to new agricultural technologies, seeds, fertilizers, and equipment needed to increase land productivity and yields, all reducing opportunities to make decisions in support of LDN. Lower wages than male counterparts for agricultural labor; unpaid and undervalued work in the home; lower knowledge and awareness of land rights, land degradation, and agricultural extension services; and less access to markets and potential alternative livelihoods all contribute to women having difficulty in accessing land, making LDN investments, and participating in community events equally.

Several sub-groups of women experience additional barriers to land access and tenure. Widows can lose family land access and standing in the community, due to lack legal title or rejection by their deceased husband's family. Similarly, divorced women can lose land and face challenges in caring for children

²⁸ This is not an exhaustive list of vulnerable communities and offers only some dimensions of consideration; local context should be considered in identifying the key vulnerable populations and their specific needs.

²⁹ FAO Governing Technical Guide, 90-91.

³⁰ UNCCD. (2022). [Land Tenure](#). *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Land tenure | UNCCD](#).

without a husband's support. Unmarried women are often landless, lacking equal inheritance rights and expected to access land through marriage. These layered identities impact women's relationships to land.

Gender-responsive, human rights-based approaches must inform efforts to raise awareness on land degradation. Awareness-raising activities should focus on raising (1) women's awareness of land rights, and (2) both women and men's awareness of the community benefits of inclusive land rights to support LDN.

For more resources on this topic, see:

- UNCCD and FAO, Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the UNCCD and Land Degradation Neutrality, forthcoming May 2022.
- UNCCD, "[Turning the Tide: The Gender Factor in Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality](#)," 2017.
- UN Women, Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and IUCN, "[A Manual for Gender-Responsive Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes](#)," September 2019.
- UN Women, "[Toward a Gender-Responsive Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#)", 2018.
- UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought on Women and Men, forthcoming May 2022.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) are frontline environmental stewards and holders of traditional knowledge, practicing LDN techniques across forest, farmland, and rangeland stewardship.³¹ The environmental stewardship and collective land use common among IPLCs can benefit the restoration of land.³² Globally, there are an estimated 370 to 500 million Indigenous Peoples,³³ located in approximately 90 countries across the world.³⁴ Indigenous Peoples and other local communities are a large part of the 2.5 billion people who rely on land and natural resources, but they hold secure, legally recognized tenure rights to only 10% of the land they hold.³⁵ UNDRIP recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples – as a collective or as individuals – to own, use, and control traditional lands, territories, and resources,³⁶ but these internationally recognized rights may not be honored in practice at the

³¹ Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD. (2020). Speech at the Indigenous Peoples' Dialog on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Desertification. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Indigenous peoples' dialog on climate change, biodiversity and desertification | UNCCD](#)

³² Samantha Muller, Steve Hemming, Daryle Rigney. (2019). [Indigenous sovereignties: relational ontologies and environmental management](#). *Geographical Research*. 57(4). 399-410.

³³ United Nations Development Programme. (2019). 10 things to know about indigenous peoples. *UNDP*. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from <https://stories.undp.org/10-things-we-all-should-know-about-indigenous-people>.

³⁴ UN Economic and Social Council 14th Session. (2015). [Twenty-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and beyond: a framework to advance indigenous women's issues](#). *UN Economic and Social Council*. Item 8, 1-17.

³⁵ Peter Veit and Katie Reytar. (2017). By the Numbers: Indigenous and Community Land Rights. *World Resources Institute*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from wri.org/insights/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights

³⁶ UNDRIP, art. 1, 26.

community level where power balances are strongly in favor of government or para-government actors as well as external, extractive actors.

The lack of legal recognition of rights creates and exacerbates unique threats to IPLCs' tenure security, including limited formal recognition of collective or traditional land rights under existing government tenure regimes, external land appropriations such as infrastructure or large-scale extractive projects that can displace communities without recourse or compensation, and violation of rights to free, prior, and informed consent in development projects. State-imposed restrictions on cultural agricultural practices, or mandated practices such as forced monocropping, and imposed sedentarization can undercut long-standing relationships to Indigenous or traditional land and related knowledge of ecology and sustainability. These unsustainable land use decisions contravene both human rights and climate change frameworks at international, regional, and national levels, including those specifically related to responsible land-based investment and acquisition.

CASE STUDY

A 2020 study by UCSD and Columbia University found that full and recognized ownership rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest resulted in a 66% reduction in deforestation, going from about 3% to 1% per year. The collective rights of these Indigenous Peoples require that any economic activity obtain consent from both the tribe and the federal government in order to occur on the land. The study estimates that the new administration's hesitance to grant Indigenous Peoples control of new territories may have resulted in 1.5 million hectares of additional deforestation per year.³⁷

There are an estimated 238 million Indigenous women in the world, according to the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI).³⁸ They can face intersecting forms of discrimination particularly based on sex/gender, race, ethnicity, and other related identity. Lack of legally recognized land rights enables external appropriations that threaten Indigenous women's traditional land-based livelihoods and inequitable gender norms can cut women out of decision-making bodies and venues, leaving them little recourse when expropriation occurs or their rights are otherwise infringed.

For more resources on this topic, see:

- ADB, [Safeguard Policy Statement](#), 2009.
- FAO, [Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems: Insight on Sustainability and Resilience from the Front Lines of Climate Change](#), 2021.
- FAO, [Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples](#), 2015.
- FAO, Technical Guide, [Respecting Free, Prior, and Informed Consent](#), 2014.
- IFAD, [Engagement with Indigenous Peoples Policy](#), 2009.
- Rights and Resources Initiative, [Who Owns the World's Land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights](#), September 2015.
- Scientific Advisory Board of the UN Secretary-General, Policy Brief, [Indigenous and Local Knowledge\(s\) and Science\(s\) for Sustainable Development](#), 5 October 2016.

³⁷ Kathryn Baragwanath and Ella Bayi. (2020). [Collective property rights reduce deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon](#). *PNAS*. 1-8.

³⁸ International Indigenous Women's Forum. (2020). [Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls](#). *FIMI*. 12-13.

Youth

There are 1.8 billion people in the world between the ages of 15 and 35,⁴⁰ many of whom work in agriculture either formally or informally. However, young people consistently experience food and nutrition insecurity in many societies. Further, many youth are overlooking agriculture as a viable livelihoods option. In Asian universities, only 4% of students in 2012 were enrolled in agricultural studies.⁴¹ Evidence suggests that landlessness, land tenure insecurity, and lack of economic opportunities are primary drivers of youth migration away from agricultural livelihoods and rural areas.⁴²

Youth experience limited and unequal land access due to discriminatory customary practices; overreliance on inheritance, which limits choices in terms of timing, size, quality, and location of land; lack of youth inclusion in state land allocation and redistribution programs; undeveloped and costly land rental and sales markets; and exclusion of youth from community-level and national-level land governance bodies, including many farmers' organizations. Youth are more likely to be unbanked, as they cannot open bank accounts or access finance without land in some places, further restricting land access because they cannot afford to buy plots in a land market without credit.⁴³ As degradation, climate change, urbanization, and land-based investment all reduce the amount of arable land, low-income, young women, and unemployed youth are even less likely to have the means to access land. Youth are further driven from the agricultural sector by inadequate access to land information and networks.

Youth have varying experiences in accessing land depending on their gender, marital status, level of education, legal status, and stage in life cycle,⁴⁴ all of which can affect their inclusion in decision-making processes within family, community, and formal institutions. Young women, who often face compounding discrimination due to their gender and related gender norms and who achieve a lower level of education than young men, are at higher risk of having little or no inheritance of land from their families and are often dependent on marriage for land access.

CASE STUDY

In Benin, a study on young people's access to rural land in Borgou region, commissioned by GIZ and carried out by Youth Initiative for Land in Africa (YILAA), conducted surveys of young people's experience of land practices in the region. Respondents reported insecure tenure rights deriving from one powerful local family to difficulties with inheritance or use of family land. One young woman shared that she understood she would have no rights to family land because she was a woman. Yilaa found that the respondents had very little knowledge of their rights under the law.³⁹

For more resources on this topic, see:

- FAO, [Indigenous Youth as Agents of Change: Actions of Indigenous youth in local food systems during times of adversity](#), 2021.

³⁹ Yilaa. (2021). Yilaa découvre les réalités d'accès des jeunes au foncier rural dans le Borgou (Nord du Bénin). Land Portal. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [YILAA à l'atelier sur Les mesures de Gestion Durable des Terres \(GDT\) et d'Adaptation au Changement Climatique \(ACC\) en milieu tropicale. | Land Portal](#)

⁴⁰ UNCCD. (2021). Land and Youth. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [Youth | UNCCD](#)

⁴¹ UNCCD Action Guide 6. (2021) [Engaging Youth in Nature-Positive Food Production](#). *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. 1-9.

⁴² F. Kwame Yeboah et al. (2019). [Youth Access to Land, Migration and Employment Opportunities: Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa](#). IFAD. 1-35.

⁴³ Tizai Mauto. (2022). OPINION: Give land rights to youth to boost rural economies. *Landesa*. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [Give land rights to youth to boost rural economies \(trust.org\)](#)

⁴⁴ IFAD How to Do Note. (2021). [Access to land for rural youth employment and entrepreneurship](#). IFAD. 1-17.

- FAO, Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation & IFAD, [Youth and agriculture: key challenges and concrete solutions](#), 2014.
- IFAD, How to Do Note, [Access to land for rural youth employment and entrepreneurship](#), 2021.
- IFAD, [Rural Youth Action Plan](#), 2018.

Pastoralists

Pastoralists are key managers of rangelands and grasslands, supporting food security, soil health, and local and national economies. Mobile pastoralism is a form of productive and sustainable land management in arid areas.⁴⁶ Pastoralists, including nomadic, semi-nomadic, and agropastoral groups, engage with land differently than settled communities around them, practicing customary and community-based rangeland management in a variety of settings and across broad areas.

Pastoralists face unique challenges in accessing land, particularly in a degraded landscape. As pastoralists rarely have recognized rights over pastures and grazing lands in legal structures that favor sedentary agriculturalists, pastoral access rights are dependent on negotiated, flexible, and reciprocal arrangements with settled communities. Rangeland may span the territories of several settled communities over seasonal migration routes, and shared use rights can be withdrawn unexpectedly as settled communities shift property boundaries or become more exclusionary. Degradation of rangelands and agricultural lands can lead to conflicts with farmers as they compete for increasingly scarce resources, and increased tenure security of farmers can further affect pastoralists, leading to exclusion and disenfranchisement from previous routes if mixed use rights are not firmly established.⁴⁷ Pastoralists are particularly susceptible to the effects of drought, as water access solutions, such as irrigation, are often inviable, and degradation food and water for livestock can lead to starvation. Due to nomadism and discrimination, the needs and capabilities of pastoralists are often overlooked in land use planning at the community level.

Some pastoralists also face ethnic discrimination, as they have different ethnic backgrounds than the settled communities with which they interact. These ethnic tensions can make it even harder for pastoralists and farmers to cooperate on land management and agree on shared use.

CASE STUDY

The Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust worked closely with Maasai communities on Kuku Group Ranch to develop an integrated grazing and rangeland restoration management plan to rebuild the degraded rangeland to the benefit of the environment, livestock, and Maasai community in Kenya. A participatory rangeland restoration project brings together women from the Maasai community to create grass banks for seed production and generate income from selling the grass seeds. The project includes regular community meetings to improve understanding and uptake of the holistic grazing management plan.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust. (2022). Rangeland Restoration: Sustainable Natural Resource Management & Ecosystem Restoration. *Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust*. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [Rangeland Restoration - Kenya Environment Issues - MWCT \(maasaiwilderness.org\)](#)

⁴⁶ Chris Magero, Jonathan Davies, and Razingrim Ouedraogo. (2019). Pastoralism and the Restoration Agenda. *International Union for Conservation of Nature*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Pastoralism and the Restoration Agenda | IUCN](#)

⁴⁷ USAID. Forthcoming. Pastoralism and Nomadism Thematic Analysis, *USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance Task Order*.

Integrating pastoral communities into any discussions on tenure and degradation is important to the success of those ventures as well as the sustainable livelihoods and way of life of those communities. Awareness-raising activities should focus on raising (1) pastoral awareness of land rights solutions, and (2) both pastoral community and settled community awareness of the benefits of inclusive land use planning and land management to support LDN.

For more resources on this topic, see:

- FAO, [Land Degradation Neutrality: A rationale for using participatory approaches to monitor and assess rangeland health](#), 2021.
- FAO, [Pastoralism: Making Variability Work](#), 2021.
- FAO, [Pastoralist Knowledge Hub](#).
- FAO, Technical Guide, [Improving Governance of Pastoral Lands](#), 2016.
- FAO and IUCN, [Crossing Boundaries: Legal and Policy Arrangements for Cross-Border Pastoralism](#), 2018.
- Pastoralist Development Center of Kenya – Turkana Chapter, [Triggering the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure \(VGGT\) in the Context of Oil Extraction in Kenya’s Turkana County, A Case Study](#), April 2018.
- UNCCD and IFAD, [Women Pastoralists: Preserving Traditional Knowledge, Facing Modern Challenges](#), 2007.

Migrants and Displaced People

Migration and displacement can be triggered by conflict, natural disaster, climate change, personal safety issues, economic opportunity or lack thereof, or a range of other factors. Regardless of the reason for movement, migrants and displaced people of all types frequently experience land tenure issues different from the members of settled communities. Secure land tenure can offer displaced people security that their land will still be available to them when it is safe to return. Long-term migrants may be able to use land as financial capital to fund resettlement in a new community. Land users with insecure rights to land can experience land as a shackle, feeling obligated to stay longer than is safe or practical to hold onto that land asset.

An increasing amount of migration and displacement is triggered by land degradation or the effects of climate change on land, making the practice of livelihoods

CASE STUDY

In 2005, NGO Tulele Peisa in Papua New Guinea started the process of relocating several thousand residents of the Carteret Islands and nearby atolls to the larger island of Bourgainville. Their lands had been destroyed by storm-related erosion and saltwater intrusion, making it nearly impossible to make a living off the land or maintain food security. As of 2021, only about 100 residents have resettled on the island of Bourgainville, on land donated by the Catholic diocese. Difficulty persists in finding additional land for relocation, as traditional tenure structures do not easily accommodate migrants and funds to purchase land are limited. Carteret Island women are further disadvantaged as they lose their traditional matrilineal land rights in adjusting to a different culture and land governance structure.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Volker Boege & Ursula Rakova. (2020). [Community Input Improves Climate Change-Induced Resettlement Effort](#), *New Security Beat*; Kalolaine Fainu. (2021). [‘My father will go down like the captain of the Titanic’: life on the Pacific’s disappearing islands](#), *The Guardian*.

impractical or impossible. The World Bank predicts that if no urgent actions are taken, over 140 million people could be internally displaced by climate change by 2050.⁴⁹ In 2017, 13.1 million people were newly displaced by drought.⁵⁰ Some governments offer communities in “managed retreat” new land at a low price or for free as compensation for the land lost.⁵¹

Larger migrant communities are often desperate for access to land and livelihoods opportunities in their host communities, as host communities struggle to absorb the influx of people and labor. Many displaced people also come from a lower-income background, as wealthier migrants can afford to buy land at a premium. Migrants and displaced people are often treated as outsiders, left out of land allocations and decision-making structures because they are expected to be temporary members of the community.

For more resources on this topic, see:

- IOM, [Addressing the Land Degradation – Migration Nexus: The Role of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#), 2018.
- Kimberley Thomas, R. Dean Hardy, Heather Lazrus, Michael Mendez, Ben Orlove, Isabel Rivera-Collazo, J. Timmons Roberts, Marcy Rockman, Benjamin P. Warner, and Robert Winthrop, [Explaining Differential Vulnerability to Climate Change: A Social Science Review](#), Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews. Climate Change 10 (2), 2019.
- UNHCR, [Housing and property restitution in the context of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, final report of the special rapporteur, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro](#), 2005.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities are often overlooked when it comes to land tenure or LDN initiatives, especially when impairments may preclude them from working in agriculture. Yet, people living with disabilities have need for reliable land tenure security as much as others. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires Parties to “take all appropriate and effective measures to ensure the equal right of persons with disabilities to own or inherit property, to control their own financial affairs and to have equal access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, and shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not arbitrarily deprived of their property.”⁵²

Disability rights and land rights are rarely discussed together. This erasure of persons with disabilities is all too common, as the estimated one billion persons with disabilities are among the poorest people in the world, with 80% living in developing nations according to the World Bank.⁵³ Persons with disabilities

⁴⁹ International Organization for Migration and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. (2018). [Addressing the Land Degradation – Migration Nexus: The Role of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#). IOM. 13-14.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 12-13.

⁵¹ Siders, A.R. and Idowu Ajibade. (2021). [Introduction: Managed retreat and environmental justice in a changing climate](#). *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*. 11, 287-293.

⁵² UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 12(5).

⁵³ Nora Ellen Groce, Jillian London, & Michael Ashley Stein. (2014). [Inheritance, Poverty, and Disability](#), *Disability and Society*. (29)10, 1554-1556; The World Bank Brief. (2018). [World Bank Group Commitments on Disability-Inclusive Development](#), *The World Bank*.

experience 50-75% lower employment rates.⁵⁵

Commonly, persons with disabilities are left out of inheritance regimes, as inheriting children are expected to provide for aging parents and persons with disabilities are not expected to be able to fill that role.⁵⁶

Disinheritance has a major impact on the wealth of persons with disabilities, which is compounded by the fact that persons with disabilities have fewer alternatives for livelihoods than others. Persons with disabilities are often left out of decision-making structures, as stigma against disability creates huge barriers, often precluding physical and communication accessibility, which can also be dismissed as too expensive or difficult to include in event planning. Relevant legal frameworks often fail to ensure accessibility and equality for persons with disabilities, making it harder to seek remedies in court. When national legislation does exist, implementation and awareness often fall far behind.

CASE STUDY

As Zambia was finalizing the development of its new National Land Policy in 2015, the Zambia Land Alliance approved Disability Rights Watch to join its network to provide CSO input on the draft land policy, as previous consultations had not had representation of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities invited to the disability sector thematic cluster meeting on the Land Policy were pleased to be recognized as an important constituency and provided valuable input to the draft, and organizations of persons with disabilities played a crucial role in moving the draft forward.⁵⁴

For more resources on this topic, see:

- Nora Ellen Groce, Jillian London, & Michael Ashley Stein, [Inheritance, Poverty, and Disability](#), Disability and Society, Volume 29, 2014.
- Trocaire, [Enhancing Awareness of Land Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Acholi-Land](#), Paper presented during the Northern Uganda Land Platform, June 2017.

⁵⁴ Disability Rights Watch. (2016). DRW Holds Disability Sector Land Policy Consultation. DRW. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [DRW HOLDS DISABILITY SECTOR LAND POLICY CONSULTATION – Disability Rights Watch](#)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Nora Ellen Groce, Jillian London, & Michael Ashley Stein, 1557-1558.



Awareness-Raising Action Tracks

The steps below guide stakeholders in developing their own awareness-raising action track appropriate for their context, priorities, resources, and target audiences. Throughout design and implementation of awareness-raising plans and activities, an intersectional gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approach should be integrated in reaching target audiences and identifying local partners. To ensure effectiveness and to fulfill human rights of participation, members of vulnerable groups should be represented in design and implementation of all activities.

STEP 1: Draft an action plan - Stakeholders evaluate their national context and review awareness-raising activity options to build their own awareness-raising action plan or employ the stakeholder guides that prioritize activities according to six stakeholder groups' resources, expertise, and networks.

STEP 2: Identify and partner with target audiences - Stakeholders identify their target audiences and use a gender equality and social inclusion approach to tailor the design of awareness-raising activities to reach those audiences.

STEP 3: Adopt key messaging - Stakeholders select high-level messaging options or draft their own context-specific messaging to raise awareness on the most salient issues at the nexus of land tenure and degradation.

STEP 4: Evaluate success, learn, and adapt - Stakeholders develop a plan to monitor the efficacy of their awareness-raising activities and integrate learnings into their ongoing activities.

STEP 1: Draft an Action Plan

The selection of any option or combination of awareness-raising options should be informed by a foundational understanding of a) the challenges to and opportunities for implementing inclusive tenure and national objectives for land degradation neutrality as well as b) how a diverse set of stakeholders can contribute to both sets of objectives in an integrated way within a given national context. This need for contextual and collaborative analysis is illustrated by Options 1 and 2 below, which can be seen as “foundational” or “context-setting” awareness-raising activities. These activities will also help determine the scale and scope of other awareness-raising activities, and support analysis of how other activities can address land tenure and degradation challenges.

The following options focus on identifying the context-specific land tenure and governance issues related to DLDD through consultative processes; engaging and mobilizing key stakeholders to become champions of land rights and LDN, acting as catalysts for further awareness-raising; and amplifying high-level messages to a wide audience, increasing the baseline level of awareness on these issues. A decision tree follows the options to offer examples of how to approach and combine options, and specific stakeholder guides complete the section with recommended options for different types of stakeholders.

Option 1: Host virtual and in-person consultative convenings, public meetings, or online forums to gather testimony and learn about the issues. In a high-level government context as well as with community members on the ground, gather stakeholders to identify the key intersections between land tenure and DLDD and discuss solutions. Participants and speakers should represent diverse perspectives and can be asked to carry forward awareness-raising activities after the convenings. At the local level, a series of public meetings can remove geographic, financial, and time barriers to participation. To advance inclusion, organizers should explore and offer services that may increase participation of different groups, particularly those most vulnerable. Such services may include interpretation, transportation, childcare services, varying meeting times and locations, and separate meetings for different groups based on age, gender, class, or ethnicity, where appropriate. Organizers should make it explicit that all members of the community should be included and specifically name vulnerable groups (youth, women, etc.).

Option 2: Commission journal issues, reports, or studies to better understand the nexus of land tenure and DLDD in your context. Expanding the body of resources at this nexus can help raise awareness, build networks across sectors, and provide background for future awareness-raising and knowledge-building activities. To advance inclusion, organizers should prioritize inclusion of researchers, report writers, and reviewers from vulnerable communities and across a variety of sectors (governments, civil society, academia). In determining study focus areas, organizers should ensure participation of vulnerable populations in any surveys, key informant interviews, or focus group discussions, and should include Indigenous evidence and data.

Option 3: Leverage existing global frameworks on environmental sustainability, sustainable development, and human rights addressing tenure to advance awareness-raising. Global frameworks and initiatives such as VGGT, Glasgow Leader’s Declaration, the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and others have established structures that should be included as awareness-raising stakeholders (e.g., National Human Rights Institutions, Central Statistical Organizations), as well as existing awareness-

raising efforts, champions, initiatives (e.g., Great Green Wall), and funding priorities at all levels of government and society. Increased intersectoral collaboration and sharing of regulations, strategies, and commitments can increase knowledge of aspects relating to land and DLDD at all levels of government. Building on these efforts to advance awareness of the relationship between land tenure and DLDD avoids duplication of resources and leverages existing momentum.

Option 4: Create a diverse task force to organize awareness-raising activities, draft commitments for organizations or individuals to endorse, and recognize exceptional actors' commitments to the cause.

With representation of vulnerable groups, a task force can identify priority issues, offer predictable and consistent collaboration opportunities, and organize around clear goals, activities, and funding. Drafting a set of commitments and mobilizing others to endorse the commitments raises awareness among signatories and strengthens existing networks of awareness-raising actors. Partners from vulnerable populations should participate in drafting the commitments. Offering awards for exceptional awareness-raising activities can motivate and inspire action by local government officials, civil society groups, or communities. Awards could include formal recognition, a medal, or financial compensation.

Option 5: Create a resource-sharing hub or multi-stakeholder platform for champions committed to strengthening tenure security.

A central hub to gather action calls, host awareness-raising resources, and provide background materials to expand the knowledge and buy-in of champions can help to galvanize and organize awareness-raising. A sophisticated platform could include opportunities for exchange between platform users and should adhere to open data and accessibility requirements, including an open license and material availability in a machine-readable format as well as providing information in formats that are accessible and inclusive. Stakeholders from diverse backgrounds should be consulted in developing the hub, and media, including offline media, commonly used by vulnerable groups should be prioritized.

Option 6: Provide awareness-raising opportunities for land and agriculture specialists.

Offering training courses for local land and agriculture specialists on the tenure-degradation nexus can build awareness and buy-in at the community service provision level. Building a cohort of subject matter experts can create a network for collaboration and expanded awareness-raising within specialists' professional communities. In developing the training course, organizers should consider potential barriers to consideration, such as cost, location, or language. Organizers should also provide specific supports for participants from vulnerable groups to serve as land and agricultural specialists – offering women specific training, for example, as they may be generally underrepresented in these fields. Women may also require childcare assistance or may face the risk of gender-based violence if they seek to participate in service provision in rural areas. Similar analysis for youth, ethnic minorities, or persons with disabilities will support better representation of vulnerable groups among service providers, and in turn better delivery of services for members of vulnerable groups.

Option 7: Develop social/print media campaign materials in partnership with communities and engage media through coordinated publications campaign.

One way to engage communities in developing campaign materials is to host a contest to develop awareness-raising campaign materials, which can create valuable resources while also drawing attention to the underlying issues and consulting with vulnerable populations on what messaging is most meaningful to them. Winning materials could be posted locally, used for social media campaigns, or submitted to local media. The contest could engage artists, communications professionals, or students. Coordinated release of reports,

press releases, social media campaigns, and other media coverage – particularly when tied to a specific event – can reach a wide public audience. Concentrating media coverage over a short period of time can generate buzz, helping to reach additional members of the public who may not have come in contact with any of the media coverage previously.

Option 8: Host a webinar, podcast series, radio skits, or TV dramas to be adapted to local contexts. Organizing a webinar or podcast series develops a regular group of dedicated and interested attendees/listeners and to increase viewing numbers over time as the series is publicized. Recordings and transcripts should be made available to accommodate viewer/listener schedules and offer opportunity to review more technical elements later. Entertainment that includes light education and awareness-raising can be effective in reaching a wide audience. This audience is likely to be different from the actors who seek out awareness-raising opportunities, widening the reach of these awareness-raising efforts. Radio programming and TV dramas can also be developed to engage children, which can lead to awareness-raising with their parents and an informed generation of future leaders. To advance inclusion, programming should be provided in all relevant languages and tailored to different cultural contexts, providing positive representation of rural and vulnerable groups. In the design of all programming that uses technology, organizers should take into account gendered access and access for vulnerable groups other than women; within rural communities especially, women often have less access than men to mobile phones and radios in particular. Overcoming inequalities of access may require designing community theater, as well as other forms of programming that specifically take into account the limitations of access for vulnerable groups.

The **Decision Tree** below provides examples of how stakeholders may combine awareness-raising options for greater impact. As stakeholders draft an action plan for awareness-raising, they can adapt and expand on the following awareness-raising options, building specialized action plans based on these proposed activities. Successful impact for each of these activities, and for awareness-raising efforts, depend on collaboration and cooperation between a range of stakeholders, using the comparative advantage of unique networks and skillsets to address the gap in awareness around land tenure and degradation. Knowledge exchange among stakeholder networks and south-south learning will advance the efficacy of awareness-raising efforts.

Decision Tree

- Not sure where to start? Go through the **questions** and **answers** in this decision tree.

Have you gathered or supported contextual analysis of the nexus between land degradation and tenure issues in your specific context?

- **Consider** options 1 and 2. See also this paper's "Background" to learn more.
- **Once you have identified key challenges and opportunities**, consider options 3-8.
- **To leverage your own expertise on land tenure or the expertise of someone in your network** that would be useful to a wide-ranging audience, consider options 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8.
- **See also "STEP 3: Adopt key messaging"** to learn more.

What type of audience are you trying to reach?

- **If you seek to raise awareness amongst multilateral actors or national government officials**, consider options 1-5 and 8.
- **If you seek to raise awareness amongst subnational or local actors**, consider options 1 and 4-8.
- **See also "STEP 2: Identify and partner with target audiences"** to learn more.

What kind of resources do you have to commit to awareness-raising?

- **If you have significant funding to commit**, consider options 1, 2, 5, 6, and 8.
- **If your budget is limited**, consider options 1, 3, 4, and 7.

How much time do you have to devote to awareness-raising activities?

- **If you have significant time to invest in awareness-raising**, consider options 2, 4-6, and 8.
- **If you are limited in time**, consider options 1, 3, and 7.

Are you familiar with awareness-raising campaigns?

- **If you have experience leading awareness-raising campaigns**, choose the options most like your previous campaigns. Note that it will take extensive, overlapping activities to raise awareness of all target groups.
- **If you have communications or media expertise**, but have never conducted an awareness-raising campaign, consider options 1, 4, and 7.
- **If you are unfamiliar with awareness-raising campaigns**, consider options 1 and 3 to gather resources for future activities.

Do you identify as member of any of the following groups: Parties to the UNCCD, UN bodies and international organizations, development partners, subnational or local governments, civil society organizations, or the private sector?

- **If yes**, see the stakeholder-specific guides on the following pages that feature suggestions on which options may suit your resources, networks, and areas of expertise.

Stakeholder-Specific Guides

Stakeholder-specific guides are suggested for key stakeholder groups to provide engagement opportunities at all levels of governance and points of entry. For each of these stakeholder groups, this section includes a guide that identifies key awareness-raising activities for that stakeholder group and suggests strategic considerations in carrying out those activities.

Parties of the UNCCD

Specific awareness-raising options for Parties to consider include:

Host a consultative convening with national-level stakeholders from diverse ministries and sectors to discuss links between land tenure and land degradation. See Option 1.

Parties can organize a national-level convening of key stakeholders within government, private sector, and civil society, who are working on issues adjacent to DLDD. For example, ministers and experts on land, the environment, human rights, gender, labor, and finance could provide diverse, complementary perspectives on the linkages between land tenure and LDN and what awareness-raising strategies would be most effective in their networks. The meetings can include an educational component to raise awareness on the relationship between responsible land governance and LDN then engage stakeholders in exchanging ideas for further awareness-raising in the national context and identify key challenges and opportunities for reaching vulnerable populations.

Hosting a convening presents an opportunity to identify entry points for action within the national context, mobilize champions, and coordinate approaches across several sectors. It is particularly valuable for aligning diverse ministries' priorities and coordinating resources toward a shared goal. To ensure that discussions lead to further awareness-raising action, convenings should include target- and commitment-setting by participants to continue awareness-raising activities beyond the convening.

Leverage existing global frameworks on environmental sustainability, sustainable development, and human rights to advance awareness-raising on land tenure. See Option 3.

Parties can coordinate with other national-level actors engaged in activities related to the Rio Conventions, Sustainable Development Goals, FAO-supported Multi-Stakeholder Platforms on land governance, and human rights frameworks to identify common goals on land tenure and LDN. In

CASE STUDY

In Mongolia in 2019, the Ministry of Nature, Environment, and Tourism and the Ministry of Food and Light Industry created a multi-stakeholder platform focused on the cashmere sector as part of UNDP Green Commodities' Programme, bringing together 100 stakeholders across the sustainable cashmere value chain in an initial conference. In addition to civil society, government, and local private sector actors, representatives from Gucci, H&M, and the NGO Textile Exchange participated.⁵⁷ The objective of the resulting platform is to build capacity through the implementation of sustainable pastureland and forest management, reducing degradation and desertification and protecting biodiversity and improving ecosystem services. The multi-stakeholder platform also seeks to provide a platform for exchange of information and knowledge between stakeholders.

⁵⁷ UNDP & Mongolian Sustainable Cashmere Platform. (2019). Background. *Sustainable Cashmere Platform*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Background \(sustainablecashmereplatform.com\)](https://sustainablecashmereplatform.com/Background)

meetings with key actors responsible for implementing and reporting on related global frameworks, Parties can raise these actors' awareness on the importance of land tenure security as a tool for addressing land degradation and plan for joint programming on awareness-raising.

Existing meetings and processes for reporting and updating national commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, LDN targets, Nationally Determined Contributions, and human rights treaty monitoring bodies (as well as National Human Rights Institutions) can present an opportunity to raise awareness and align messaging among key national actors working to advance similar environmental priorities. This messaging can filter out to other levels of governance as these key national commitments are shared and discussed.

Parties can also draw on global resources from these frameworks to plan for additional awareness-raising activities. For example, national government actors can elect to host a side event at a Rio Convention COP, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), SDG High Level Political Forum, or other international conferences to feature the linkages between LDN and land tenure they are seeing in their national context and projects.

Leveraging existing global frameworks presents an opportunity to generate buy-in from impactful actors in the national and global space, increasing the likelihood of future integrated interventions on land tenure and degradation. This option offers Parties an often-rare chance to collaborate substantively with other sectors, decreasing the chance of conflicting messaging or activities. It also facilitates adherence to international human rights standards in the pursuit of LDN and land tenure awareness-raising, supporting the inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups.

Create a diverse task force of government and civil society organization (CSO) actors to carry out awareness-raising activities and allocate resources. See Option 4.

Parties can draw on the network of participants in the national-level convenings (Option 1) and the global frameworks coordination (Option 3) to identify and establish a diverse task force of motivated and engaged actors committed to undertaking awareness-raising activities across the country. Parties can offer national context-specific messaging, tools, and priorities to focus the efforts of the task force.

Through grants and prize competitions, Parties can allocate resources to promising actors that have identified specific awareness-raising strategies that reach target populations. With representatives from vulnerable groups and various geographies, the task force can decide what awareness-raising issues and strategies are most relevant to their target populations and can allocate resources accordingly. The task force can have a dual approach of creating educational resources to support awareness-raising efforts and coordinating financial and logistical support of awareness-raising activities.

A focused task force can support the Parties in coordinating large-scale awareness-raising efforts and offer alternative perspectives on how best to engage the public on this issue. Task force establishment should include clear goals, financial resources, and duties for task force members to ensure effective implementation of awareness-raising plans.

CASE STUDY

In Liberia in 2019, Landesa helped to coordinate the development of a cohesive set of messages (validated by the Liberia Land Authority) for use by civil society organizations across the country to raise community awareness of the recent land reforms. This coordination helped to ensure that consistent and accurate information reached communities about the new processes for customary land formalization and other rights and responsibilities under the new legal framework.

UN bodies and international organizations

UN bodies and international organizations are most likely to succeed in coordinating global efforts to raise awareness, with options including:

Leverage existing global frameworks on environmental sustainability, sustainable development, and human rights to advance awareness-raising by including and elevating land tenure targets within Parties' commitments. See Option 3.

By coordinating across global frameworks and agendas, UN bodies can elevate land tenure and responsible land governance as a tool for advancing a variety of UN priorities related to environmental sustainability, sustainable development, and human rights. Many UN bodies already include gender-equitable and socially inclusive land rights as a target or indicator for Parties to track and report, particularly including the SDGs. These UN agencies and organizations could share best practices and lessons learned with colleagues in adjacent agencies and organizations on the relationship between land tenure and LDN. This information exchange and awareness-raising could take the shape of new partnerships, regular meetings, or consultative sessions to discuss the role of land tenure in achieving global goals. In addition to advancing global goals, UN bodies will benefit from an increase in national reporting and tracking of metrics, because resource-strained governments may be able to focus their energies on fewer, aligned goals across frameworks.

CASE STUDY

UN Institute for Training and Research has partnered with UNEP to create a 3-hour self-paced course providing a general introduction to the relationship between human rights and the environment. The course includes exercises and tests to engage the participant. Course participants are eligible for a certificate of completion. The course was designed to add to the information already available on the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA) platform, which hosts information on treaties, parties, relevant law and cases, events, a glossary of terms, goals, and documents and literature as well as courses on biological diversity, chemicals and waste, climate and atmosphere, environmental governance, marine and freshwater, and land and agriculture. Through InforMEA, interested parties can get a diploma on international environmental law and governance.

Provide awareness-raising courses for land and agriculture specialists within several target groups. See Option 6.

Many UN bodies and international organizations have relevant knowledge, experience, and background to develop series of high-quality training modules on the intersections of land tenure security and LDN. Target groups for these trainings could include journalists, civil society and NGO leaders, government officials, and private sector agricultural extension workers. The courses could start as pilots and then expand to reach target audiences directly or incorporate a second phase with a train-the-trainer approach for reaching broader audiences.

Focusing a training course on the technical aspects and impacts of secure tenure on land degradation, soil quality, agricultural production, and other agricultural extension issues could help to activate land and agriculture specialists. These land and agriculture specialists could be private sector workers, local government employees, or even national-level agricultural extension planners who could shift intervention priorities to focus on tenure issues. Laying out high-level issues in a short course for journalists and civil society actors could help to promote more nuanced and educated reporting and programming on this issue, helping to dispel myths around land degradation and promote sustainable land management.

Engage media through a coordinated publications campaign around the UNCCD, UNFCCC, and CBD COPs, or other related events. See Option 7.

The Rio Conventions can raise the profile of this topic through a press campaign around upcoming COPs or other related events. Releasing the Technical Guide on the integration of the VGGT into the UNCCD and LDN, tools for awareness-raising, and articles about the importance of land tenure security to the success of LDN efforts could help to focus the attention of not only COP participants but also followers of the event and related topics within media.

Coordinated release of reports, press releases, social media campaigns, and other media coverage – particularly when tied to a specific event – can reach a wider audience of the general public than other, more targeted approaches. Concentrating media coverage into a short period of time can generate buzz, helping to reach additional members of the general public who may not have come in contact with any of the media coverage on their own. Other relevant events for coordinated campaigns include international days such as International Women’s Day on March 8th or the Desertification and Drought Day on June 17th.

Development partners

Development partners can also expand awareness through several activities focused on existing connections and global visibility. Development partners are most likely to be successful with high-level, high-impact options, including:

Commission journal issues, reports, or studies to better understand the nexus of land tenure and DLDD, elevate the profile of these issues, and hone strategic funding priorities. See Option 2.

Expanding the body of resources can help to raise the profile of land tenure issues and lend further legitimacy to the efforts of awareness-raising by deepening the underlying evidence.

Specifically, development partners could commission the publication of a journal issue focused on land tenure and LDN in a development-focused journal, such as *Land*, *Land Degradation and Development*, *Journal of Land and Rural Studies*, and *Land Tenure Journal*; coordinate and publish a joint editorial report with diverse stakeholders weighing in on the issues of land tenure and LDN; or commission a study on the awareness-raising activities related to this initiative and publish the results widely, including a section on best practices for further awareness-raising efforts.

Any of these publications would benefit from the dialogue between the various stakeholders involved in LDN. Coordinating contributions from diverse actors will also increase the reach of the publications, as different communities follow the work of various actors and can be persuaded by distinct arguments and evidence.

Fund and support the creation of a global resource-sharing hub or national multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) for champions committed to these issues. See Option 5.

In partnership with the UNCCD or national governments, and in consultation with established partners in government, the private sector, and civil society, development partners can support the creation of a resource-sharing hub or multiple hubs for LDN champions to share resources and best practices for awareness-raising. Development partners are well-suited to this role due to their global reach, secure funding, and existing skills that can help to make an online venue for knowledge exchange successful.

Resource sharing and coordination mechanisms could be developed at the global level to share common resources across geographies, or it could be organized at the national level to focus on building stronger coordination between national actors. In the global scenario, development partners could bring together key stakeholders from their networks and partner with UNCCD to create shared resources and opportunities for exchange. In the national scenario, development partners could assist several governments in the launch of similar platforms, building on learnings of existing MSPs to develop an efficient and effective platform for knowledge exchange between actors playing intersecting roles in sustainable land management. This approach could be particularly useful for regional, trans-border, or landscape-level coordination between multiple national or sub-national governments, civil society, and private sector actors.

This option offers development partners a crucial role in the coordination and synchronization of many, disparate awareness-raising efforts. Gathering resources and key stakeholders together can provide a much-needed source of organization and opportunity for collaboration.

Host a webinar or podcast series for the general public or grantees working on issues adjacent to land tenure and LDN. See Option 8.

Development partners can activate their broad networks of experts and partners for guest speaking, webinar/podcast promotion, and further learning opportunities. Development partners could organize these sessions independently or in partnership with stakeholders who have previously carried out similar activities.

The webinar/podcast could cover a series of in-depth topics related to land tenure security and LDN, focusing the viewers/listeners with action calls, stories from the field, and related insights. In addition to managing the content, organizers will need to focus on ways to reach target audiences.

CASE STUDY

IFAD's Farms. Food. Future. is a monthly podcast focused on raising awareness on the challenges that smallholder farmers face around food security. The podcast interviews IFAD experts, partners, donors, celebrities, and farmers to get a broad perspective on the relevant issues. Topics include climate change, environmental sustainability, gender, youth, nutrition, and Indigenous Peoples' rights. To increase learning opportunities, the podcast episode pages provide links to related content on the IFAD website.⁵⁸

Subnational and local government

Some of the many awareness-raising options open to subnational and local government actors include:

Convene public meetings to gather testimony and share experiences with local land stewards on how tenure insecurity and DLDD affect them and their local environment. See Option 1.

Subnational and local government actors can draw on their community contacts to convene a public meeting, presenting an opportunity for community members and local civil society leaders to learn about the intersection between land tenure and DLDD and to share their experiences with related issues. Public meetings can help to build trust between government and communities as the

⁵⁸ IFAD. (2022). Farms. Food. Future. podcast. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Farms. Food. Future. IFAD's monthly podcast | IFAD](#)

government organizers can publish a report on the testimony given during the session, highlighting the challenges and needs of the participants.

Subnational or local government actors should convene similar meetings in different areas throughout their jurisdictions, ensuring that many stewards have an opportunity to weigh in on the issues and learn about the nexus of tenure and LDN. This can help to build a foundation upon which to design and implement future interventions on tenure and degradation.

Recognize one or more local communities for efforts to decrease DLDD by presenting them with awards. See Option 4.

As follow-up to the meetings convened in Option 1, subnational or local government officials could offer an award to communities that achieve and maintain a high level of awareness on these issues and begin to change behaviors to address some of the drivers of DLDD in their area. Drawing attention to this change can demonstrate to others what is possible, potentially spurring new ideas for innovation. To further benefit awareness-raising, the press coverage of the award and the underlying efforts to combat DLDD will help to raise awareness beyond the communities engaged in the initial awareness-raising efforts. This option will help to solidify the awareness of meeting participants, spread awareness to others within their communities, build better relationships between government actors and communities, and raise levels of awareness on a larger scale through press coverage of the award.

Host a contest to develop social/print media campaign materials to be deployed at the local or national scale. See Option 7.

Local government officials are well-poised to launch a contest to develop materials on the intersection between land tenure and LDN for broader awareness-raising campaigns given their leadership and decision-making role in local communities. The context could be formatted in a number of ways, including as a classroom-based activity for youth to learn about land tenure and LDN and develop a related piece of art or print media or a competition between professional graphic designers or artists. Judges could be subnational government officials or relevant local business leaders, and prizes could include cash, a certificate, or another culturally relevant recognition.

Contests can serve to both raise the awareness of participants in the contest as well as the viewers of the materials once they're selected and disseminated in the community. Recognition by local or subnational government bodies could bring pride to the participants in the contest and help to build stronger connections between communities and government officials.

CASE STUDY

In the United States, Cabarrus County Soil and Water Conservation District, a local district in the state of North Carolina, won an award for Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts' Conservation Education District of the Year for exemplary outreach to the community. Local teachers also received the honors of Secondary Conservation Teacher of the Year and N.C. Soil and Water District Hall of Famer. The Cabarrus Soil and Water Conservation District averages roughly 4,000 yearly interactions with students and parents, with more than 7,000 interactions in 2020. Courses range from preschool to 12th grade as well as offering professional development opportunities.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Cabarrus County. (2022). Cabarrus Soil and Water Conservation District earns state awards. *Cabarrus County, America Thrives Here*. Retrieved on 18 March 2022 from [Cabarrus County](#)

Civil society organizations

CSOs are well-positioned to advance many of the awareness-raising options, in particular:

Draft commitments for organizations or individuals to endorse as an awareness-raising tool at all levels of governance. See Option 4.

Signing onto specific commitments to raise awareness on the importance of land tenure security to LDN can help clarify the roles and responsibilities of various actors. These commitments can then be drawn on to ensure that they are being carried out. Civil society organizations can work together to draft the commitments, consulting with vulnerable groups and other stakeholder groups. Commitments could go beyond awareness-raising efforts but should incorporate awareness-raising as a key objective.

Civil society organizers should be as inclusive as possible, reaching out to all relevant stakeholders within their target area. Drawing in as many stakeholders as possible will offer both opportunities to raise the awareness of the signatories and also to show the widespread buy-in to the urgent solution of land tenure security as a tool to address land degradation, furthering interest in these issues.

CASE STUDY

The International Land Coalition, a network of over 300 civil society and intergovernmental organizations working to put people at the center of land governance, seeks to draw together support for land rights issues through a variety of initiatives, including the Land Rights Now campaign. The Land Rights Now campaign was launched in 2016 in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and local communities seeking to secure their land rights. Since then, the campaign has mobilized over 800 organizations and over 40,000 individuals from around the world to join the movement calling for the doubling of global area of land legally recognized as owned by IPLCs. The campaign's online platform includes background information, campaign materials to support further mobilization, opportunities to get involved, and news articles covering related topics.

Engage media through coordinated publicity campaigns and existing events. See Option 7.

Civil society organizations are strong mobilizers, making them good candidates for a coordinated publicity campaign. In this option, civil society, in coordination with UNCCD or other partners, will organize a day or week of coordinated messaging, social media campaigns, local programming, and media outreach to draw attention to the issue of land tenure security as a solution to DLDD. An organizing committee would coordinate the media outreach and high-level messaging, encouraging other groups to build on the shared ideas to go further with their awareness-raising outreach.

This option could be carried out on a transnational, national, or subnational level, with benefits to each. Linking to local holidays or festivals, CSOs could coordinate activities in person, increasing the likelihood of local participation and engagement. National groups could capture the media attention of the country and identify issues for government and private sector stakeholders by tying issues to national commitments. Transnational efforts could provide higher levels of media attention, a sense of global community, and likely stronger financial support by linking to Rio Convention COPs or other conferences.

Produce radio skits or TV dramas to be adapted to local contexts given awareness of challenges faced by populations served by civil society. See Option 8.

CSOs are well-positioned to produce radio skits or TV dramas, as they are often well-versed in media engagement and can produce high-quality content rooted in community knowledge and advocacy savvy.

Many CSOs are also able to work directly with communities to develop skits that are relevant to their cultures and can offer a fun way to help deepen community understanding of the issues at play.

These platforms reach and engage broad audiences. Radio has a deep reach in rural communities around the world. As an oral medium, it is also more inclusive than some other options. TV dramas can similarly reach broader audiences, offering entertainment alongside awareness.

Creating content specifically for children can start conversations between children and their parents and guardians on the linkages between land rights and LDN. Beginning awareness-raising at a young age builds an informed generation of future leaders in the sustainable land management sphere.

Private sector

Specific awareness-raising options for private sector actors to consider include:

Host or sponsor a virtual or in-person consultative convening focused on supply chain-specific interests regarding land tenure and land degradation. See Option 1.

Private sector actors can host a consultative convening of peers and partners engaged in relevant supply chains at the national or transnational level. The convening's sessions can raise awareness of land tenure and land degradation issues affecting the selected supply chains and focus on quantifying the costs to businesses of not addressing these intersecting issues and identifying land governance priorities for future exploration and discussion. Convenings can include target- and commitment-setting by participants to explore land tenure solutions to degradation further within their fields, focusing on the importance of a GESI approach in all efforts. To support further awareness-raising, convenings should offer resources for private sector actors to share with their existing farmer and value chain networks to continue awareness-raising activities beyond the convening, including about the business costs of land tenure insecurity and land degradation.

Hosting a convening offers leaders within the private sector an opportunity to identify sector-wide approaches to raising awareness of and addressing land tenure impacts on land degradation. Land degradation and tenure insecurity have negative impacts on agricultural productivity, which can reduce product availability and increase costs throughout the supply chain. Desire to minimize this risk may incentivize private sector actors to address these issues. Private sector actors bring a unique perspective and network to the issues of tenure and degradation, and their involvement in future initiatives to address tenure insecurity and land degradation could be invaluable to the success of such efforts.

Draft commitments regarding best practices for responsible investments for private sector partners to endorse. See Option 4.

Given identified priorities around land tenure and land degradation, private sector actors can organize partnerships in their industry to commit to best practices to promote LDN and responsible land governance. Private sector actors can draw on experience in their working environments to identify the negative impacts of tenure insecurity and degradation on agricultural productivity, quality, and adaptability. For assistance in drafting the commitments, private sector actors can partner with other companies within their sector, trade organizations, government actors, or CSOs working at the intersection of these issues.

By developing commitments with a range of private sector (and other) stakeholders, private sector actors can generate buy-in, building momentum and awareness of the issue. For actors hesitant to sign on to commitments, a public-facing commitment by peer companies can offer both peer pressure and a sense of community, understanding that others will be adapting practices and benefiting in parallel tracks. Public awareness of the commitments and the signatories can increase the visibility of the root issues and provide signatories with good press as they commit to helping farmers to combat land degradation.

Provide awareness-raising events for local land and agriculture specialists engaged in relevant supply chains. See Option 6.

Private sector actors can engage local actors in understanding the connections between responsible land governance and LDN by organizing awareness-raising events in communities within their supply chain. These meetings and events can raise the awareness of community-level skilled workers who either work directly for the private sector actor or work in a related sphere and express interest in the topics of tenure security and LDN. The private sector actor can sponsor the events and provide agronomy-related technical expertise to participants through webinars or in-person community engagement, partnering with experts on land tenure and degradation. Content for the trainings can be produced in collaboration with local leaders to increase relevance, legitimacy, and coordination for participants.

The private sector stands to gain from producing educated workers who understand the benefits of tenure security and LDN to both the community and business. If there is high demand for the events, candidates from local communities and vulnerable groups should be prioritized for participation. To promote active participation and learning, organizers can offer a completion certificate or a compensation incentive for participants. As participants finish the course, they may become champions for the role of land tenure security as a solution to land degradation, carrying out further awareness-raising in communities with which they work and live.

CASE STUDY

At UNCCD COP14, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), a CEO-led organization of over 200 international companies, led a multi-stakeholder consultative process during UNCCD Business Day on Soil, Land, and Agriculture. Following the consultation, WBCSD announced the UNCCD Delhi Declaration from Business, a call to action highlighting the need for businesses to work toward LDN and drought resilience. While the Declaration does not list signatories, it asks businesses to voice support to the Declaration and the priorities therein.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ WBCSD. (2019). [The UNCCD Delhi Declaration from Business](#). WBCSD. 1-5.

STEP 2: Identify and Partner with Target Audiences

In developing an action plan, stakeholders must first consider who they are trying to reach with their awareness-raising efforts before they can craft specific messages tailored to that audience. After selecting which options are best suited to the organizer's strengths and resources, identifying the target audiences for the awareness-raising activities can help the organizers to select key partners from within those communities to help develop messaging and carry out context-sensitive activities.

Target audiences for this awareness-raising effort can range from international and national actors to private sector to rural communities – these audiences are all valuable actors to engage in awareness-raising efforts to reduce and reverse land degradation. However, certain sub-populations within these target audiences can be particularly difficult to reach with generic awareness-raising activities, disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of land tenure insecurity and land degradation, and critically important to the success of future efforts to address the underlying issues of land tenure insecurity and land degradation.

Accordingly, applying a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approach is key to success as vulnerable populations are important actors in natural resource management, and as their rights are most at stake. Utilizing a GESI approach and partnering with vulnerable groups can determine the effectiveness of messaging, awareness-raising actions, and follow-up interventions for the populations engaged.

Some of the populations most vulnerable to the effects of tenure insecurity and land degradation are key actors in LDN, holding traditional knowledge, customs, and values of sustainable futures that are important drivers of conservation and regeneration. Yet the vulnerable populations that do not have specific or obvious beneficial impacts on land degradation neutrality are no less important to include in any land tenure awareness-raising efforts and future related interventions. All vulnerable populations are at risk of compounded marginalization if land tenure interventions further entrench the relative tenure security of more dominant groups. As such, an inclusive approach is essential to not cause further harm in these populations.

Checklist for Creating an Inclusive Environment

In creating an inclusive environment that encourages the participation of vulnerable populations in awareness-raising activities, there are several things to consider in designing an activity:

- ✓ Provide meaningful opportunities for broad participation and input in all activities, inviting participation from different sub-groups in large group settings.
- ✓ Create separate spaces to engage vulnerable communities that may not be comfortable participating in a large group setting.
- ✓ Design materials specifically focused on the issues most important to vulnerable groups.
- ✓ Bring together disparate communities and discuss how they can work together on land tenure and LDN.
- ✓ Partner with minority-led and minority-focused groups in creating and carrying out awareness-raising, through funding their own initiatives or co-designing events.

- ✓ Include representatives of vulnerable populations and minority groups in design and planning of awareness-raising activities.
- ✓ Ensure that information is available in all relevant languages and that mobility and accessibility support is provided when needed.
- ✓ For in person events, select a time and location that is convenient for marginalized populations that may have specific household responsibilities, such as child- or eldercare.
- ✓ Consider inclusion of organizations focused on the rights of vulnerable populations when planning invite lists in addition to entities focused on land tenure or land degradation.
- ✓ Ensure that the inclusion and interests of various sub-categories of vulnerable groups are considered in messaging and planning.
- ✓ Raise awareness on the unique situations of vulnerable groups in all activities to educate the wider population and elevate the voices of minorities.

STEP 3: Adopt Key Messaging

Key Message Themes

Policymakers and implementers at all levels (national, regional, and local) have a role to play in raising awareness about the importance of securing equal land tenure rights in order to achieve land degradation neutrality. This can be achieved by highlighting the following key messages:

- ✓ **Secure land tenure rights encourage sustainable land investments and good land stewardship.**
 - Land tenure security provides long-term assurance of landholdings and can stimulate large-scale investments in land degradation neutrality (LDN) and restoration.
 - Land stewards are more likely to invest in sustainable land management if their rights are secure.
 - Those who hold land securely are able and motivated to invest in resource conservation practices with a view to promoting the long-term health and productivity of the land and without fear that their land may be unjustly taken or encroached upon.
- ✓ **Secure tenure provides a foundation for lasting solutions for life on land.**
 - Improving tenure security can provide multiple benefits in terms of poverty reduction, food security, women's empowerment, and avoiding resource conflicts.
 - 2.5 billion rural people derive their livelihoods from agriculture and natural resources, but many have weak tenure rights.
 - Strengthened tenure can encourage action against further degradation and reverse past degradation, building community resilience to climate and environmental change.
- ✓ **Placing inclusive land rights at the center of efforts to combat land degradation will enable countries and communities to set the course for a more sustainable planet where all can thrive.**
 - Legal protection and recognition of the land rights of vulnerable groups – including women, youth, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and local communities – are important to safeguarding rights and motivating sustainable land use and management.
 - Achieving equality in land rights requires a combination of actions, including legal reform and awareness-raising to shift social customs, norms, attitudes, and behaviors.

Developing Messages

The success of awareness-raising campaigns hinges on how topics are presented to intended audiences. The messaging themes on the preceding page correspond to the essential points connecting land tenure and land degradation.

Every messaging strategy should include a statement on the importance of secure land tenure to solving land degradation, an explanation of how land tenure can enable LDN, and an emphasis on the risks of excluding people in land tenure or land degradation interventions. Messages can be tailored to fit the interests and backgrounds of the target audience(s), getting more or less technical in nature or underlining the connection to other priorities.

When crafting a messaging strategy:

- ▶ Identify a **target audience**.
- ▶ **Adjust the message** to fit the context and audience knowledge/awareness level.
- ▶ **Ensure inclusivity** of messaging strategy.
- ▶ Focus on **providing solutions** to known problems.
- ▶ Consider **staff capacity** to clearly and accurately convey messages.
- ▶ Ensure **consistency** in messaging across mediums.

To decide what messaging to use, stakeholders should first identify what issues are most pertinent in their context(s). It is important to consider and center the target audience; messaging is most effective when target audiences can relate to the content. Including members of the target audience in crafting the content can help to focus on the elements of tenure and LDN most interesting and relevant to the intended audiences, and these actors can bring in locally-relevant examples or commonly known cultural touchstones that will help ground the messages.

Specific messaging should be adjusted to fit the specific land tenure issues of the context as well as the specific land degradation pressures of the area. Messaging can include explanations of why secure land tenure can help to address land degradation as well as identify what can be done to achieve improved outcomes for both tenure security and land degradation neutrality.

Remembering the GESI approach used in identifying target groups above, messaging should be intersectional and include all relevant vulnerable groups. Sharing stories of local actors who are already working on land tenure and LDN efforts, considering local customs and land tenure systems in explaining the intersections, and emphasizing the ways in which the audience can get involved in solutions can all help to take these messages forward.

In framing the message, stakeholders should consider how and by whom the messages will be delivered and adjust accordingly. Trainers and other technicians should be thoroughly sensitized on the intersection between these issues prior to conducting awareness-raising efforts to avoid misinformation or misunderstanding among the target audiences. For more evidence on the intersection of tenure security and LDN, see this paper's Background on Land Tenure and Land Degradation Neutrality section.

CASE STUDY

Women are disproportionately impacted by land degradation, yet uniquely positioned to act because of their role as natural resource managers and caretakers. The Stand for Her Land campaign advocates to close the gap between women's land rights that exist on paper and the lack of implementation on the ground. Key messages linked secure land tenure for women to climate resilience and food security. Campaign coalitions across Uganda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Kenya generated far-reaching media coverage to raise awareness of the issue, and secured engagements with government officials – to advance women's land rights.

STEP 4: Evaluate Success, Learn, and Adapt

The goal of this awareness-raising options paper is to support improved awareness on the importance of secure land tenure for addressing DLDD. Reaching this goal will require concerted efforts and collaboration between various stakeholders, working together to raise awareness from the UN to the community level. It will require support from all levels of stakeholders along the way, starting with Parties.

To evaluate the success of these efforts, stakeholders can monitor their efforts and their impacts on awareness of target audiences, tailoring their chosen indicators to the context and mode of their awareness-raising activities. This monitoring and evaluation should occur in parallel with activities so that stakeholders can iterate on their planned approach adapt to new learnings throughout their activity deployment. As stakeholders continue awareness-raising efforts, this monitoring will allow them to make adjustments that strengthen the efficacy of their activities. Rather than waiting to evaluate the efficacy of efforts at the conclusion of the project, adaptive project management allows stakeholders to improve their approaches to awareness-raising in real time.

Sample indicators include:

- ▶ Number of awareness-raising initiatives launched
- ▶ Number of awareness-raising activities conducted as part of awareness-raising initiatives
- ▶ Number of stakeholder entities organizing or partnering on awareness-raising activities
- ▶ Number of women and men participating in initiatives and activities, disaggregated by identity group and age group
- ▶ Percent of participants who are members of vulnerable populations, disaggregated by identity group, age, and sex
- ▶ Number of education and communication resources created
- ▶ Number of publications covering land tenure and land degradation
- ▶ Number of new partnerships formed between ministries, civil society organizations, or private sector actors to support awareness-raising efforts
- ▶ Percent of target audience reporting increased awareness or understanding of the intersection between tenure and LDN (measured via surveys conducted before and after awareness-raising activities)
- ▶ Percent of target audience reporting interest in learning more about the intersection between tenure and LDN
- ▶ Percent of target audience interested in taking action on land tenure security in support of LDN
- ▶ Percent of organizing committee members and/or presenters that are representatives of vulnerable populations
- ▶ Percent of organizing committee members and/or presenters that are women
- ▶ Percent of organizing committee members and/or presenters representing each target geography
- ▶ Percent of meetings and fora that include participation from grassroots groups representing vulnerable populations

Of these indicators, the percent of target audience members reporting increased awareness in pre- and post-activity surveys will give the best indicator of how clearly the message was communicated and whether the target audiences' awareness was raised. The other indicators offer important tools to monitor how carefully a GESI approach is integrated into activity planning and implementation and how widespread the efforts to raise awareness are. These indicators can be disaggregated by locality, theme, stakeholder group, or other grouping as useful for data analysis and further adjustment to approach. Some of these indicators are high-level indicators that UN bodies can track; others will be useful for all stakeholders no matter their scale and scope of awareness-raising.

Keep in mind that network-building and awareness-raising activities can often have unintended outcomes. Stay alert and open to monitoring indicators beyond the sample list provided to capture the broad array of learnings and impacts of awareness-raising activities. In addition to monitoring countable metrics, include a few open-ended questions in surveys and focus groups to create space for discussing the unexpected.

To successfully raise awareness, target audience members will not only be made aware of these topics, but some actors will also gain interest in further learning, engage in spreading awareness, and commit to solving the problems of land tenure insecurity and DLDD. Addressing these problems will take a groundswell of support in understanding the issues.

As stakeholders track their awareness-raising efforts and learn effective methods for connecting with target audiences, they are encouraged to share their findings with their networks so that others can learn from their experiences and enact equally effective awareness-raising projects. Knowledge-sharing is an essential step to developing increasingly meaningful awareness-raising strategies.

CASE STUDY

*Land Portal's LAND-at-scale project, supported by RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency), utilizes monitoring and evaluation to provide continuous assessment of the project activities. The monitoring findings inform the need for adaptive programming to ensure that the project design is able to respond to changes in the operational environment. Anna Locke, the Principal Research Fellow for sustainable natural resources at ODI, identified the importance of monitoring and evaluation to adjusting the project's activities, reflecting on "which products and evidence had the most impact and had been most relevant to people's thinking and practice. We were then able to identify what we would focus on over the next two or three years."*⁶¹

⁶¹ Footnote: Sorensen, Neil & Wytske Chamberlain. (2022). Effective Knowledge Management Practices in Land Programs. Land Portal. <https://landportal.org/blog-post/2022/02/land-scale/effective-knowledge-management-practices-land-programs>.



Conclusion and Way Forward

This options paper offers action tracks for stakeholders to start the conversation about land tenure security as a solution for combatting desertification, land degradation, and drought.

For a successful awareness-raising effort:

- ▶ Understand the background on the connection between land tenure and degradation.
- ▶ Collaborate with existing networks and initiatives focused on land tenure and degradation.
- ▶ Create an action plan, choosing strategic awareness-raising options.
- ▶ Identify and partner with target audiences, using a gender equality and social inclusion approach.
- ▶ Develop key messaging suited to the targeted audience(s).
- ▶ Evaluate the success of the awareness-raising activity to strengthen future efforts.

This paper can help any stakeholder to jumpstart their own awareness-raising efforts. Yet this paper's guidance will go no further without significant financial, logistical, and strategic support from key UNCCD stakeholders as well as the national and subnational stakeholders who build on the efforts of Parties and partners.

Solving the urgent problems of DLDD depends on responsible land governance that ensures secure land tenure for all. Creating an enabling environment for LDN interventions through addressing land tenure and land governance requires a holistic approach that is best achieved by broad, collaborative partnerships. Developing and deepening those partnerships should start with this awareness-raising

effort, as stakeholders can learn to work together and identify problems that they need to address in future interventions. Each level of governance, agriculture and land-related sector, and development priority is affected by the ability and right of people to live and work on land. Everyone is affected by tenure insecurity and land degradation and its direct and indirect impacts on food security, migration, and conflict; everyone will benefit from prosperous land including farmlands, thriving forests, and regenerated rangelands. Contributing to awareness-raising efforts, either by directly engaging with target audiences or by supporting the actions of partners, is the first step towards addressing these critical issues.

Going forward, key stakeholders should be aware of the laws, policies, and institutional arrangements governing land in their area. A participatory assessment of the law and policy framework can help identify supportive provisions, gaps, and alignment between LDN and responsible governance of tenure in the legal framework. An institutional stakeholder mapping exercise and identification of processes and regulations underpinning the implementation of the law can similarly offer more understanding of the enabling environment available for LDN within the land governance sector. This information could be relevant to awareness-raising activities at a technical level, as the audience may be interested in the legal and institutional structures relevant to this new issue area. Therefore, developing these stakeholder and legal framework maps could be carried out in parallel with awareness-raising activities.

Looking to the future, planning for future interventions is a natural next step following awareness-raising. Once awareness is raised and intervention planning starts in earnest, there are a myriad of ways to address tenure security at the community level, in coordination with communities and with governments and other stakeholders, through good business practices and policy reform. The technical guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the UNCCD and Land Degradation Neutrality demonstrates the feasibility of improving land tenure security in pursuit of LDN and offer blueprints in going beyond awareness-raising. The technical guide offers nine action-oriented pathways to contribute to LDN and land restoration commitments that focus on common land tenure challenges and potential solutions in the context of national plans, legal frameworks, strategies, and action programs.

Annex 1: Glossary of Terms

Gender equality: This concept focuses on the goal of achieving equality in rights, responsibilities, opportunities and benefits/ outcomes for all women and men and providing potential for both women and men to shape their own lives and contribute to society in all areas. It implies that the knowledge, experience, contributions, priorities and constraints of women and men should be taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity between different groups of women and men. Gender equality is both a human rights issue and a driver for sustainable development. Gender equality is recognized as critical for the achievement of goals relating to sustainable development and natural resource management, including biodiversity.⁶²

Gender responsive: A term used to describe laws, policies, programs, and public services that are formulated and/or delivered to: i) take into account existing structures and relations of gender inequality and seek proactively to overcome and remove them; ii) identify and bring attention to women's contributions and critical roles as agents and leaders, in order to facilitate gender equality, the empowerment of women and women's enjoyment of human rights.⁶³

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:

- a) Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;
- b) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;
- c) Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);
- d) Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
- e) Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
- f) Other relevant factors.⁶⁴

Land degradation neutrality (LDN): A state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.⁶⁵

⁶² Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and Women. (2019). [A Manual for Gender-Responsive Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes](#). *UN Women*. 1-49.

⁶³ Ibid, 6-7.

⁶⁴ UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 36th Session, Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations. (1983). [Final Report \(last part\) Submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Jose R. Martinez Cobo](#). *UN Economic and Social Council*. Item 11.

⁶⁵ UNCCD, Decision 3/COP12, Ankara, 2015.

Land governance: Concerns the rules, processes and structures through which decisions are made about access to land and its use, the manner in which the decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way that competing interests in land are managed.⁶⁶

Land tenure: Relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land. Land tenure is an institution, that is, rules invented by society to regulate behavior. They define how access is granted to rights to use, control and transfer land, as well as associated responsibilities and restraints. In simple terms, land tenure systems determine who can use what resources for how long and under what conditions.⁶⁷

Local community: A human population with a clearly defined spatial identity, with members who are interacting with their environment in localized, physically proximate ways, and are small enough to enable face-to-face interactions amongst all members. Such communities may be long-standing ('traditional') or relatively new and may consist of a single or multiple ethnic identities.⁶⁸

Tenure security: Security of tenure is the guarantee of continued occupancy or use rights whether by virtue of formal rights, customary rules, or other forms of assurance.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Palmer, D., Fricska, S. & Wehrmann, B. (2009). Towards Improved Land Governance. Land Tenure Working Paper 11. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*.

⁶⁷ FAO Land Tenure Studies. (2002). [Land Tenure and Rural Development](#). *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*.

⁶⁸ Kothari, A. with Corrigan, C., Jonas, H., Neumann, A., & Shrumm, H. (2012). [Recognising and supporting territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Global Overview and National Case Studies](#), *Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ICCA Consortium, Kalpavriksh, and Natural Justice*. no. 64, 160.

⁶⁹ FAO. (2022). AGROVOC Multilingual Thesaurus. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. Retrieved on 21 March 2022 from [AGROVOC: AGROVOC Multilingual Thesaurus \(fao.org\)](#)

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