



Improving governance of land-based investments

Case studies exploring the strategies and impact of the ALIGN Technical Support Facility

May 2026



COLUMBIA CLIMATE SCHOOL
COLUMBIA CENTER ON
SUSTAINABLE
INVESTMENT

Produced in partnership

This publication was jointly produced by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) as part of the 'Advancing Land-based Investment Governance' project (ALIGN).

ALIGN supports governments, civil society, communities and peoples and other relevant actors in strengthening the governance of land-based investments. The project is implemented by a consortium led by IIED, CCSI and Namati, and is funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). This material has been produced as part of ALIGN by IIED and CCSI. However, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of ALIGN partners or the UK government.

IIED is an international policy and action research organisation delivering solutions to sustainable development challenges. Working with partners across the globe, we link local priorities to global challenges. We use evidence, action and influence to strengthen the voices of marginalised people in vital decision-making arenas — from village councils to international conventions.

Contributing authors

Hansika Agrawal is a legal researcher at the CCSI

Esther Akwii is a senior legal researcher at the CCSI

Ayo Aribidara is a FDI and trade policy consultant and director at SageReach Ltd

Thierry Berger is an associate in the Law, Economies and Justice team at IIED

Anna Bulman is a consultant and director of Change Collective

Silas Nyagala is the acting executive director at Himiza Social Justice

Lara Fornabaio is a lead researcher at the CCSI

Nathaniah Jacobs is a senior researcher in the Law, Economies and Justice team at IIED

Abdou-Rachidou Matcheri is the head of ADHD's land tenure programme and communication programme

Adiavou Mawuvi is the executive director of ADHD

Rose Mosi is a senior researcher in the Law, Economies and Justice team at IIED

Freeman Chiwele Mubanga is an environmental and natural resource governance specialist and former head of research and studies at CEJ

Anirudh Nanda is an independent climate law and policy consultant

Saswati Roy Patnaik is the secretary of Swadhina

Cissy Namuddu Settumba is the partnership and business development manager at the Buganda Land Board

Darryl Vhugen is an independent land tenure and responsible investment consultant

Nana Ama Yirrah is the executive director at COLANDEF

Corresponding editor email

Nathaniah Jacobs, nathaniah.jacobs@iied.org

Published by IIED, May 2026

Jacobs, N (ed), Agrawal, H, Akwii, E, Aribidara, A, Berger, T, Bulman, A, Nyagala, S, Fornabaio, L, Matcheri, A-R, Mawuvi, A, Mosi, R, Mubanga, FC, Nanda, A, Roy Patnaik, S, Namuddu Settumba, C, Vhugen, D and Ama Yirrah, N (2026) Improving governance of land-based investments: case studies exploring the strategies and impact of the ALIGN Technical Support Facility. IIED, London.

[iied.org/22727iied](https://www.iied.org/22727iied)

ISBN 978-1-83759-209-8

International Institute for Environment and Development

44 Southampton Buildings, London, WC2A 1AP, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399

www.iied.org

 www.facebook.com/theIIED

Download more publications at [iied.org/publications](https://www.iied.org/publications)



IIED publications may be shared and republished in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Under the terms of this licence, anyone can copy, distribute and display the material, providing that they credit the original source and don't use it for commercial purposes or make derivatives. Different licences

may apply to some illustrative elements, in which instance the licence will be displayed alongside. IIED is happy to discuss any aspect of further usage. For more information, visit www.iied.org/Creative-Commons

IIED is a charity registered in England, Charity No.800066 and in Scotland, OSCR Reg No.SC039864 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England No.2188452.

Cover image: Togo. Credit: Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable (ADHD)

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Abbreviations	4
Introduction: the ALIGN Technical Support Facility	5
Strategic design	5
The case studies	11
Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable (ADHD) — From strategy to practice: participatory land governance in action	12
Buganda Land Board (BLB) — Clear and aligned principles, better land investment decisions	18
Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) — Regulation, collaboration, accountability: transforming land-based investments	23
COLANDEF Land and Property Rights (COLANDEF) — Co-ordinated voices for inclusive land governance	29
Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency (EKDIPA) — From process mapping to better investment decisions	35
Himiza — From conflict to collaboration: strengthening dialogue on land and investment	41
Swadhina — When women lead, land rights grow stronger	46
Endnotes	52

Acknowledgements

Contributing organisations: this publication draws on work led and implemented by the organisations and individuals who have partnered with the ALIGN Technical Support Facility since 2020. The collaborative approach and efforts of ALIGN and the partnering institutions have surfaced important practical insights and lessons for both the delivery of technical support and the navigation of politically complex policy spaces. While this collection of case studies provides a snapshot of the work done through the TSF, the important work and experience of all the organisations that have partnered through the TSF must be acknowledged. Exchanging comparative experiences and cross-fertilisation of ideas have been important parts of the ALIGN project, and we recognise the important contributions and insights of all those who have worked with the TSF, even if they are not presented in this publication. The content and analysis reflected in this publication should, however, not be taken to reflect the views of ALIGN in-country partners.

ALIGN design and implementation team: the ALIGN Technical Support Facility came about through the collaboration and collective contribution of numerous people. Drawing on collective experiences from multiple sectors and country contexts, the ALIGN Technical Facility was designed and set up through a collaboration between IIED and CCSI and the contributions of Kaitlin Cordes, Lorenzo Cotula, Nathaniah Jacobs and Tehtena Mebratu-Tsegaye, with valuable input from Clarisse Marsac and Brendan Schwartz. A key characteristic of the TSF has been its flexible and evolving nature, shaped through implementation and reflective feedback from across the extensive implementation team. The collaborative and cross-learning nature of the ALIGN project means that knowledge products draw from the work and contributions of multiple members of the ALIGN team. The contributions of Hansika Agrawal, Esther Akwii, Ayo Aribidara, Thierry Berger, Emily Beauchamp, Eric Bisil, Grace Brennan, Anna Bulman, Kaitlin Cordes, Jesse Coleman, Sonkita Conteh, Lorenzo Cotula, Lara Fornabaio, Lucy Fry, Helen Hekel, Nathaniah Jacobs, David Kienzler, Rachael Knight, Clarisse Marsac, Rose Mosi, Anirudh Nanda, Horline Njike, Emily Polak, Ry Ravenholt, Inès Rejraji, Amaelle Seigneret, Brendan Schwartz, Philippine Sutz, Sam Szoke-Burke, Lara Wallis, Nicole Walsh and Darryl Vhugen are acknowledged.

Advice, review and expert inputs: the authors are deeply grateful to Lorenzo Cotula, Emily Polak and all those who provided reviews, comments and feedback for this publication. Such reviews should not be taken to imply endorsement of the final version of this report.

Editorial assistance: thanks to Annette McGill, David Ackers and Jodie Frosdick for valuable editorial and design assistance.

Abbreviations

ADHD	Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable	FRILIA	Framework for Responsible and Inclusive Land-Intensive Agriculture
ALIGN	Advancing Land-based Investment Governance	IAP	Investment assessment process
BLB	Buganda Land Board	IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
CEJ	Centre for Environment Justice	ILC	International Land Coalition
COLANDEF	COLANDEF Land and Property Rights	LSMSP	Land sector multistakeholder platform
CSO	Civil society organisation	MDAs	Ministries, departments and agencies
EKDIPA	Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency	NLC	National Land Coalition
EPF	Environmental Protection Fund	PADZ	Planned Agricultural Development Zone
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent	SDP	Sengerema District Platform
FRA	Forest Rights Act	TSF	ALIGN Technical Support Facility

Introduction: the ALIGN Technical Support Facility

Across the global South, land-based investments are triggering sweeping livelihood changes and increasing land pressures. Covering diverse sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, mining and emerging 'green' investments, such as renewables and carbon, these projects typically come with large land footprints, engage multiple institutions, carry significant environmental and social risks and operate within complex political economies.¹ In addition, the frameworks regulating how these investments are implemented are often complex, fragmented and ineffective. Dominant narratives of land abundance, national interests and weak implementation of safeguards further aggravate the situation.²

The ALIGN Technical Support Facility (TSF) was designed to respond to these challenges by providing practical support for improving governance of land-based investments. Set up under the Advancing Land-based Investment Governance (ALIGN) project, the TSF provided targeted and responsive support to governments, civil society and other relevant actors. Jointly implemented by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) over five years, the TSF worked in 22 countries across sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, with more than 34 different partner organisations and networks, delivering a total of 47 individual instances of technical support. The diversity of contexts, requests and entry points the TSF engaged across provided a rich source of insights on approaches, strategies and politically savvy ways of working to deliver more systemic governance reforms.³ These insights helped inform the strategies and community of practice developed more broadly across the ALIGN project, providing the space to incubate partnerships, methodologies and approaches. In addition, the work of the TSF offers helpful lessons on delivering effective technical support, as well as the types of interventions and ways of working that can meaningfully contribute to more systemic change.⁴

The case studies presented in this publication represent a small sample of the requests supported through the TSF and are intended to highlight some of the key insights that have emerged.

Strategic design

The TSF was established to respond to demand-driven requests for technical support from mostly national-level actors. Designed to boost longer-term initiatives or objectives of requesting partners, facility support was planned to take place over a period of six months and draw on the comparative experience and expertise of internationally sourced technical experts. Key aims included: enhancing the capabilities, comparative knowledge and technical resource capacities of requesting institutions and supporting them to capitalise on pivotal moments for change within national contexts. The TSF also made grants to support requestor-driven objectives and enhance the impact of support. Technical support responses were not intended to be siloed, formalised projects, but rather co-developed, short-term collaborations that complemented the longer-term objectives of requesting institutions and strengthened overall land-based investment governance.

Accepted requests prioritised opportunities with the potential to generate long-term systemic change, such as developing laws and policies, strengthening institutional co-ordination and multi-level collaboration strategies or fostering national dialogues. Institutionalised implementation processes and practices, particularly around leverage points in the governance of land and investment (such as environmental and social impact assessments, free prior and informed consent and investment approvals), were as important as 'big win' legislative adoption.⁵

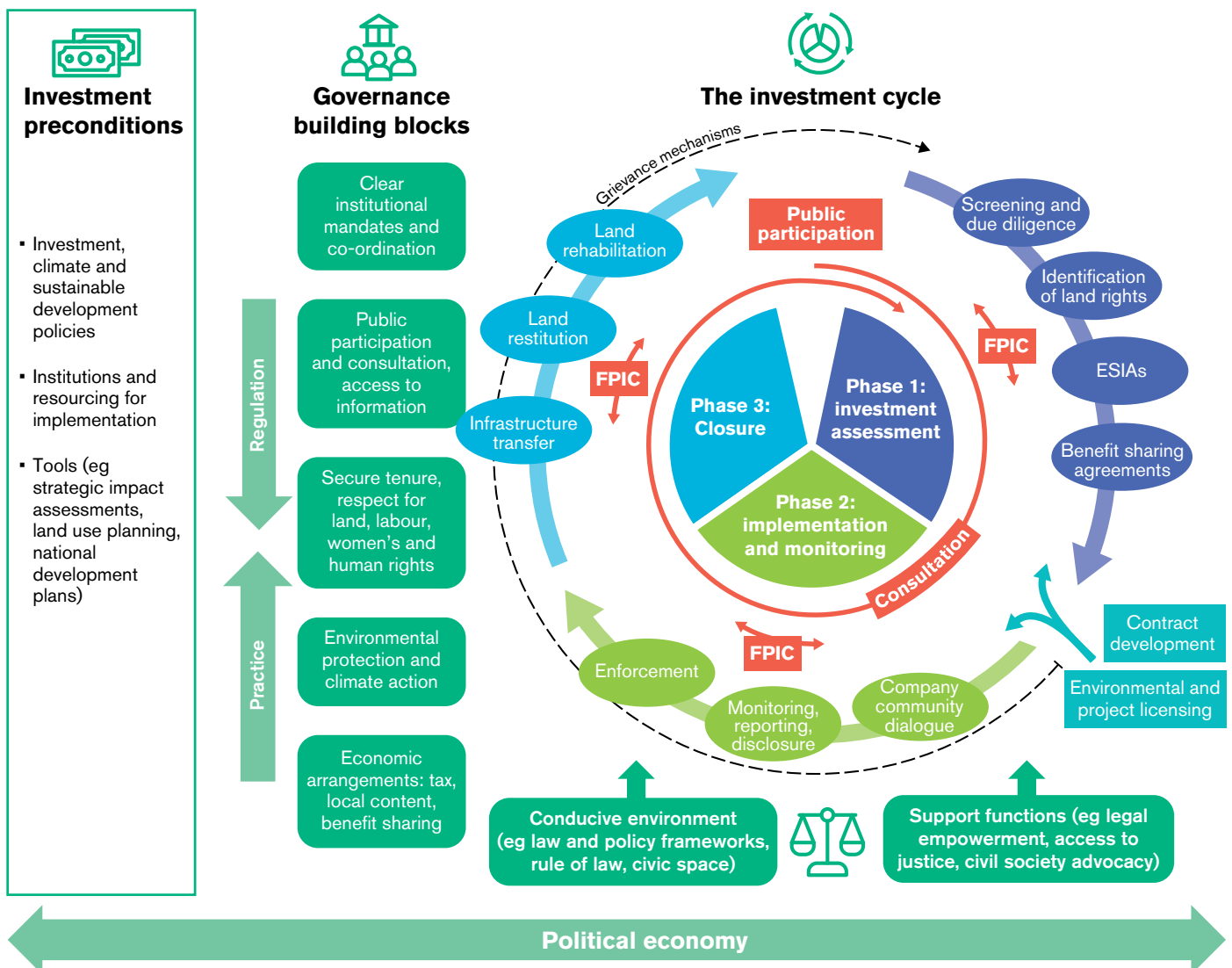
To operationalise this model effectively, several key elements were required. Firstly, a clear sense of how diverse time-bound requests could contribute towards wider systemic strengthening of land-based investment governance. Secondly, strong partnerships that encouraged the exchange of ideas and created the space for technical inputs to be effectively 'plugged-in'. Thirdly, implementation flexibility created the space for process-driven and partner-led interventions.

Mapping the land-based investment ecosystem

Land-based investments cut across sectors and national institutions, becoming the physical focal point where multiple functions, interests and rights intersect. The governance frameworks for responsible land-based investments at a national level are therefore complex and seldom contained within a single instrument or institution. Land and environmental rights, sectoral licensing processes, benefit sharing, consent and access to information are all essential components for investments that advance development, respect rights and balance the imperatives of sustainability and climate actions. So too are the industrial policies and land use planning processes that lay the foundations, shaping how land-based investments happen, the investment approval processes that assess and define the terms on which investments take place, and the compliance-monitoring processes that ensure compliance with social and environmental safeguards. Civic space and consistent enforcement of regulatory frameworks remain essential. All of these interlocking systems and processes must, therefore, come together to effectively advance responsible land-based investment governance.

It is extremely unlikely that any one intervention could address all elements needed for responsible land-based investment governance. The strategic and context-specific openings that drove technical support requests were unpredictable and varied. To accommodate this fluidity and yet ensure that the TSF retained a coherent direction of travel, the ALIGN team developed an internal assessment tool that mapped core elements of responsible land-based investment governance. These elements, as represented in the diagram below, provided a robust framework through which to ensure that facility activities remained aligned with the overarching project objectives of advancing land-based investment governance, while also remaining responsive to externally determined and locally led priorities targeting individual responsible land-based investment elements.

FIGURE 1. ALIGN DIAGNOSTIC TOOL⁶



Insights into investment ecosystem mapping:

- Co-ordinated, multi-level efforts that target process frameworks across decision chains and institutions lead to greater systemic impact.
- Technical support focused on embedding processes within institutions, rather than simply pushing for the development or adoption of new policies, laws or regulatory guidance, is more sustainable and impactful in the long run.
- Contextually grounded and locally identified and led interventions facilitate effective navigation of political economy considerations and maintain political momentum.

Partnerships: collaboration and co-creation

Strong partnerships were a vital component of the TSF's success. Providing short-term technical support packages in national contexts required collaborations that were built on positions of trust and were true partnerships of equals. To do this, engagements needed to evolve beyond top-down interactions focused on activity delivery and monitoring toward conversations built on horizontal engagements and collaboration. Open reflection, strategic brainstorming and collective solution-seeking delivered the most impactful interventions — facilitating process-driven, 'real-time' interventions rather than implementation of static workplans that remained disconnected from evolving on-the-ground dynamics. Achieving this was not possible in all support instances, as embedded power dynamics, administrative structures and process expectations created challenges. Moving beyond established development partnership patterns was helped by the deliberate inclusion of transparency, inclusive decision making, shared objectives, role clarity and an understanding of contributions, constraints and mutual benefits.⁷

The TSF worked with multiple different types of requesting organisations, often in different configurations and ways of working. Broadly speaking, the TSF responded to requests from six categories of institutions:

- National civil society organisations (CSOs)
- Government institutions (both at the national and subnational levels)
- Community-based organisations
- Customary governance structures
- Coalitions, platforms and networks, and
- International or regional organisations.

The ways the TSF worked with these different institutions varied across the individual requests and interventions were shaped by contextual needs. At times, requested technical support was delivered directly to government or CSOs, for example, through direct inputs such as training, legal reviews or network linking or knowledge sharing. Often, however, the technical support provided took the form of indirect institutional backstopping. Usually more discreet in nature, this type of mediated technical support often required the TSF to take a backseat, with national counterparts taking a lead role and the TSF enhancing the capacity and technical resources available for a requesting organisation to engage directly in national reform processes.⁸ These were among the most successful instances of support, and flexibility in project branding and visibility requirements facilitated this type of politically attuned response. Working with established networks and coalitions and supporting the creation or strengthening of networks and coalitions across both horizontal and vertical scales in both the civil society and public sectors was an approach that supported collaboration, activity amplification and embedding of good practice.

The partnerships or social capital of the organisations requesting support were also an important feature contributing to the success of facility-supported activities. The ability to convene, engage and mobilise stakeholders around reform opportunities or processes, and to enjoy the trust of key decision makers and process gatekeepers, was vital. The position of the TSF as an actor removed from national political contexts and the perception that it was a credible neutral actor also created opportunities to engage on more sensitive issues within the land-based investment ecosystem, such as gender or Indigenous land rights, consent requirements or environmental protection. The individual identities of facility members, such as their gender, race, seniority or nationality, were also, at times, used by requesting national counterparts to navigate national political economy contexts. Adjusting framing and positioning core issues in alignment with relevant stakeholder priorities served as a bridge to establish the common ground and objectives needed to build productive partnerships, particularly with government institutions.

Insights into partnerships

- Individual relationships or existing histories of collaboration shape the speed at which support requests can be developed and implemented. Adapting and pivoting actions in response to political economy considerations requires effective collaboration, understanding and communication.
- Embedding work across multiple institutional anchor points (both horizontal and vertical) ensures resilience in the face of rapidly shifting political priorities. Ensuring a clearly defined and articulated value-add, as well as strong vertical intra-institutional awareness and engagement with the requested support, is particularly important when working with government.
- Relationships between the TSF and requesting institution, as well as the requesting institution and downstream stakeholders, matter. The iterative nature of the TSF's ways of working resulted in the indirect impact of strengthened downstream partnerships and engagement.
- Identifying the comparative advantage of the requesting organisation and using an approach of co-creation, rather than competitive bids, avoided duplication and facilitated context-priority-aligned interventions.

Approaches

The TSF deployed carefully considered and political-economy-informed approaches to advance the objective of strengthening land-based investment governance.⁹ Developed in close collaboration with requesting institutions, the support delivered was shaped by strategic openings (often unplanned at the time of the initial requests), evolving contexts and the unique political economy characteristics¹⁰ of each identified entry point and partner organisation.¹¹ The support was often incremental in nature; the TSF responded flexibly to requests for renewal or extension, adopting an iterative 'mosaic' or modular approach that allowed for continued support in circumstances where external change processes were ongoing or where additional support could consolidate progress already made.

The pre-phase (comprising initial strategy development, activity co-design and preparation for individual instances of support) was a vital component of the work, and often took as long as the formally contracted implementation time. This phase of indirect or tacit pre-engagement support was also vital for ensuring project alignment (for which the mapping tool in Figure 1 was key), building common understanding, overcoming pervasive top-down project-based engagement pathways, identifying strategies to boost longer-term institutional objectives and identifying potential opportunities for impact.¹²

Facility-supported interventions adopted a variety of approaches and strategies, usually linked to broader processes or ongoing developments, such as legislative reforms, the rollout of national programmes or shifting national priorities. The TSF and requesting institutions often combined or sequenced approaches within a specific instance of support.

These approaches included:

Evidence building and preparation

- **Action research:** a participatory process to identify existing gaps or challenges in land-based investment governance frameworks with the purpose of informing subsequent actions to improve and strengthen practice, policy or regulations.
- **Comparative research:** looking at how different countries or regions approach elements of land-based investment governance and using those insights to suggest improvements to regulatory frameworks and implementation practices.
- **Mandate mapping:** used to identify the legislated powers and responsibilities of government institutions and officials; important for facilitating institutional co-ordination and collaboration.
- **Participatory resource mapping:** a process in which community members work together, using local knowledge, to visually map and document natural, social or economic resources in their area.
- **Technical analysis:** the systematic examination of laws, policies and institutional arrangements to assess their consistency, effectiveness and alignment with good governance principles for land-based investments. This allows identification of gaps and recommending improvements.

- **Political economy analysis:** identifying strategic leverage points and receptive actors to advance the work, often building on formal or informal stakeholder and mandate mapping, as well as ongoing policy processes.¹³
- **Stakeholder mapping:** identifying key government decision makers, their interests and priorities.
- **Technical inputs:** expert contributions such as regulatory, policy or standardised process drafting aimed at strengthening land-based investment governance frameworks, implementation and practice.

Capability and knowledge building

- **Advocacy:** strategic use of evidence and collective voice to influence decision makers, raise public awareness and promote responsible land-based investment approaches.
- **Awareness-raising and sensitisation:** creating understanding among stakeholders about the challenges, rights and opportunities linked to land-based investments and encouraging stakeholders to recognise and appreciate the social, environmental and governance impacts of large-scale land-based investments.
- **Community legal empowerment:** equipping community representatives with substantive knowledge and politically informed tools to articulate and advocate their own priorities.
- **Facilitating public participation:** creating spaces, providing tools and supporting stakeholders to actively and meaningfully engage in decision making.
- **Network building and mobilisation:** a more flexible and organic approach to building relationships, consensus and sharing knowledge. Less formally structured than coalition building, this approach focuses on building contacts, relationships and the sharing of insights, lessons and comparative experience around a broader thematic topic.
- **Peer-to-peer exchanges and allyship building:** collaborative exchange and sharing of knowledge, experiences and strategies, while fostering supportive relationships to advance shared goals.
- **Technical backstopping:** providing expert background guidance and ongoing incremental support to stakeholders to strengthen their own capacity to engage with land-based investment governance processes more effectively.
- **Technical training:** sharing knowledge and skills with identified stakeholders so that they are better able to understand, implement and monitor large-scale land-based investments.

Consensus building and mobilisation

- **Coalition building and mobilisation:** bringing together diverse stakeholders into an alliance that pools resources, knowledge and influence, and then takes joint action to advance responsible land-based investment governance
- **Institutional co-ordination:** the process through which different government bodies work together to align their roles, share information and exchange expertise to ensure practices around land-based investments are consistent, efficient and follow good governance principles
- **Knowledge building and sharing:** generating, documenting and exchanging evidence, experiences and lessons to strengthen advocacy, understanding, constructive dialogue and eventually inform better land-based investment governance
- **Multistakeholder dialogues:** creating opportunities for collaboratively identifying challenges and solutions
- **Politically informed government engagements:** building strategic relationships with public sector actors to support ongoing processes and, when necessary, backstop capacity gaps, and
- **Radio campaigns:** raising public awareness and broadening buy-in.



Credit: Swadhina

The TSF's position as part of a multi-partner, multi-country international project could also be leveraged to strengthen the voices of requesting organisations at strategic moments. Sharing insights and messaging through a practitioner-focused blog series¹⁴ and hosting webinars that highlighted emerging issues or provided an international platform to raise awareness were valuable tools for national organisations. Developing a closed peer-to-peer network among the nongovernmental facility partners also provided opportunities to discuss comparative approaches and strategies.

To facilitate delivery and responsive flexibility, the TSF made adjustments to the initial model. The administrative structures needed to facilitate the complementary small grants created a tension between the envisaged nimble and responsive interventions and financial monitoring mechanisms, such as workplans and defined deliverables. This effectively 'projectised' interventions, making adaptable responses more difficult. Workplan pivots required corresponding administrative adjustments, which significantly increased transaction costs for the TSF and requesting organisations. The TSF, therefore, needed to act as a middleman to absorb much of the administrative burden and facilitate the continued flexibility of support instances, in effect serving as a buffer between the constraints of a large, publicly funded project and the needs of demand-driven, political-economy-informed technical support.

Insights into approaches

- Effective technical support extends well beyond formal implementation windows. Preparing, building consensus, identifying entry points and dovetailing facility offerings to a requesting institution's long-term objectives require considerable lead-in time. Tracking external processes beyond the control of facility partners requires flexible timelines and support activities.
- Governance reform includes changing both regulatory frameworks and practices. The methodology of change and how it shapes institutional ownership, builds collaboration and develops process pathways will shape implementation and outcomes.
- Land-based investment governance is a politically sensitive issue. Using the perceived objectivity of national laws and regulations, or respected external comparative practice, can be a useful tool for overcoming political divisions and building consensus and momentum for change, particularly when supporting institutional collaboration and subnational engagements.
- Governance reform efforts based on evidence and direct accounts that promote transparency and remain people centred tend to be more effective.

The case studies

The case studies in this compendium document our work with partner organisations in seven countries, across differing national contexts and political economies. They illustrate how the facility developed a responsive, flexible and partner-led approach to delivering technical support, and show how technical support can be tailored to leverage opportunities for change and navigate the complex landscape of land-based investment governance. The insights shared can inform future work to support nationally led governance-strengthening efforts within complex political economies. The case studies are as follows:

- 1. Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable (ADHD) in Togo**, where the TSF supported ADHD to translate national policy commitments into practice and adopt practical strategies for the development of Togo's Planned Agricultural Development Zones (PADZs). This case study shows how strong civil society and government co-operation can improve community outcomes, and how well-timed interventions can leverage the process to advance women's land rights.
- 2. The Buganda Land Board (BLB) in Uganda** worked to strengthen land governance and responsible land-based investments through clear principles and tools for investment screening and approval. This case study highlights how a customary institution can approach responsible land-based investment practices.
- 3. The Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) in Zambia**, where the TSF supported efforts to operationalise the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and enhance the engagement of traditional authorities. The case study reflects on civil society strategies for using research for regulatory advocacy and on engaging multiple levels of government.
- 4. COLANDEF Land and Property Rights (COLANDEF) in Ghana**, where multistakeholder platforms were established to build momentum and operationalise the Land Act. This case study shows how civil society can proactively engage with and support national policy processes, building alliances and momentum for strengthened practice. It also highlights approaches to building dialogue platforms that contribute toward action.
- 5. Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency (EKDIPA) in Nigeria** worked to develop a land-based investment approval process. This case study highlights strategies to foster co-ordination and collaboration among subnational government agencies and successful approaches to delivering technical support to government.
- 6. Himiza Social Justice in Tanzania** reflects on the challenges related to resettlement processes for mining-impacted communities and how improved communication and direct engagement at the local level can improve practice. This case study shows how legal empowerment approaches and stakeholder dialogue can improve and strengthen local-level decision-making processes.
- 7. Swadhina in India**, where work to strengthen the role of women in land governance and decision-making processes and facilitate recognition of their land rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) took place. This case study highlights approaches for supporting rural communities to advocate for their rights, build internal community support and cultivate bureaucratic allies within complex processes.

Each case study begins with a partner statement or story that reflects a key issue or positive outcome. The case studies then report on the context, the original request for support and the work done. They then describe the approaches and strategies that were most effective in achieving regulatory or practice outcomes and reflect on some of the key challenges, lessons and contributing factors for success. Intended to be a resource for those working toward strengthened governance frameworks at both the national and international levels, the case studies offer short, practice-oriented reflections on how politically savvy and contextually relevant technical support can be delivered and meaningful impact achieved.

The technical support offered through the TSF is intended to boost the longer-term objectives and capabilities of requesting organisations. The national processes being tracked and systemic changes sought take both time and the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders. By supporting the identified priorities of those most familiar with the contexts in which change can happen and directing resources towards those priorities, the impacts of the work continue to snowball. The catalytic actions supported through the TSF continue to deliver tangible and meaningful change and strengthen the good governance of land-based investments.

Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable (ADHD) — From strategy to practice: participatory land governance in action

Authors: Abdou-Rachidou Matcheri, Adiaou Mawuvi, Thierry Berger, Lara Fornabaio and Nathaniah Jacobs

In June 2021, in Lomé, in the hushed salons of the FOPADESC hotel, the third edition of the Civil Society Land Forum was held, organised by Togo's National Land Coalition (NLC). For three days, civil society voices rose to debate, question and make proposals on the country's land issues.





At the heart of the discussions, one presentation had a revelatory effect: the 'PADZ strategy', previously unknown to many participants, was presented as a powerful lever for rural development and poverty reduction. For some, it was a striking discovery, a window onto an initiative that seemed to promise more equitable access to land, particularly for young people and women.

Driven by this collective curiosity, the NLC, an International Land Coalition (ILC)-convened network, decided to explore the strategy in greater depth. At the time, the NLC was led by Mr Frédéric Djinadja, then NLC facilitator and director of the NGO Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable (Rural Self-Promotion for Sustainable Human Development — ADHD). A man of action and a skilled strategist, he had close ties with officials at the ministry responsible for PADZs. Thanks to these networks and relationships, he succeeded in opening the doors of the ministry to the NLC and civil society, enabling the organisation to become actively involved in monitoring and analysing this public policy.

This moment was more than just a forum: it marked the beginning of a strategic collaboration between civil society and state institutions, with the ambition of making the PADZ strategy a real tool for inclusion and social transformation.

However, the implementation of PADZs faces major obstacles that compromise their social and inclusive scope. In several localities, communities are reluctant to engage in PADZs for fear of losing access to their land due to the lack of clear and transparent land tenure security processes. Women and young people are often marginalised in land use decisions and land distribution mechanisms.

Faced with these challenges, the NLC and the ILC have entered into a strategic partnership with ALIGN to conduct an in-depth analysis of land dynamics around PADZs and promote more inclusive governance. This is part of an advocacy approach based on free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), with a view to ensuring that PADZs become genuine levers for equitable, sustainable and participatory development.

COUNTRY	Togo	
PARTNER	Autopromotion rurale pour un Développement Humain Durable (ADHD)	
PARTNER TYPE	National CSO	
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED		
	 Investment precondition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land pooling/consolidation
	 Governance building blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public participation ▪ Secure tenure ▪ Respect for tenure and land rights of women and vulnerable groups
	 Investment cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contract development ▪ Identification of land rights
	 Conducive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Civil society support function and capabilities (advocacy and legal empowerment)

About ADHD

ADHD was established in 1996. Focusing on legal empowerment, land and sustainable agriculture and the environment, its goal is to promote change for the lives of women, men and communities at the grassroots level. ADHD provides support to communities through three strategic objectives: connecting communities with one another and with external agents of change; mobilising communities by providing them with the knowledge, capacities and opportunities they need to take action; and influencing decision makers (the government and its partners) and the private sector.



Since 2013, ADHD has hosted Togo's NLC, a platform bringing together representatives of CSOs, government, the private sector, traditional chiefs and farmers' organisations. The platform, supported by the ILC, operates at the national level. Shortly after ALIGN began its support, ADHD's longstanding director passed away.

Context

In 2018, Togo adopted Law 2018-005 establishing a Code on Private and State-owned Land (Land Code) that includes progressive provisions such as the recognition of customary rights, measures to combat 'land grabbing' and the promotion of equal access to land.¹⁵ In addition, to enhance agricultural value chain development, food security and job creation, the Ministry of Agriculture has developed the 'Strategy for securing developed areas', which aims to consolidate land by establishing PADZs — referred to as the PADZ strategy.¹⁶ The Togolese government's aim is to establish a PADZ in every district of the country. Prior to ALIGN support, however, the PADZ strategy document was not publicly available, which limited local understanding and ownership.

Under the PADZ strategy, landowners within PADZ-designated areas make their land available for agricultural developments, the state carries out improvements (including water access, irrigation and storage infrastructure), and local farmers and agricultural co-operatives develop farming operations on the land.

During the process of establishing a PADZ, landowners (individuals and communities) are entitled to have their land formally registered. The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for implementing the PADZ strategy, including mapping the land made available by landowners for the PADZ's users. Some communities and individuals have been reluctant to include their land in the PADZs. Concerns had been raised that formal registration had not taken place, that promised revenues had not materialised and that verbal agreements were not translated into written contracts.

Technical support requested

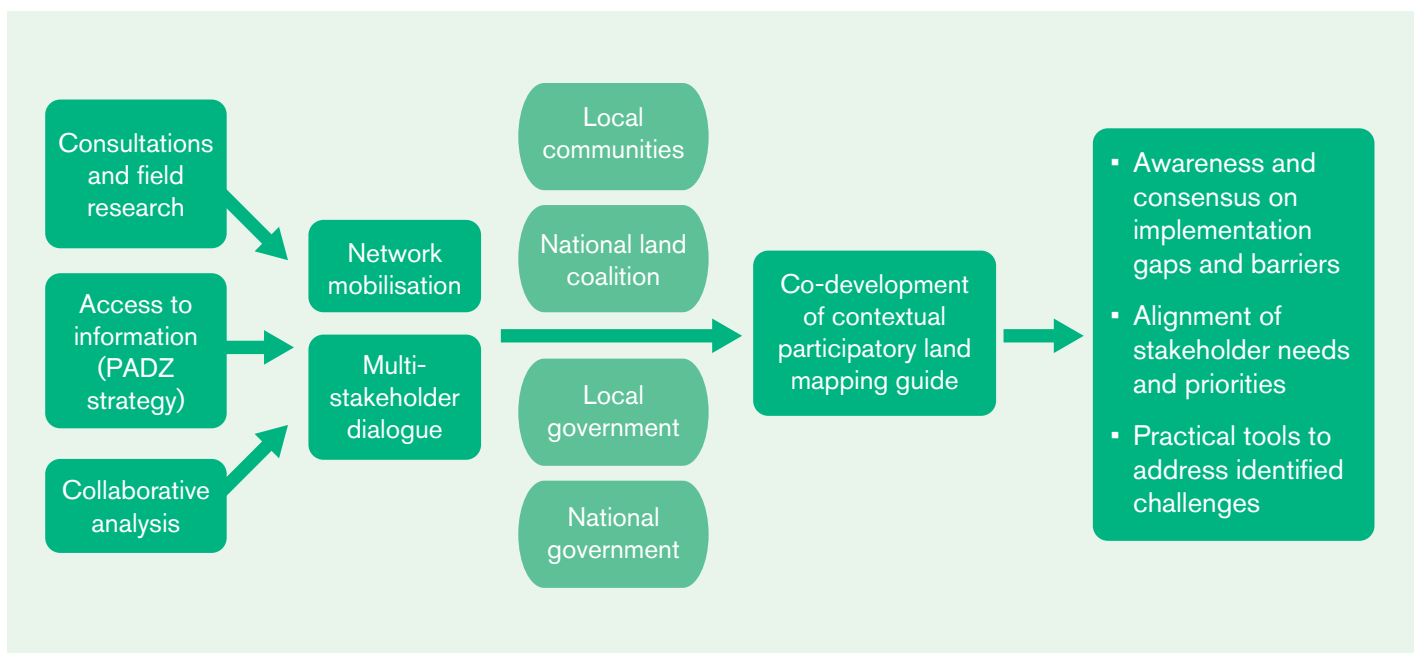
ILC-Africa facilitated this request for technical support from ADHD, which asked for support to:

- Gather information and community feedback from eight communities impacted by PADZs and analyse whether the PADZ strategy is consistent with national and international laws and good practice on land-based investments
- Build the awareness and understanding of NLC members in relation to regional and international good practice, as well as the provisions of applicable national laws, and
- Raise awareness among decision makers about national and international principles on responsible land-based investment applicable in the PADZs.

A key issue that emerged during implementation was that in some cases, the proposed boundaries for PADZs were unclear, causing tensions. Additional ALIGN support was therefore mobilised to enable ADHD to:

- Carry out consultations at the national and local level with a view to preparing an agreed methodology for participatory mapping of land provided for proposed PADZs
- Prepare a contextually informed guide describing the methodology needed for participatory mapping, and
- Organise a multistakeholder workshop to raise awareness and validate the guide.

Vision of change



What was done?

Between December 2023 and March 2025, ALIGN supported ADHD as follows:

- **Engagement with relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture:** engaged key stakeholders to provide access to the PADZ strategy, created buy-in from those stakeholders by demonstrating the significance of the issues raised, assessed the PADZ strategy, and communicated the importance of participatory land mapping in PADZs, creation and access to land for women and vulnerable groups.
- **Field visits and analysis of the PADZ strategy:** conducted field visits to evaluate existing land allocation and registration approaches in PADZs, identified PADZ strategy implementation challenges and suggested future action to address those challenges. In addition, completed an analysis of gaps in the PADZ strategy and its implementation.
- **Land Forum:** in 2024, the fourth edition of a gathering for stakeholders involved in land issues in Togo (National Land Forum) was organised in collaboration with the NLC. This gathering facilitated diverse stakeholder engagement — including representatives from CSOs, media, traditional chiefs, farmers' organisations, the private sector, ministries and donors. The event focused on promoting responsible land governance and led to the participatory development of an action plan. The findings of the field visits and analysis report were presented, and a revised version of the report, based on feedback, was circulated after the event.
- **Collecting data and developing a guide on participatory land mapping:** in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and stakeholders, undertook consultations on existing methodologies for participatory land mapping at the national and local level. Drafted a contextually informed guide that sets out a methodology for participatory land mapping that follows good practice.¹⁷
- **Facilitate awareness and support:** engaged stakeholders throughout the process of drafting the guide. Organised a multistakeholder workshop to raise awareness and validate the guide, as well as solidify support for the approach.

Key impacts/Outcomes

The ADHD–ALIGN collaboration helped address gaps in Togo's land consolidation policy and enabled ADHD to demonstrate to relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture, the need to fill those gaps and strengthen land governance approaches.

- **Highlighting gaps in Togo's policy on PADZs:** the assessment highlighted that the PADZ strategy document excluded landowners and local authorities from the land-mapping process. The absence of participatory mapping risks overlapping land claims, potential ownership conflicts, and an erosion of trust between landowners and PADZ users, which could adversely impact the viability of the PADZ strategy.
- **Successful engagement with stakeholders and active collaboration:** ADHD successfully engaged with stakeholders (traditional chiefs, local communities, PADZ users and landowners) and the Ministry of Agriculture to facilitate constructive dialogue and collaboration. The Ministry of Agriculture was open to suggestions and willing to adopt the participatory land-mapping approaches suggested by civil society. The Ministry also supported the collection of field data through its local representatives, who collaborated with researchers and participated in developing the participatory land-mapping guide.
- **Enhanced access to information and awareness:** ADHD succeeded in securing a copy of the PADZ strategy and making it publicly accessible. ADHD also worked to communicate the importance of identifying tenure rights during the PADZ process — including through participatory land mapping.
- **Adoption of participatory mapping guide and strengthened investment governance:** the participatory mapping guide, which bears the official logo of the Ministry of Agriculture, was validated and published in May 2025. Through its collaborative development and contextual grounding, the document will inform future PADZs development and lead to improved tenure security, avoidance of conflicts and strengthened governance practices.
- **Access to land for women and vulnerable groups:** momentum from the PADZ process has been used to improve the recognition and protection of women and young people's land rights, particularly in Kpegnon Adja village. These groups have long faced obstacles in accessing land but are now able to access agricultural plots, thanks to the gap identification and collective solutions development of the stakeholders. ADHD wrote a blog outlining this process.

Approaches and political economy factors

ADHD's ongoing and longstanding relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture was a key factor in securing their engagement and support for the policy reform process. This established relationship of trust enabled ADHD to respond to existing priorities, present a clear value proposition to the ministry and move quickly towards impact.

By using an ongoing government process for the introduction and development of PADZs, ADHD was able to increase awareness and advance governance practice on several key issues, including tenure security, meaningful participatory and consultation processes and women's and youth equality. The PADZs provided a focal point around which diverse stakeholders could be convened, problems identified and collective solutions — with wider systemic benefits — developed. The focus on the PADZ process fostered a more receptive environment in which to discuss more sensitive issues (such as women's land rights or participatory practices) and demonstrate the benefits of good practice approaches around these topics.

The inclusive approach adopted by ADHD fostered a collaborative environment that encouraged stakeholders to build on what was seen as collective efforts. The initial action research and technical analysis engaged different stakeholder interests from the local to the national level. Each stakeholder group could identify value in the work and see how the findings could benefit their objectives. The meaningful inclusion of these groups within the process also ensured that the final documents enjoyed broad stakeholder legitimacy.

This joint ownership of baseline findings, together with the robust analysis of the PADZ strategy, enhanced ADHD's credibility and allowed it to further position itself as an expert organisation that could provide assistance to the government. This enabled the next phase of work focusing on the participatory mapping process and guide.

Three additional factors were relevant to the success of this engagement. Firstly, ADHD's role as host of Togo's National Land Coalition, which allowed ADHD to leverage both the insights and support of the broader NLC network. ADHD was also able to leverage its role as ILC-Africa's regional focal point.

Secondly, the perceived ALIGN institutional status and in-country visit of an ALIGN representative helped to strengthen the credibility of the work in the eyes of decision makers and institutional stakeholders and generated broader political support.

Thirdly, facilitating direct exchanges between PADZ participants and local authorities helped to humanise the challenges and reinforce the need for proposed solutions in tangible ways.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Action research**
- **Key stakeholder engagement**
- **Multistakeholder dialogues**
- **Participatory resource mapping**
- **Politically informed government engagements, and**
- **Technical backstopping.**

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

Loss of key senior personnel

Strong relationships and networks are vital. Ensuring those connections are institutionalised both widely and deeply within institutions ensures sustainability. Shortly after the ALIGN collaboration commenced, the well-regarded director, Frédéric Djinadja, passed away. He had been instrumental in designing the intervention and in building ADHD's networks and relationships. Junior staff had to step up. Fortunately, the connections developed had been integrated into the organisation, which meant that despite the significant loss, the vital work of the organisation could continue.

Access to information

Access to key policy documents is vital for impactful participation, engagement and collaboration. Without access to the PADZ strategy, the work would have been limited (addressing issues at just one site) and likely unsustainable. With access to the strategy document, action research and follow-up activities could be tailored to support systemic change through improved practice and strengthened frameworks.

Engagement with government and other key stakeholders

- ADHD's regular engagement with the government (the Ministry of Agriculture) ensured an open channel of communication and facilitated the collaborative approach that enabled ADHD to directly contribute toward strengthened good governance practice in the implementation of a national policy.
- The inclusive joint-process-ownership approach adopted, particularly during the initial data-gathering and analysis stages, avoided potential disagreements or questions about the validity of findings. This facilitated consensus and a greater focus on forward-looking solution development.
- Facilitating direct engagement between PADZ users and landholders on the one hand, and relevant government authorities on the other, encouraged increased accountability and follow-through. Direct reports from impacted stakeholders were far more effective than those reported through third parties.

Building on local, national and international connections

- Leveraging local, national and international connections significantly boosted the work and amplified its impacts. The connections facilitated through ILC-Africa and ADHD's national relationships played a key part in the work's success.

Entrenching work into government priorities and processes

A good working relationship with the government ensured the work was closely aligned to emerging government interests and priorities, and the partner could effectively connect on-the-ground challenges to existing political will.

Proactive and responsive intervention

The work's proactive and responsive nature — not waiting for concerns and challenges to become entrenched conflicts — was important in ensuring all stakeholders were willing to engage in an open and collaborative manner.

Inclusive and attentive dialogue can strengthen rights recognition

Ensuring adequate and ongoing opportunities for all stakeholders to share their views encouraged richer and contextually relevant discussions, and also strengthened the recognition and social legitimacy of tenure rights and fostered more equitable decision making, particularly for women and other marginalised groups.

Leverage project momentum to advance rights recognition




Using dialogue processes that incentivised engagement provided opportunities to foster awareness and understanding of less-acknowledged problems, such as the rights of women and other marginalised groups. In this case, engagements around the PADZs incentivised local stakeholders to attend discussions, providing an opportunity for other issues to be discussed, build understanding and achieve progressive outcomes.

Buganda Land Board (BLB) — Clear and aligned principles, better land investment decisions

Authors: Cissy Namuddu Settumba, Darryl Vhugen, Nathaniah Jacobs and Esther Akwii

“The inclusive approach to developing the key principles for land allocation, the investment approval process and the due diligence tool was invaluable. By involving staff from different careers, departments and locations, we tapped into a wealth of knowledge and experience. It wasn’t just about creating a policy; it was about building a shared understanding of what responsible land-based investments mean for our community and incorporating these within the larger framework of the kingdom.”

Cissy Namuddu Settumba, Buganda Land Board Working Group member

COUNTRY	Uganda	
PARTNER	Buganda Land Board (BLB)	
PARTNER TYPE	Cultural institution	
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED		
	 Governance building blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear institutional mandates and co-ordination ▪ Secure land tenure
	 Investment cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investment assessment (screening and due diligence, land rights identification)
	 Conducive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Law, practice and policy frameworks

About BLB

BLB is a professional body established by the Kabaka¹⁸ of Buganda to manage and administer land and property returned under the Restitution of Assets and Properties Act of 1993. It is accountable through its board to the cabinet of the Buganda Kingdom and ultimately to the Kabaka, who in turn are accountable to the people of Buganda through a clear cultural *abataka* — a cultural governance structure of clans and clan leaders. There are 52 clans within the kingdom, to which every Muganda belongs.



Buganda Land Board

More specifically, the BLB is responsible for ensuring that land is optimally and efficiently used as a revenue-generating asset for the kingdom and, at the same time, that the land is managed in accordance with cultural and customary values, ensuring sustainability for future generations.

Context

The Buganda Kingdom, the largest of Uganda's traditional kingdoms, regained some of its assets and properties through the Traditional Rulers' (Restitution of Assets and Properties) Act of 1993 and the 2013 Agreement with the Government of Uganda. Among these assets is Official Mailo land, much of which is occupied by tenants who have legitimate tenure claims through long-term occupancy. The designation of mailo land was created as part of the 1900 Buganda Agreement between the British colonial administration and the Kingdom of Buganda and is characterised by demarcated title and often overlapping landlord and *bibanja* (tenant) rights. This land is managed by the BLB on behalf of the Kabaka of Buganda, in whose name the properties are registered.

The BLB was grappling with rapidly increasing applications for large tracts of Official Mailo land, much of it already occupied by tenants, while lacking a clear policy framework to manage these requests. This created several challenges:

- **Land tenure issues:** balancing investor interests with the rights of existing tenants and ensuring no forced dispossession
- **Environmental concerns:** addressing potential environmental impacts of large-scale land use and extractive activities and longer-term implications for the kingdom
- **Increased demand:** responding to a surge in applications for land, mining and quarrying resources, which necessitates a more structured and comprehensive policy framework, and
- **Risks involved:** the need to effectively assess and attach a cost to identified risks, considering competing land uses, long-term Kingdom interest and objectives.

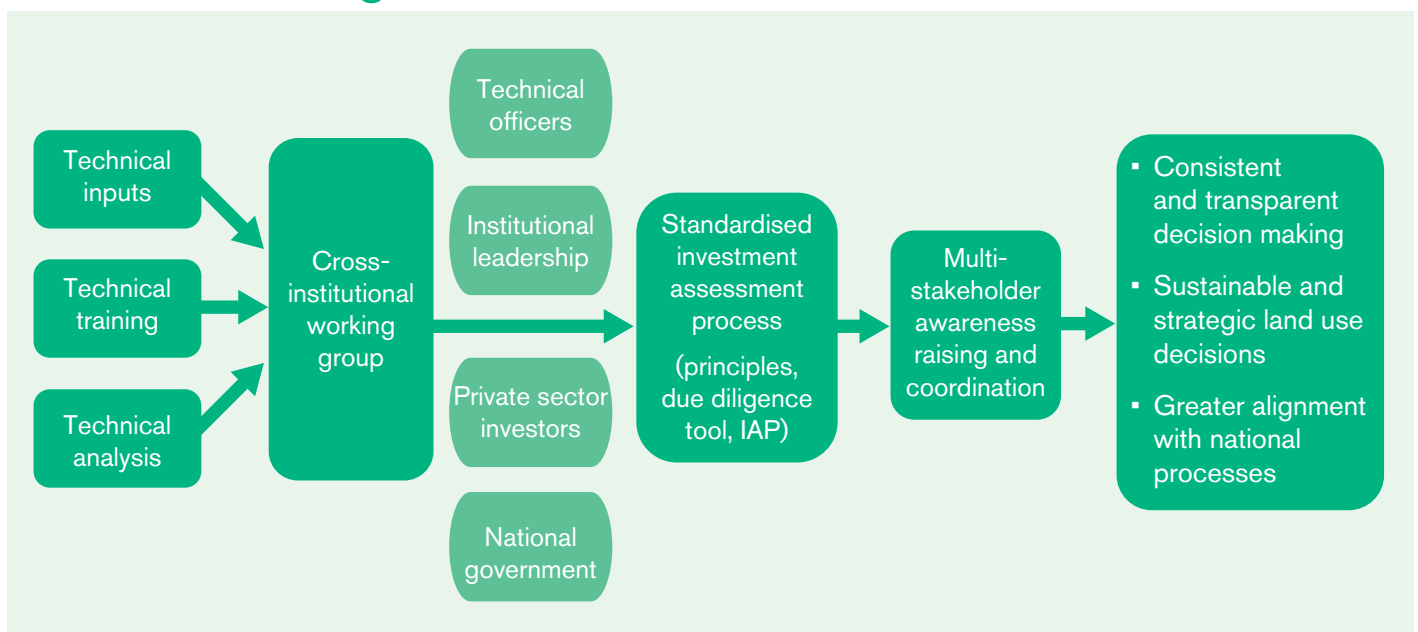
Technical support requested

The requested support aligned closely with the BLB's core mandate of managing mailo land on behalf of the Kabaka of Buganda, by strengthening its internal processes for leasing land and building the institutional capacity of its Business Development Committee and senior management. By developing a comprehensive policy and refining internal guidelines, the support fits into the BLB's ongoing efforts to modernise land governance, enhance transparency and ensure that large-scale land-based investments are managed responsibly and sustainably.

The BLB requested ALIGN's technical support to:

- Conduct remote training sessions on responsible land-based investment for BLB staff
- Assist in conducting stakeholder engagements to inform the drafting of policy documents
- Provide technical support for drafting policy documents in accordance with international good practice and principles of sustainable development, and
- Conduct a validation and capacity-building workshop in Kampala to allow various stakeholders to review, discuss and refine the proposed draft policy documents.

Vision of change



What was done?

The BLB, with ALIGN assistance, undertook a process to develop policy and internal guidelines for the assessment and allocation of land for investment. This included:

- Remote training sessions led by ALIGN on international good practice for land-based investments.
- Establishing a dedicated working group to develop needed guidance documents and process blueprints. The working group represented the different BLB units.
- The development of three internal documents by the working group and the BLB Business Development Committee outlining key principles to guide land allocation decisions, an investment approval process (IAP) to ensure consistency and transparency in practice and an implementation framework to guide internal practice. The documents were developed with the support of BLB senior management teams. ALIGN provided technical support.

- A focused multiday drafting workshop of the working group with ALIGN technical support. The workshop allowed the working group to consolidate work undertaken and develop a consensus on provisions in the working drafts of the three documents.
- A multistakeholder workshop and validation event in Kampala that brought multiple government and civil society actors together. The workshop allowed the BLB to present the work undertaken, obtain feedback, raise awareness and seek synergies with broader national processes.

Impacts/Outcomes

The BLB–ALIGN collaboration produced several observed impacts closely aligned with the BLB’s long-term objectives. In addition, the engagement’s outcomes have laid the foundation for future implementation and stronger synergies across systems.

- **Greater transparency and consistency in investment decision making:** development of the three internal documents established 1) the key principles according to which decisions about land available for investment are made; 2) a procedural blueprint for the IAP and 3) an implementation framework to guide internal practice. These documents have introduced a standardised approach to the identification and allocation of land for investments within the kingdom, which facilitates greater consistency and transparency in how decisions will be made.
- **Improved collaboration and process ownership:** the internal working group brought together representatives from different units and levels across the BLB. This approach encouraged collaboration and collective ownership of both the drafting process and final documents. It also ensured that a diversity of technical insights and professional experience was captured in the documents.
- **Enhanced land-based investment governance frameworks within the BLB:** following the successful development of the initial documents, the BLB is working to pilot the system and implement needed fine-tuning adjustments. Additional areas needing process guidance and implementation frameworks have also been identified, and work to develop enhanced frameworks is taking place.
- **Development of synergies and alignment:** national actors and entities, such as the BLB, engaging with land in Uganda, have different institutional arrangements and processes. This creates gaps and bottlenecks in processes that involve these institutions. This work has advanced efforts to facilitate strengthened institutional and process alignment.
- **Strengthened engagement between the BLB and Ugandan national institutions:** the BLB sought feedback and input from national stakeholders, and there were several engagement meetings to raise awareness and elicit inputs on the documents, including an in-person multistakeholder workshop in Kampala. This increased the momentum for greater synergies across processes and has encouraged more engagement and collaboration on land for investment allocation processes.

Approaches and political economy factors

The BLB is working within a context of multiple complexities and must balance numerous competing priorities within its processes for identifying land for investment and its allocation. Evolving landscapes and land uses, layered legal property histories and multiple social, environmental and developmental objectives are generating competing priorities for the body responsible for managing land within Buganda Kingdom.

To effectively navigate these issues, the BLB identified several land administration and policy areas where ALIGN technical backstopping could meaningfully assist. A decision to limit scope and focus on the internal investment approval processes, with a focus on land identification and allocation, was agreed. This approach enabled deeper engagement with those processes where pressure was most acute, where impact could be most amplified and upon which additional governance processes could be built.

Awareness raising and building support were key elements in the work. The BLB engaged several key stakeholders, including relevant national government institutions and international organisations, to generate awareness and buy-in. The unique position of the BLB necessitated careful navigation of, and strategic alignment with, broader institutional processes. Awareness raising, transparency and process alignment were key elements for this; the in-person meetings and multistakeholder validation event helped achieve this.

The co-owned, multi-level drafting process to develop the key principles, frameworks and processes was also a vital component of the work. This approach, backstopped by ALIGN technical inputs, ensured that the unit representatives and technical experts ultimately responsible for implementing the final identification, approval and allocation process were the ones developing the framework. This approach had several benefits, providing an opportunity for working group members to translate the training they received into practice and also ensuring a contextually relevant, institutionally rooted, understood and internalised final process.

The position of ALIGN, perceived as neutral outside experts removed from the complexities of the national context, also contributed toward the successful implementation of the work. The ALIGN team's travel to Uganda and attendance at in-person meetings created opportunities to advance discussions.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Multistakeholder dialogues**
- **Political economy analysis**
- **Politically informed government engagements**
- **Technical backstopping**
- **Technical analysis**
- **Technical inputs, and**
- **Technical training.**

Key lessons learned

Clear principles and frameworks

- Developing clear principles on responsible land-based investments and translating them into practical tools (IAP and due diligence process) created a strong foundation for the BLB's work.
- Having structured frameworks not only standardised decision making but also increases transparency and accountability in managing land-based investments.
- Including diverse technical experts, such as land surveyors, land valuers, lawyers and spatial planners in the working group ensured more robust and relevant outcomes, as well as common understandings across the process.

Training and practice

- Capacity building, reinforced by ongoing engagement, equipped the BLB working group with skills and confidence and also demonstrated that pairing training with practical application fosters sustainable outcomes.

Ensuring process ownership

- Backstopping the technical experts and unit representatives responsible for implementing processes to draft and develop the frameworks and guidance themselves encouraged outputs that were contextually embedded, institutionalised, understood and fully implemented.
- The BLB's development and pilot testing of terms of reference for quarrying investors showed the importance of testing draft policies/tools with real users before finalisation.

Stakeholder involvement

- Workshops that brought diverse stakeholders together enabled broader input, validation and buy-in, which facilitates longer-term sustainability and support.

Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) — Regulation, collaboration, accountability: transforming land-based investments

Authors: Freeman Chiwele Mubanga, Nathaniah Jacobs and Rose Mosi




When a coal mining company established operations in Nkandabwe village, Sinazongwe district, Zambia, it came with the promise of jobs and development. Community members were told the mine would bring opportunities, create employment and contribute to economic growth of the district. For a community that had long struggled with underdevelopment, this investment inspired hope.

As time has gone by, the reality for the residents of Nkandabwe village has been very different. The way of life has changed, but with residents receiving very little in return. Families have been displaced from customary land to make way for mining activities, yet the compensation paid has been completely inadequate to replace what was lost. For many, the land was not only a home but also their primary source of food and income. Losing it meant losing security and dignity.

Those who turned to the mine for work soon realised that wages offered were far below expectations and could not sustain a household. Promised benefits of development, including improved livelihoods and better services, never materialised. Instead, the community was left to bear the costs of extraction while tangible benefits flowed elsewhere.

This situation highlights critical gaps in Zambia's land-based investment governance. The absence of meaningful consultation and FPIC means that affected communities have little say in decisions that shape their future. In addition, mechanisms intended to safeguard the interests of both the affected community and Zambia, such as the EPF, which ensures accountability for environmental damage, remain unenforced.

The experience of Sinazongwe illustrates why land-based investments must prioritise the rights and wellbeing of host communities. Without strong governance, fair compensation and genuine participation, the promise of development through mining risks becoming an empty one – delivering exploitation instead of progress.

COUNTRY	Zambia	
PARTNER	Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ)	
PARTNER TYPE	National CSO	
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED		
	 Governance building blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutional mandates and co-ordination ▪ Environmental protection ▪ Access to information
	 Investment cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation ▪ Enforcement
	 Conducive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulatory implementation ▪ Civil society advocacy

About CEJ

CEJ, established in 2010, is a Zambian nongovernmental organisation dedicated to promoting environmental justice by creating platforms and processes that empower vulnerable communities and foster access to accurate information on critical issues such as environmental protection, extractive industries, climate change, sustainable energy, water security and agriculture. Enhanced accountability, good governance and sustainable development are the ultimate objectives of the CEJ's work.



Context

The mining industry is a cornerstone of Zambia's economy. In recent years, copper alone has accounted for roughly 69–70% of the country's export earnings, with the sector contributing just over 10% of gross domestic product and generating nearly 39% of government revenue.¹⁹

To meet rising global demand for energy transition-linked minerals, Zambia has set an ambitious target of achieving three million tonnes of copper production per year by 2031.²⁰

It is against this backdrop of rapid expansion and targeted development of critical resources that the EPF must operate. Designed to ensure mining companies meet their environmental obligations, the EPF was established under the 1995 Mines and Minerals Act and operationalised in 2007. The EPF requires companies to deposit hard currency contributions (cash, bonds or bank guarantees) to cover environmental rehabilitation if mining companies fail to take rehabilitation measures themselves. In theory, the fund ensures that the Zambian government and Zambian people do not have to pay the cost of restoring the land and environment once mining activities are completed and revenues extracted.

Despite this being a legal requirement, the majority of the mines operating in Zambia are failing to make the necessary contributions. In 2023, it was estimated that only 26 out of approximately 500 mines approved to operate were complying.²¹ And among submitting financial guarantees, many did not comply with Bank of Zambia validation requirements. In addition, the relevant department within the Ministry of Mines has not enforced compliance by defaulting parties, further undermining the integrity of the fund.²²

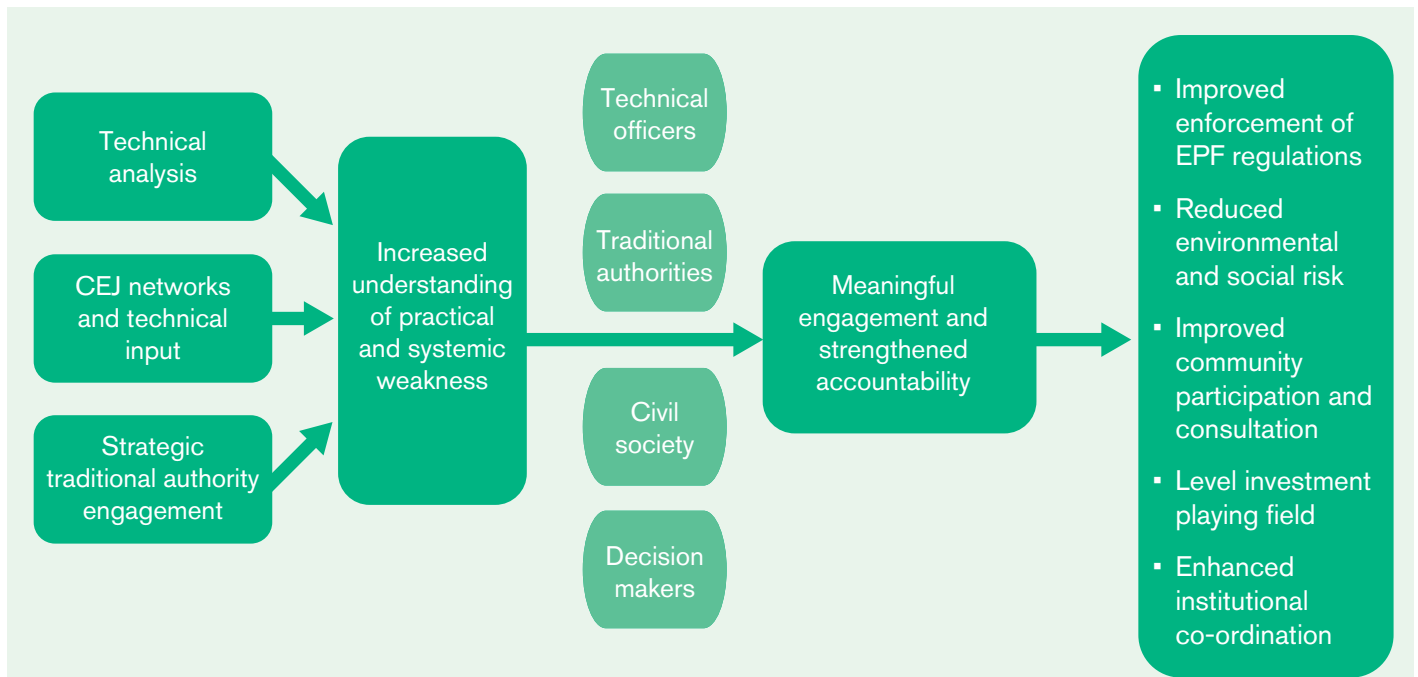
These failures to implement the EPF requirements are causing significant challenges. Environmental degradation, dangerous health and safety conditions and unusable land leave lasting impacts on both host communities and Zambia's natural resources — devastating and limiting sustainable livelihood options and undermining any aspirations of a just transition. Traditional land use and tenure governance patterns are also disrupted.

Technical support requested

The CEJ requested ALIGN's technical support for two distinct but interlinked areas of work:

1. An inaugural traditional leaders' caucus to bring together leaders to discuss and identify barriers and implementation gaps for environmental and social protections within the context of land-based investments.
2. Technical backstopping for a legal and policy analysis of the EPF.

Vision of change



What was done?

Between October 2022 and October 2023, the CEJ, with ALIGN support, undertook activities to identify and highlight land-based investment governance gaps, bring together key stakeholders, and analyse existing challenges within the EPF. This included organising an inaugural traditional leaders' caucus, developing a summary action paper from the event, a technical analysis of the EPF and implementation gaps, and publishing a policy brief.

- **Inaugural traditional leaders' caucus:** the CEJ convened the leaders' caucus as a side event to the 2022 Environmental Protection Dialogue, an annual event hosted by the CEJ. The caucus brought together traditional leaders from across Zambia, was officiated by the minister of local government and rural development and sought to highlight land-based investment governance gaps, particularly those impacting environmental protection.
- **Summary action paper:** the objective of the traditional leaders' caucus was to surface concerns and raise awareness around governance issues driving investment-linked environmental degradation. The implementation team gathered traditional leaders' views, and a summary action paper was developed and endorsed. The paper captured 11 action points, which were discussed during the Environmental Protection Dialogue.
- **Analysis of the EPF:** the CEJ, with ALIGN support, undertook a comprehensive review of the EPF to assess how effectively it ensures mining companies fulfil their environmental obligations. The analysis examined gaps in regulatory oversight, compliance monitoring and the mechanisms through which funds are collected, managed and disbursed. It highlighted challenges such as inconsistent enforcement, limited transparency in fund utilisation and weak engagement with affected communities. The findings provided evidence-based insights into the structural and operational barriers limiting the EPF's effectiveness, as well as a strong foundation for targeted reforms and capacity-building initiatives.

- **Policy paper to inform advocacy:** drawing on the technical analysis of the EPF and inputs from stakeholder consultations, including government representatives, traditional leaders and community members, CEJ developed a policy brief to inform advocacy and policy engagement.²³ The brief outlines key recommendations for improving the design and implementation of the EPF, enhancing accountability and strengthening governance in land and extractives sectors. It also identifies actionable steps to ensure that environmental protection measures are enforceable, that communities are adequately consulted and compensated and that exploiting mineral resources contributes to sustainable development. The brief provides a strategic tool for CEJ and partners to influence policy, raise public awareness and guide the implementation of reforms aligned with environmental justice principles.

Impacts/Outcomes

The CEJ–ALIGN collaboration produced tangible shifts in stakeholder engagement, policy attention and public accountability around land-based investments and the EPF. These include:

- **Policy influence and regulatory follow-through:** following validation of the EPF policy brief, a technical officer in the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Development began incorporating research insights into proposed amendments to the EPF regulations, signalling that the analysis is informing formal policy drafting.
- **Stronger regulatory engagement:** the Acting Chief Inspector of Environment (Mines Safety Department) has engaged with stakeholders to clarify inconsistencies in EPF implementation and has invited CSOs to a consultative workshop to review the proposed regulatory amendments, an important step toward more inclusive rule-making.
- **Demands for improved transparency:** the work has catalysed a greater push for access to information on EPF contributions and use, for example, calls for clear public disclosure of who is contributing to the fund and the form and value of those contributions.
- **Raised profile for the CEJ and strengthened partnerships:** the CEJ's profile on land and extractives governance has grown, opening doors to deeper engagement with government technical teams and creating entry points for collaboration with other development actors. The analysis and convening work have revealed synergies with ongoing international development priorities (governance, environmental protection and just transition agendas), positioning the CEJ as a credible partner for technical assistance and multistakeholder initiatives.
- **Regular engagement of traditional leaders:** following the success of the ALIGN-supported inaugural traditional leaders, caucus, CEJ has continued to support this annual platform as a key space for integrating responsible natural resource management with customary leadership priorities. Building on the outcomes of the 2023 caucus, CEJ facilitated subsequent provincial traditional leaders, caucuses in Solwezi²⁴ and Serenje²⁵ districts. These provincial engagements demonstrate how the caucus has evolved into a continuous multilevel platform that empowers traditional authorities to play a more active role in environmental stewardship and community-centred resource governance.



Approaches and political economy factors

By taking a two-pronged approach of firstly convening a key stakeholder group (traditional leaders) ahead of the annual Environmental Protection Dialogue and, secondly, convening a wider stakeholder dialogue, the CEJ was able to achieve multiple objectives, which strengthened the impact of the more technical policy and regulatory analysis of the EPF. Creating a forum for traditional leaders to discuss key issues and concerns with their peers provided an opportunity for more focused, open discussions. It also facilitated a consensus on priority issues, which enabled contextually rooted messaging on identified issues going into broader multistakeholder discussions.

The implementation team considered it important to work with traditional leaders within the Zambian context of land-based investment governance because of their voice in national policy making, their first-hand experience of implementation gaps and the unique position they occupy as a bridge between customary systems and the formal state processes. They are also a stakeholder group with significant power within Zambia.

The decision to focus on the EPF was informed by discussions during the initial traditional leaders' caucus and subsequent Environmental Protection Dialogue. In addition, supporting an area identified as a priority for key stakeholders ensured greater momentum and political support. The CEJ approach of engaging with government as a provider of additional technical support, lightening the burden on stretched government officials, was an additional factor contributing to the success of this work.

Engaging the private sector proved fairly complicated for several reasons. A lack of trust and a weak culture of transparency made it difficult to have meaningful conversations. It was also difficult to obtain clear information on who was authorised to speak on behalf of the private sector actors approached. In addition, an absence of government incentives or articulated expectations for the private sector to engage was an obstacle. This issue was more pronounced among smaller companies than among larger multinationals.

During the ALIGN engagement, the CEJ made adjustments to maximise impact and ensure that outputs were actionable. One key adjustment was narrowing the scope to focus on a single, high-priority piece of legislation: the EPF regulations. This allowed the team to respond to what had emerged during the Environmental Protection Dialogue and conduct a deeper, more thorough review, ensuring that findings were precise, contextually grounded and directly relevant to ongoing policy discussions. By concentrating its efforts on a single instrument, the CEJ was able to produce targeted recommendations that could realistically inform amendments and strengthen regulatory compliance.

In addition, greater emphasis was placed on legal analysis and framework engagement, as this provided a more neutral grounding from which to engage public and private sector stakeholders. This involved systematically examining the EPF regulations in relation to other relevant laws, policies and institutional arrangements to identify gaps, inconsistencies and opportunities for improvement. This approach strengthened the evidence base for the CEJ's recommendations, providing government stakeholders, traditional leaders and other actors with clear, actionable guidance for reform. The combination of a focused scope and rigorous legal analysis ensured that technical outputs were both credible and practically useful, enhancing the likelihood of uptake and long-term impact.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Multistakeholder dialogues**
- **Key stakeholder engagement**
- **Politically informed government engagements**
- **Action research**
- **Technical analysis, and**
- **Technical backstopping.**

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

1. Working with traditional leaders

- Ensure each step in the engagement processes is agreed upon and systematically documented in action reports.
- Collaborative feedback and transparency throughout the process are critical to maintaining trust and ensuring that concerns and priorities are accurately captured.

2. Engaging government

- Synchronise support with ongoing processes and identify government priorities. Organisations perceived as constructive and adding actionable value are more likely to be invited to participate in relevant policy and regulatory discussions.
- Engaging strategically across different levels of government (national versus provincial/district), recognising that priorities and decision-making authority can differ, and ensuring tailored approaches for each level enhances influence and legitimacy.
- Horizon scanning of emerging government priorities allows civil society to prepare materials proactively, enabling rapid, evidence-based responses that increase organisational credibility and future engagement opportunities.

3. Engaging civil society and development partners

- Build long-term partnerships within strategic thematic areas that extend beyond the objectives of individual projects. Sustained engagement strengthens institutional memory and influence over policy processes.
- Promote co-ordination and collaboration among international development actors to reduce duplication, fragmentation and dilution of efforts, and to leverage synergies across initiatives.

4. Information gathering and sensitive issues

- Standard questionnaires are often ineffective for politically sensitive topics. Face-to-face bilateral meetings or calls, particularly with government actors, tend to yield more reliable insights and foster trust.
- Systems should be established to retain and transfer institutional knowledge, avoiding repeated restatement of foundational information and ensuring continuity across projects.

5. Recommendations for future technical engagements




- Improve documentation and strengthen follow-up mechanisms for stakeholder consultations, capturing both process and outcomes and ensuring the information is available to interested parties.
- Continue integrating legal and technical analysis with stakeholder engagement to ensure evidence-based, actionable recommendations.
- Maintain flexibility to adapt strategy based on political economy factors, including shifts in government priorities, stakeholder interests and emerging sectoral challenges.
- Facilitate multilevel engagement with government and promote information sharing to improve policy coherence and ensure that reforms reflect both national and local realities.

COLANDEF Land and Property Rights (COLANDEF) — Co-ordinated voices for inclusive land governance

Authors: Nana Ama Yirrah, Darryl Vhugen, Esther Akwii and Nathaniah Jacobs

“Multistakeholder policy processes have become increasingly critical in recent years, offering significant value to governments, local communities, private sector actors and multilateral institutions alike. Despite their importance, there remains limited clarity regarding institutional responsibility for convening and facilitating these processes. To date, development partners have largely assumed the role of both financiers and facilitators. However, for such processes to be sustainable and legitimate, a more robust approach is required — one that is government-led, collectively owned by stakeholders and managed through independent and transparent mechanisms.”

Nana Ama Yirrah, executive director of COLANDEF

COUNTRY	Ghana	
PARTNER	COLANDEF Land and Property Rights (COLANDEF)	
PARTNER TYPE	National CSO	
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED		
	 Precondition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutions and resourcing for implementation
	 Governance building blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear institutional mandates and co-ordination ▪ Public participation ▪ Secure tenure
	 Conducive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Civil society advocacy ▪ Stakeholder engagement

About COLANDEF

Established in 2004, COLANDEF is a nongovernmental organisation that seeks an end to agricultural land tenure insecurity within a unified land sector. To achieve this vision, COLANDEF implements interventions under three main pathways. These are:



1. Transforming the service delivery of land-sector institutions
2. Education on land rights, and
3. Advocacy for inclusive land and natural resource policies.

Through these intervention areas, COLANDEF supports a variety of initiatives aimed at securing the tenure rights of those using agricultural lands through bottom-up solutions. In addition to delivering targeted interventions at the community level, the organisation focuses on land policy research and national policy advocacy to improve the recognition and strength of local land rights. COLANDEF provides training and institutional strengthening of both customary land and state institutions, especially in the areas of transforming land-based investments to achieve socially and ecologically responsible investments in Ghana. Similarly, COLANDEF has expanded its work in support of stronger women's land rights, targeting not only local women in communities but also focusing on queen mothers (female traditional leaders in Ghana) in their institutional capacity.

Context

Weak land governance within Ghana's dual land tenure system, where statutory and customary systems are somewhat operationally disconnected, has been a longstanding issue. This has led to insecurity of tenure, gaps in protecting marginalised landholders and inefficiencies in land administration. The enactment of the 2020 Land Act created an opportunity for progress, but key challenges, such as ensuring its effective implementation, including harmonisation of statutory and customary practices, closing gaps between law and practice and fostering inclusive governance that safeguards vulnerable groups, still need to be addressed.

68% of all land in Ghana is used for agricultural purposes. 80% of all land is customary land, most of which is unregistered.²⁶ With increasing competition for agricultural lands, the threats of dispossession and tenure insecurity have continued to increase for smallholder agricultural land users.

Despite the Land Act providing recognition for all land rights in the country and including mechanisms for their registration, the current institutional setup for land registration remains inaccessible for smallholder users of customary land. Many are left with little option but to make use of formal, individual land rights registration, which can be more easily achieved. This is despite the provision for customary land secretariates, which are decentralised land registration centres for registering customary land rights. Additional challenges include services that remain far removed from the local communities that need them, the expense of services and services that don't meet the needs of agricultural land users.

Gender inequality also remains a challenge, particularly in relation to land rights. Even Queen Mothers, who are important traditional leaders in Ghana, do not have their land rights respected. As the joint owners of customary land, they should be meaningfully involved in decisions concerning that land. Unfortunately, these rights have been largely ignored.

Technical support requested

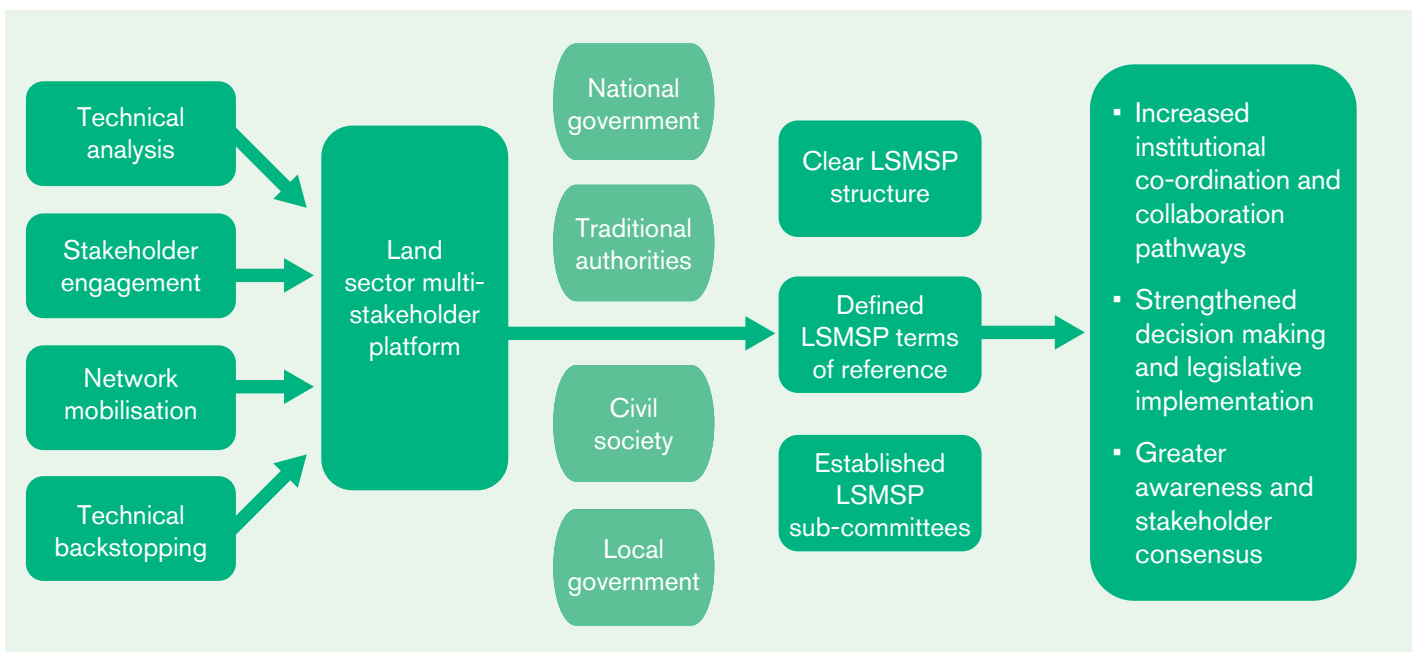
COLANDEF requested ALIGN's technical support to secure national-level momentum for a more inclusive approach to land governance and for improved implementation of the Land Act. COLANDEF specifically requested assistance as follows:

- Technical analysis of the Land Act (the Act)
- Ongoing development of a draft implementation strategy and regulations to accompany the Act
- Refinement of the design of a land sector multi-stakeholder platform (LSMSP) that brings together all interested stakeholders
- Convening of a National Land Conference in December 2022.

Following the success of this initial phase of ALIGN technical support, COLANDEF requested additional support to ensure that the LSMSP was effectively operationalised and could carry out its mandate as determined by the National Land Conference. The TSF provided an additional technical review and inputs for the development of a new Ghana National Land Policy.

Vision of change

Co-ordinated voices for inclusive land governance



What was done?

ALIGN supported COLANDEF to promote land rights and tenure security in Ghana by securing national-level support for a more inclusive approach to land governance.

- **Technical analysis of the newly adopted Land Act:** COLANDEF and ALIGN conducted a legal analysis of the 2020 Land Act. The analysis identified many key features in the act and the statutory provisions requiring regulatory amplification or clarification. The issues addressed included: customary land and customary land secretariats; title and deeds-based land registration; usufructuary interests; women's land rights; compulsory land acquisition; electronic conveyancing; and fees for services and other user expenses, as well as several other matters. For each issue, the analysis proposed clarifications and next steps, including matters to be addressed via regulation. The findings in the analysis were used to develop a draft implementation strategy and implementing regulations to support the operationalisation of the act.
- **Multistakeholder convening:** COLANDEF and the Ministry of Land jointly hosted a National Land Conference. This event brought together stakeholders from government, civil society, customary authorities, communities and the private sector.
- **Design and operationalisation of the LSMSP:** COLANDEF, with ALIGN technical backstopping, consolidated work for the design and establishment of the LSMSP. This included developing terms of reference to operationalise LSMSP structures, such as the oversight committee, secretariat and technical working groups (TWGs).
- **Initiate review of the National Land Policy:** one of the recommendations to come out of the National Land Conference was a review of Ghana's 1999 National Land Policy in the light of emerging issues. COLANDEF, with ALIGN support, developed the overarching terms of reference for developing a new National Land Policy and responding to issues such as gender equality and social inclusion, climate action and environmental management.
- **Convene a women's rights forum:** more than 90 key stakeholders and national actors came together at a national forum convened under the title: 'The Status of Women's Land, Property and Natural Resource Rights in Ghana', to discuss key issues relevant to the protection and development of women's rights in relation to these issues.

Key impacts/Outcomes

The COLANDEF–ALIGN collaboration proactively took steps to enhance the implementation of Ghana's newly enacted Land Act, encouraged stakeholder collaboration, increased political momentum and bolstered the technical capabilities of Ghana's Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

- **Established and operationalised the LSMSP:** COLANDEF developed and implemented the institutional structures and procedural mechanisms needed to establish a fully functional LSMSP. Management structures were created such as the oversight committee and secretariat. Technical working groups were established on strengthening customary land management; implementation of the Land Act, 2020; surveying and boundary demarcation; review of the National Land Policy of 1999; land use planning and spatial development; and the consolidation and integration of all land sector initiatives.
- **Generated and secured government support:** government support and continued political momentum have been vital to the success of the LSMSP. COLANDEF secured this buy-in and encouraged sustained engagement on action plans for inclusive land governance. The LSMSP was officially inaugurated in July 2023 and is hosted by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.
- **Regulations and implementing guidelines developed:** technical inputs on the draft Land Act Regulations, 2023, provided technical backstopping support to the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Lands Commission. This has resulted in the development of implementation strategies, regulations governing land-based investments and transactions and implementation guidelines.

Approaches and political economy factors

Two key actions formed the foundation for the successful establishment and operationalisation of the LSMSP. Firstly, the initial technical review and analysis of the Land Act and the legislative ecosystem in which it operates provided a clear and pragmatic overview of implementation gaps and bottlenecks. It also ensured stakeholder dialogues and engagements could coalesce around clearly identified issues and objectives, evolving constructively and in a structured manner.

The second action was the careful leveraging of political will and momentum generated by the December 2022 National Land Conference. The conference brought relevant stakeholders together to discuss challenges and seek consensus on a way forward.

COLANDEF's central role in maintaining momentum, its well-established networks and position of trust for both the state and customary institutions were also key. Serving as a neutral connector, COLANDEF was able to bridge the gaps between the state tenure system and customary land tenure systems. The state actors, for example, saw a partnership with COLANDEF as an opportunity to build stronger relationships with powerful traditional leaders whose consent is needed to move forward with national-level policy processes. Such stakeholder incentives contributed towards the sustained engagement needed to make the LSMSP a success. COLANDEF's savvy navigation and use of stakeholder interests and deep understanding of the national political economy enabled it to convene the diverse stakeholders, as well as maintain their engagement throughout the entire process.

In addition, the rich vertical (national to subnational to local level) and horizontal (cross-sectoral and across stakeholder interests) stakeholder engagement built a critical mass of interest and joint accountability. This, combined with the technical preparation and support provided by COLANDEF and backstopped by ALIGN, avoided the bottlenecks and institutional delays that can often derail multi-stakeholder and consensus-driven dialogues. The flexible, iterative nature of the ALIGN technical support also enabled COLANDEF to adapt to emerging issues in strategic ways, which kept the work relevant and responsive to the process as it evolved.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Key stakeholder engagement**
- **Multistakeholder dialogues**
- **Network building and mobilisation**
- **Technical analysis**
- **Technical backstopping, and**
- **Technical inputs.**

Key lessons learned

Establishing multi-stakeholder platforms

- Institutionalised, inclusive dialogue mechanisms are essential for securing stakeholder buy-in and sustained momentum for land governance reforms.
- Inclusive dialogue must be rooted in thorough preparation and existing regulatory frameworks. The initial technical analysis of the Land Act helped provide the structural guardrails and strategic objectives for the success of the subsequent dialogues.

Generating and maintaining momentum

- High-level events such as the National Land Conference are powerful tools for generating momentum, building consensus and ensuring accountability across diverse stakeholders.
- Respected civil society organisations that enjoy the trust of multiple stakeholders can be invaluable in the consensus-building process. Not only can they act as a bridge between the state and other stakeholder groups, but they can also provide administrative support that avoids institutional delays and lost focus.
- Initial provision of a clear value proposition that advances the interests and objectives of key stakeholders is important. Embedding objectives within the broader group of stakeholders helps to maintain commitment and joint accountability in the longer term.

Responsive technical support

- Building on and supporting the established work programmes and long-term objectives of COLANDEF allowed ALIGN to capitalise on established relationships, which allowed for shorter implementation timelines.
- The flexible nature of support funding and the iterative, phased nature of the workplans allowed COLANDEF to respond to process developments, provide high-impact inputs and adapt methodology in real-time. This facilitated more contextually tailored, politically responsive, and impactful interventions.
- When working on processes of national interest and priority, it is important to ensure national organisations take the lead and drive the process. This ensures longer-term legitimacy and impact, as well as embedding skills and knowledge within local structures, institutions and organisations.







Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency (EKDIPA) — From process mapping to better investment decisions

Authors: Ayo Aribidara, Thierry Berger, Nathaniah Jacobs and Anna Bulman

“ALIGN facilitated all stakeholders to analyse the issues impacting land investment management in the state, resulting in the creation of the first Investment Approval Process (IAP) for Ekiti. This was very beneficial, as the World Bank commended Ekiti for having the best IAP among the Framework for Responsible and Inclusive Land-Intensive Agriculture (FRILIA) implementing states nationally. Furthermore, ALIGN’s intervention prior to FRILIA helped establish processes and identify points of disagreement among stakeholders, offering strategies to resolve conflicts as they emerge.”

Akintobi Olusanmi, technical adviser to the governor on geographic information systems and land management, Ekiti state

COUNTRY	Nigeria	
PARTNER	Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency (EKDIPA)	
PARTNER TYPE	Subnational investment promotion agency	
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED		
	 Investment precondition	▪ Institutions and resourcing for implementation
	 Governance building blocks	▪ Clear institutional mandates and co-ordination ▪ Respect for land rights
	 Investment cycle	▪ Screening, due diligence and identification of land rights
	 Conducive environment	▪ Legal certainty and predictable policies

About EKDIPA

Established in 2019, EKDIPA serves as an investment one-stop shop with the mission to promote and facilitate investment opportunities and improve the investment climate in Ekiti state, Nigeria. To achieve this, one of EKDIPA's core functions is to identify and document land available for investment purposes across different sectors, such as agriculture, housing, tourism or industry, amongst others. The agency is tasked with ensuring that suitable identified pieces of land can be made available in response to prospective investors' approved investment proposals. EKDIPA must ensure that land release takes place in a manner that protects the rights of all stakeholders (landowners, occupiers and communities), while also promoting efficient land use, job creation and sustainable economic development.



Context

The authority to allocate land in Nigeria rests solely with individual state governors. Primarily deriving from the 1978 Land Use Act, this highly centralised power structure at the state level has given rise to an opaque, complicated and often problematic implementation system that makes it challenging to weigh up increasingly complex land use and spatial prioritisation demands. At the state level, fragmented bureaucracies composed of multiple ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) — often with overlapping mandates and weak, paper-based record-keeping systems — oversee the processes needed to obtain two key land administration documents: the Certificate of Occupancy and the mandatory Governor's Consent.

This system and its shortfalls have direct and, at times, harmful consequences, giving rise to community evictions and displacements contrary to principles of international good practice, causing widespread disputes. Some estimate that land disputes make up as much as 30% of all legal issues brought before the courts in Nigeria. The legal provisions that grant governors broad powers to acquire land for the 'public interest', as well as a lack of procedural clarity and consistency, often create additional challenges.

In Ekiti state, the process for identifying and allocating land for investment involves several MDAs. Despite provisions requiring the creation of a state land allocation committee, at the time of the request for ALIGN technical support, there was little co-ordination and no standard operating procedure in Ekiti state. There had been instances where local communities and landholders were evicted or dispossessed without consent or the payment of adequate compensation. And MDAs struggled to make and implement strategic land use decisions needed to advance emerging priorities around climate and a just transition.

EKITI AGRO-ALLIED INTERNATIONAL CARGO AIRPORT, ADO-EKITI



Credit: Ogundile Abayomi

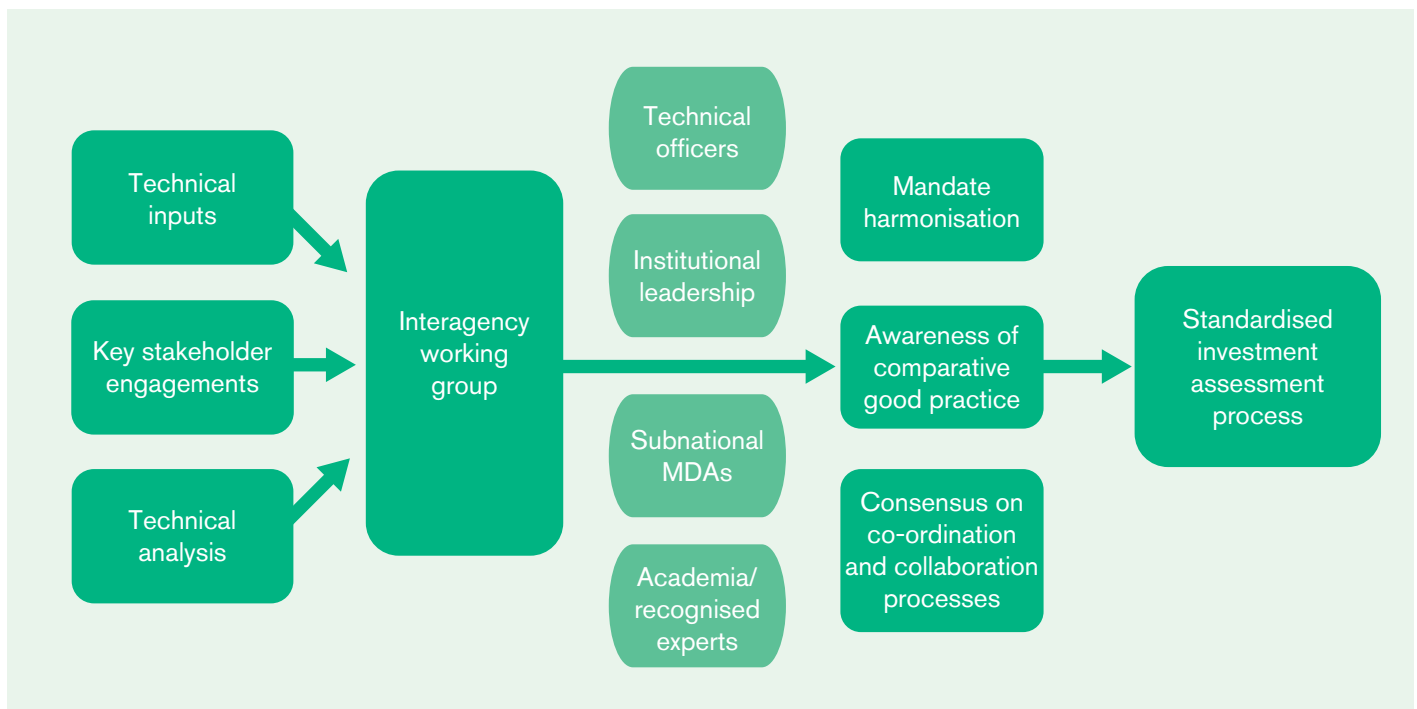
Technical support requested

In 2023, EKDIPA requested TSF to support ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional co-ordination and collaboration in the processes for the identification and allocation of land for investment. More specifically, EKDIPA requested support to carry out a gap analysis to identify:

1. Institutional mandate overlaps and underlaps or gaps that undermined effective co-ordination across MDAs within the investment land allocation processes
2. Process bottlenecks caused by mismatches between legal provision and practice, including confirmation of institutional roles and needed reforms (this also covered the compensation and resettlement process), and
3. Improved practices and procedures for enhanced institutional collaboration and coordination, in accordance with international good practice.

Vision of change

From process mapping to better investment decisions



What was done?

Throughout 2024 and 2025, the TSF supported a working group of MDAs led by EKDIPA to map Ekiti state's investment assessment process (IAP) and land allocation process. The work was implemented in two stages: first, a mapping, adjustment and internal consensus-seeking process for the IAP and land allocation process, and second, the comparison and alignment of the IAP and land allocation process with international good practice, identifying openings to improve practice. An opportunity to review EKDIPA's investment screening process also arose later. The following actions were taken within this two-stage process:

- **Legal process mapping:** the initial phase of work focused on mapping the mandates and roles of relevant MDAs, as well as the existing investment facilitation and land allocation process. This ensured a clear understanding of the process and MDA functions as they existed, both in law and in practice. This foundational step was essential to foster meaningful collaboration and facilitate structured engagement among the MDAs.
- **Establishment of a working group and inter-agency engagement forum:** the process and mandate mapping were undertaken with the participation and inputs of all relevant MDAs. Through multiple hybrid sessions, MDAs and ALIGN representatives jointly identified key elements for the IAP process. This stakeholder working group continued throughout the work and has become the primary forum for MDA collaboration and co-ordination within the final agreed IAP and land allocation process.
- **Engagement and training workshops:** following the mandate and process mapping, an in-person workshop brought together – for the first time – all relevant MDAs involved in the investment approval and land allocation process. Two additional follow-up workshops, for heads of departments and technical staff respectively, were organised to sensitise those who had not been involved in the working group and engagement forum, as well as further entrench the interagency engagement forum for enhanced co-ordination.
- **Analysis in light of international good practice:** ALIGN conducted an analysis of the agreed IAP against international good practice and shared the results with the working group.
- **Input into investment screening document:** ALIGN provided input into a new internal document on investment screening, examining EKDIPA's screening processes against good practice.

Key impacts/Outcomes

The EKDIPA–ALIGN collaboration produced several important changes that are already influencing investment approval practice. These include:

- **Formalisation of an interagency engagement forum:** deliberate engagement of MDA representatives throughout the mapping processes provided the activity around which the inter-agency forum could organically grow. With initial ALIGN support and an objective around which stakeholders could convene, a structured and inclusive interagency engagement forum has now been established.
- **Enhanced legally rooted co-ordination and collaboration:** the initiative enhanced co-ordination and collaboration by clarifying the regulatory roles and duties of each MDA and creating mechanisms for constructive engagement.
- **Ekiti state's first-ever documented IAP:** sustained support and collaboration across all relevant MDAs resulted in the first-ever formalised and agreed IAP in Ekiti state. Stakeholders worked together to identify gaps and points of tension and conflict within existing practice that prevented the efficient allocation of land, which were then addressed through the agreed IAP document.
- **Established a foundation for World Bank process on responsible agriculture:** the institutional mandate process-mapping exercise and resulting MDA consensus have also been used to engage with the World Bank-sponsored Framework for Responsible and Inclusive Land-Intensive Agriculture (FRILIA) process.²⁷ The ALIGN-supported IAP and co-ordination mechanisms were used as the basis for the large-scale agricultural IAP prepared by EKDIPA as part of the FRILIA process, ensuring consistency and coherence in the investment assessment framework.

- **Monitoring of resettlement action plans:** EKDIPA are using elements of the IAP to monitor the alignment of various resettlement action plans with international good practice, as well as the impacts on project-affected communities. More work to develop specific implementation guidance in this area is needed.
- **Awareness-raising around the importance of investment screening:** within ALIGN's support, EKDIPA commenced a review and formalisation process of its screening policy. Further support is needed to finalise this process.

Approaches and political economy factors

To navigate institutional dynamics and ensure long-term uptake, ALIGN adopted a carefully considered political economy approach to the work in Ekiti state. As the IAP and land allocation processes engaged many different MDAs and touched on numerous vested interests, an initial step of neutral regulatory process mapping was adopted. Firmly rooted in legislative frameworks, the mapping process allowed all stakeholders to objectively evaluate the process, as determined by national authorities, often beyond state-level control. This enabled stakeholders to build solidarity around solution-seeking and, to some extent, reduced political manoeuvring or perceived criticisms of individual institutions. The findings of this mapping were then compared to how processes were implemented in practice. Where gaps or bottlenecks were identified, expert insights of Ministry of Justice colleagues, eminent thought leaders and subject-matter experts from the agricultural and land policy sectors were sought before pragmatic steps to navigate identified grey areas were agreed.

A second approach was to ensure the work was driven by the priorities and needs of relevant MDAs, and that project structures and activities reflected the long-term mechanisms needed to sustain collaboration and co-operation. The project development and implementation processes were just as, if not more, important than the final agreed documents. Joint ownership of process, an adaptive approach to stakeholder needs and priorities and consensus-based decision making, established the mechanisms and pathways needed to ensure final decisions enjoyed broad cross-institutional support and sustainability.

Facilitating deep vertical and horizontal political buy-in at the institutional level was an additional strategy. To avoid lost momentum or progress due to staff movements or institutional changes, the work was deliberately anchored to the different engaged MDAs at both the political and technical levels. In addition, the knowledge and support of the state governor was established, which facilitated political will and momentum. A consultant, with significant contextual understanding and knowledge, was also brought in to guide and backstop the work. This ensured the ALIGN team were aware of areas of potential sensitivity and could offer proactive and effective options for stakeholders to successfully navigate challenging issues.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Institutional co-ordination**
- **Key stakeholder engagement**
- **Multistakeholder dialogues**
- **Politically informed government engagements**
- **Technical analysis**
- **Technical backstopping, and**
- **Technical inputs.**

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

Process and approach matter

- Technical support should not be 'parachuted in'. Unless embedded into a process that creates opportunities to develop the networks and relationships needed for long-term implementation of the work, it risks remaining a paper exercise without real-world impact, further fragmenting institutions or establishing unsustainable parallel structures. The development and implementation process is as important as the final output.
- Providing flexible, responsive technical support to a stakeholder-driven process must ensure alignment with mandated institutional roles and responsibilities and should not complicate or add to institutional power dynamics.
- To embed knowledge, enhance institutional memory and promote continuity, it is essential to involve the technical cadre in both the design and implementation of support projects. This group typically has greater longevity within public sector institutions compared to political leadership, making them key to sustaining reforms and operational consistency.

Building institutional collaboration and co-operation

A co-owned and legally rooted mandate and process gap analysis can be a powerful tool for overcoming institutional disagreements and establishing a foundation from which to build consensus-based institutional co-ordination and collaboration. Understanding both the regulatory process and the process as it exists in practice is important and may require a multi-step approach. This may include:

- Outlining the various tasks and steps involved in the process of allocating land for investment
- Analysing the institutional mandates of relevant MDAs to establish an agreed process, and
- Organising regular inter-institutional meetings and facilitated exchanges to encourage consensus and necessary political buy-in.

In situations where complex histories of institutional fragmentation have fostered mistrust, an independent external convenor, such as ALIGN, can help reshape the dynamic. Creating opportunities for structured engagement can establish more consensus-building opportunities.

Vertical and horizontal embedding

- Ensuring high-level political awareness and support can generate and maintain needed momentum and prioritisation, particularly when challenges arise. In this instance, the state governor's buy-in was key.
- Establishing both political and technical support at the level of individual MDAs and incorporating this into the inter-agency engagement forum ensured that the knowledge base for decision making was broadened and that discussions could result in meaningful, rapid and timely decisions.
- Regular meetings that demonstrated tangible forward momentum maintained political support and generated a sense of common purpose and connection, which contributed towards overall success.

Leveraging external processes

- During the implementation of ALIGN-supported work, the World Bank began implementing the FRILIA disbursement-linked indicator of the State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER) project, a performance-for-results programme that unlocked critical funding for improved land governance and agricultural investment. The ALIGN-supported work significantly enhanced Ekiti state's readiness and eligibility for funding. The ALIGN-supported processes could simply be updated, rather than developed from scratch. This FRILIA process has ensured renewed institutional and political support, allowing for deeper embedding of the developed IAP and its implementation practices. However, it should be noted that anchoring FRILIA through different sectoral institutions at the state level did reopen challenges related to institutional mandates and potential process fragmentation.

Himiza — From conflict to collaboration: strengthening dialogue on land and investment

Authors: Silas Nyagala, Hansika Agrawal and Nathaniah Jacobs

“I have lived on and cultivated this land for many years. When the mining project took over this area, we were told that we would be resettled and that new houses would be built for us. However, to date, my resettlement house has not been completed. Despite this, construction of the mining infrastructure has continued, leaving my family and me in a situation of uncertainty.


“While waiting for the house to be finished, I have continued farming on this land, but I have been prohibited from planting permanent crops such as cassava. This restriction has severely affected my ability to produce food and sustain my household. I am expected to wait without a clear timeline, yet I am not allowed to farm in a way that would ensure food security. This leaves me asking how my family is supposed to survive during this waiting period.

“In addition, a significant portion of my land, particularly the upper and hilly areas, was not compensated. We were informed that all mountainous land belongs to the government, yet the company representative claims that compensation was paid for everything. This does not reflect our reality. We had purchased this upper land legally and invested in its development over many years.

“The hills were an essential part of our livelihood. They were used for cultivation, grazing livestock and for keeping traditional trees that provided firewood and medicinal resources for our families. These trees were part of our daily life and our cultural knowledge. Since we have been pushed out of the mountain areas, these resources are no longer accessible to us. The loss of this land has not only affected our income and food production but has also disrupted our traditional practices and access to medicine and energy for cooking.

“Being displaced from the hills without compensation has caused serious hardship for my family. We have lost land we depended on for farming, grazing, firewood and traditional medicine, yet the promised resettlement and support have not materialised as expected.”

MaMa D, community member

COUNTRY	United Republic of Tanzania	
PARTNER	Himiza Social Justice	
PARTNER TYPE	Civil society organisation	
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED		
	Governance building blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public participation ▪ Access to information ▪ Secure tenure ▪ Mining sectoral practices
	Investment cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investment assessment phase: benefit sharing and compensation ▪ Implementation phase: community dialogue and condition enforcement
	Conducive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Civil society advocacy ▪ Host community legal empowerment ▪ Stakeholder engagement

About Himiza

Himiza Social Justice is a Tanzanian civil society organisation with a mission to advocate for and promote equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities through legal and policy advocacy, capacity building and community empowerment. Himiza has a particular focus on enhancing access to justice among rural and socioeconomically vulnerable communities.



Context

Sengerema District in Tanzania's Mwanza region has long faced land governance challenges. In the context of land-based natural resource investments, challenges have been particularly acute, with issues relating to the lack of transparency and community participation in land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation processes. This tends to lead to tensions between community and company actors, often grounded in community concerns about relocation and compensation measures and the potential for subsequent tenure insecurity.

The region at the southern end of Lake Victoria is an important gold mining centre. Five villages, Sotta A, Nyamg'ona, Kadashi, Nyanshimba and Kaningu have become the site of one of the most significant mining investments in the country. With operations expected to span more than two decades, the gold mine has been promoted as a key opportunity for both the country and the local area, promising employment and economic development.²⁸ Affecting more than 856 households, however, what started as hope for improved livelihoods and prosperity has become a source of uncertainty, lost livelihoods and dissatisfaction.

Land valuation and compensation processes have been delayed or contested, and disagreements on the adequacy, quality and effectiveness of compensation amounts persist. Many households remain in a state of prolonged uncertainty. In addition, delivery of alternative housing has been delayed, leaving affected families without secure alternatives, even as construction of mining infrastructure proceeds. Water and electricity access, restricted and lost arable land for farming, grazing land, long-term tenure security and disrupted social infrastructure all remained unresolved concerns.

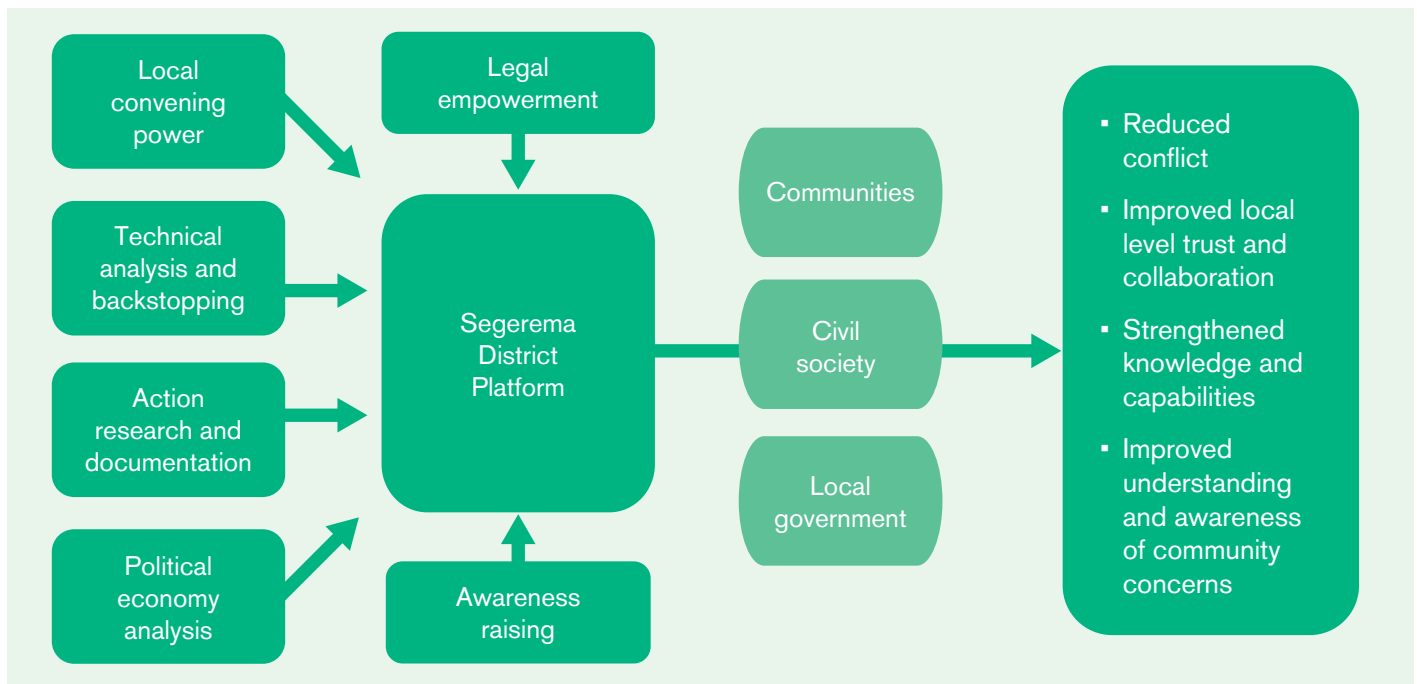
These issues have arisen within a broader national context of evolving investment governance, including the revised National Land Policy, which emphasises 'people-centred land governance' and aims to protect community land rights and ensure tenure security — treating land as a public good rather than solely an economic commodity. However, while there is regulatory progress toward more responsible investments, implementation remains a challenge. The status of non-surveyed customary or village land, land degradation and environmental concerns, livelihood disruption and weak institutional co-ordination continue to contribute to conflict and tension.

Technical support requested

Himiza Social Justice requested ALIGN's technical support to strengthen land governance processes in Sengerema district in light of challenges emerging from the gold mining project. With the aim of institutionalising participatory land governance processes in the district, Himiza sought ALIGN support to conduct a baseline assessment of land governance gaps and community needs, to support legal empowerment engagements with community members, facilitate multistakeholder dialogues and identify strategic government engagement approaches and engagement entry points.

Theory of change

From conflict to collaboration: strengthening dialogue on land and investment



What was done?

Between 2023 and 2025, Himiza, with ALIGN's support, undertook a series of activities to shift land governance in Sengerema district from adversarial to participatory approaches. This included an initial needs assessment, community empowerment and capacity-building efforts, political economy analysis of key political actors, and politically informed government engagements.

- **Initial needs assessment:** Himiza conducted a baseline needs and gaps assessment to understand the tensions between community members, company actors and government stakeholders, and to identify the land governance challenges underpinning these tensions.
- **Community legal empowerment workshops:** through a series of community workshops and dialogues, Himiza built community awareness and capacity on responsible land governance. The dialogues also supported community members to identify and articulate their concerns about and proposed solutions to key land governance challenges.
- **Stakeholder mapping and targeted government engagements:** Himiza conducted a politically informed stakeholder analysis to identify and engage government actors who would be most responsive to community interests and needs. This exercise helped Himiza secure critical buy-in from government officials ahead of any direct engagements between community members and local government stakeholders.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Himiza organised and implemented a widely disseminated radio campaign which reached and raised awareness among both community members and local government actors.

These efforts culminated in the establishment of the Sengerema District Platform (SDP), a formal local-level engagement forum for sustained community-government dialogue around land governance challenges.

Key impacts/Outcomes

The activities undertaken helped Himiza secure critical buy-in from local government stakeholders, while equipping community members with the knowledge, tools and strategies necessary to meaningfully advocate for community priorities to be addressed through strengthened investment governance practices. This foundation helped Himiza successfully establish the SDP and also ensured that discussions between community members and local government representatives were structured, productive and forward-looking. This marked a significant shift in how investment governance issues were addressed in the district.

After the SDP was established, participating government officials expressed interest in collaborating with Himiza to institutionalise the platform, making it an institutionally held engagement mechanism, to ensure long-term community engagement in local investment governance. Himiza is now exploring avenues to formalise the platform through continued engagements with key government officials, post-ALIGN, including potentially supporting the development of relevant by-laws and advocating for financial allocations for the platform in the district's budget.

“Before the platform, people were stressed and confused. Now we know where to raise our concerns and how to ask for accountability.”

Community member

“The discussions through the Sengerema Dialogue Platform helped us understand community concerns more clearly. These issues are now part of our planning and decision making.”

District official

“This is the first time the company has been asked to respond directly to the community.”

SPD meeting participant

Approaches and political economy factors

Himiza's adoption of an iterative, trust-building approach with government actors was pivotal to securing critical political buy-in at the district level. Deliberately moving away from an adversarial stance toward one of collective problem solving enabled Himiza to bring together both community and local government actors in a forum perceived as offering assistance and benefit to all stakeholders. Grounding these engagements in technical capability building ensured that participants 'spoke the language' and facilitated a constructive, ongoing exchange about challenges and solutions. This approach also ensured that it was possible to create a durable community-driven structure, unbound from the objectives and timeframes of the ALIGN project.

Further, aligning community-developed proposals with broader government mandates and development objectives enhanced the credibility and traction of initiatives and facilitated engagement and prioritisation by local government stakeholders. However, it proved difficult to engage higher-level decision makers beyond the district level. These officials have more leverage and influence over the national investment and policy reform processes that shape local implementation practice. Officials at this level are often removed from the more immediate concerns of constituents and getting them to engage was difficult. This higher-level engagement is needed to achieve more systemic impact and institutionalisation of local responsible investment practices. To address this, Himiza is now engaging with national-level civil society networks and exploring opportunities to collaborate that have opened up through the ALIGN work.

Himiza also identified initial challenges in bringing local-level experts from relevant government departments together. Until stakeholders fully understood the purpose and objectives of the engagements, getting the right people in the room was difficult. Clarifying officials' roles and mandates, increasing stakeholder awareness and understanding, and carefully balancing transparency and inclusivity with operational efficiency — so that key voices were not drowned out — contributed to the success of the SDP. Engagement with the private sector proved challenging, as it was difficult to identify responsible office-bearers or those who could provide definitive responses. Changes in company structures also made it difficult to build links.

Lastly, the iterative and flexible approach of the TSF enabled Himiza to work with communities and local government authorities to identify emerging priorities and interventions and adjust to contextual opportunities and openings. This allowed Himiza to respond to issues and concerns identified following technical training, which built stakeholder consensus, confidence and trust, and ensured that the work remained relevant. This, in turn, reinforced the community-driven nature of the engagement structures.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Community legal empowerment**
- **Mandate mapping**
- **Multistakeholder dialogues**
- **Political economy analysis**
- **Stakeholder mapping**
- **Technical backstopping**
- **Radio campaigns**

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

- **Early and strategic political engagement matters:** building trust with receptive local government authorities and aligning community priorities with government agendas created the foundation for lasting change.
- **Institutionalised dialogue platforms can be effective:** the SDP demonstrated that structured, inclusive forums can transform tension into collaboration, ensuring mutual accountability. It is vital for stakeholders to build trust and shift from adversarial positioning to collaborative problem solving, which can yield effective and responsive solutions to pervasive investment governance challenges.
- **Empowerment beyond awareness:** equipping communities with both legal knowledge and negotiation skills enabled them to engage effectively, not just passively receive information.
- **Bottom-up political economy:** combining technical knowledge of community rights and interests with politically informed approaches can enhance the effectiveness of community advocacy. Direct accounts from those most impacted can be far more effective in delivering key messages than written analysis or civil society organisation reporting.
- **Dialogue of equals:** the success of multistakeholder platforms and dialogues often hinges on the ability to bring different stakeholders and their interests together to facilitate an open and equal exchange. Himiza's parallel strategy, building both community capacity and political buy-in, demonstrated the success of this approach.
- **Linking local action to national reform:** sustaining local gains requires engaging with national policymakers to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to local budgets. While local government support ensures implementation, strategic collaboration with ministries, members of parliament and national authorities enables policy influence, legal reform and resource mobilisation. National champions and vertical networks can help scale successful local models like the SDP by integrating them into broader frameworks.
- **Local voice and perspectives in decision making:** investment decision making processes need greater inclusion of local-level voices, whether from citizens or government. Policy and regulatory frameworks should facilitate this.

Swadhina — When women lead, land rights grow stronger

Authors: Saswati Roy Patnaik, Anirudh Nanda and Nathaniah Jacobs



“Women are always labourers, whether on their own farm or someone else’s. They work hard in the fields but do not have decision-making power. Decisions about which crops to plant, where to sell the produce and who receives the profit are made solely by the men in the household. Despite their significant contributions, women lack rights and decision-making power.”

Sonamoni, Dhoboni village, Mosabani

The Indian state of Jharkhand is predominantly rural. Although agriculture plays a pivotal role in the state economy, agricultural practices and land tenure rights are predominantly shaped by highly patriarchal customary laws. This affects women’s access to land and resources and leaves them disempowered in the very activities they power — treated as labourers on their own land.

Growing economic pressures and changing ways of life have shifted cultivation toward cash crops, like oilseeds, reducing the cultivation of food crops and increasing food insecurity. Cultivation methods have changed. Nature-friendly local seeds and organic manures have been replaced by hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers. Women have no access to these market-based items, which makes them even more dependent on male relatives and further restricts their agency. Alarming environmental impacts of both changed agricultural practices and climate change are already known to all, and increasing pressures on surrounding land are making the situation harder.

Women’s land rights and access to tenure security are fundamental for women’s empowerment in this context, re-establishing their dignity in an agrarian society. There are laws and mechanisms that can be harnessed, but knowledge, skills and confidence are needed. So too is an understanding of the challenges faced and the willingness to listen and provide support. Suleka, a young woman aged 24, shared her feelings, “I want to learn a new skill which will enable me to earn money. But I cannot go out of the village because my family members will not allow me to go outside the village for training. Wish there is an opportunity in our area to enhance our skills.”

COUNTRY	India
PARTNER	Swadhina
PARTNER TYPE	Civil society organisation
RESPONSIBLE LAND-BASED INVESTMENT ELEMENTS TARGETED	
	 Governance building blocks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure tenure, respect for land, labour and human rights ▪ Environmental protection and climate action
	 Conducive environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulatory implementation ▪ Civil society advocacy ▪ Legal empowerment ▪ Institutional capacity and resourcing

About Swadhina

Swadhina, established in 1986, is a civil society organisation dedicated to women's empowerment and child development. Swadhina believes that true social progress requires the equal and active participation of women. To achieve this, Swadhina focuses on ensuring equal land and property rights for women, promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and fostering the development of marginalised children through education, health and nutrition. Swadhina works in five states across India, with a focus on remote tribal areas, including East Singhbhum in Jharkhand.



Context

Some 30% of the Indian state of Jharkhand is under forest cover and is predominantly inhabited by the state's tribal communities, who make up 26.3% of the state's total population. Indian law recognises Indigenous Peoples as tribal communities. The right to customary use of forests and land was denied to tribal communities during colonisation. In 2006, India passed the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), which included steps towards granting tribal communities rights to the forested areas they depend on. The act, however, came with onerous administrative requirements and elaborate government approvals processes. These requirements and processes have been difficult for Indigenous communities, which have been subjected to generations of marginalisation, to navigate and access. As a result, the Indigenous Peoples who are supposed to benefit from the progressive provisions of the FRA continue to face food insecurity, limited livelihood opportunities and very low incomes.

Large tracts of land remain untitled and unclaimed. Recently, there have been increasing cases of external encroachments into these areas, for example, forest cutting, stone quarries and small manufacturing units, resulting in a gradual loss of forest cover and land degradation, which, in turn, pose an increased threat of climate change impacts. Women living in these communities are the most impacted by these developments because most men migrate elsewhere for better livelihood opportunities, and the women alone have to care for their families and agricultural fields.

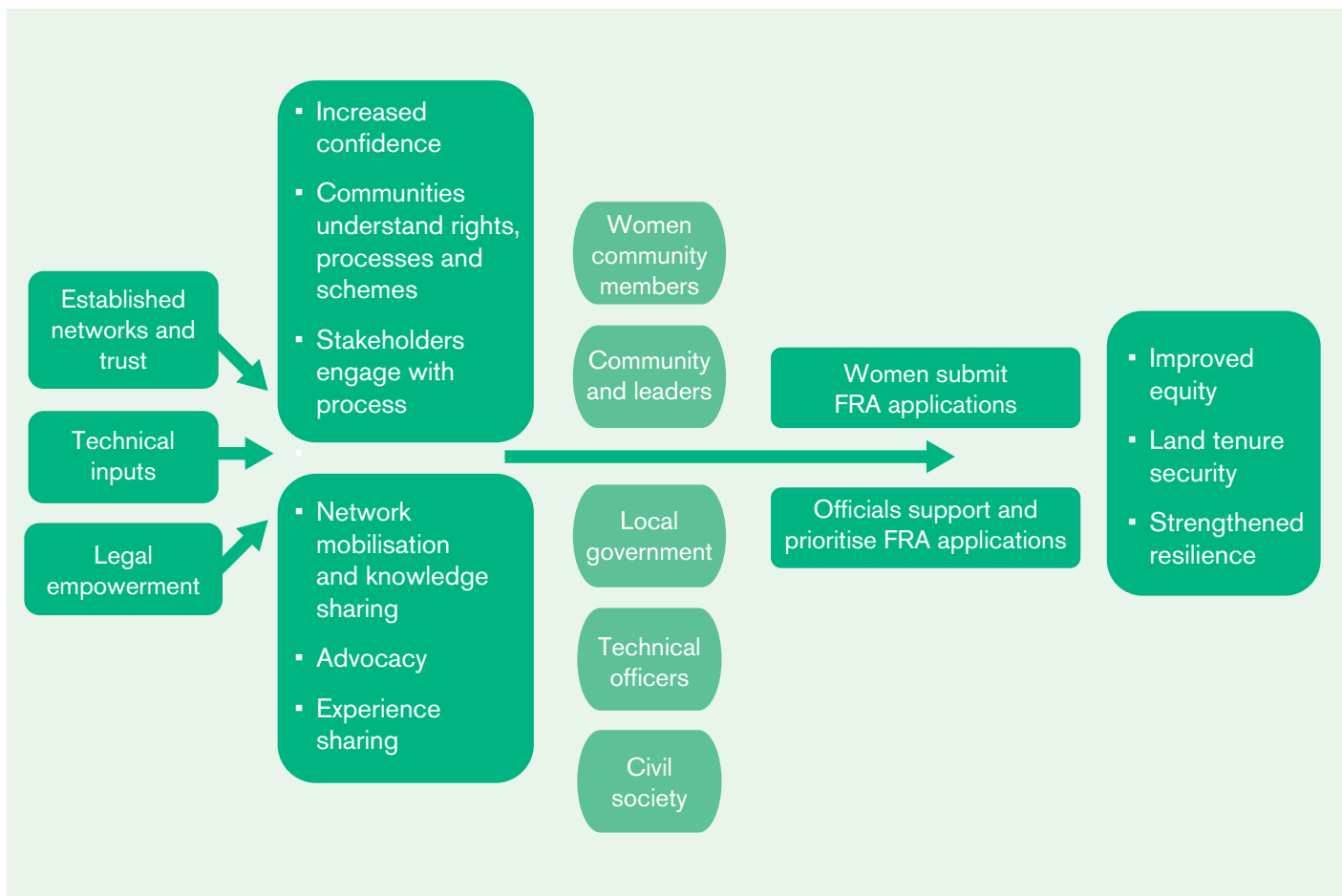
Technical support requested

Swadhina requested ALIGN's technical support to:

1. Strengthen the role of women in land governance and decision-making processes
2. Raise social awareness of land and natural resource laws, particularly the FRA, and related government schemes
3. Support the facilitation of community access to, and utilisation of, land and natural resource rights, and
4. Develop community awareness and capabilities to respond to potential climate-linked initiatives.

Vision of change

When women lead, land rights grow stronger



What was done?

Swadhina carried out activities in East Singhbhum, Jharkhand, from late 2024 to mid-2025. With ALIGN support, multiple interventions to strengthen community awareness and capabilities and further the overarching objectives of Swadhina took place. These included:

- **Capability building for women:** facilitating the organisation of women from ten villages into local groups for peer support and collective action. Swadhina hosted four leadership workshops to empower women to raise community issues and engage effectively with government officials.
- **Land reclamation and resource management:** assisting 40 families in reclaiming fallow land to grow food and improve green cover using sustainable methods. A participatory resource-mapping exercise was conducted to help communities identify and strategically manage local resources.
- **Advocacy and government engagement:** enhanced engagement with local officials to expedite the implementation of the FRA: meetings with the state education and agriculture ministers to highlight systemic roadblocks preventing Indigenous communities from accessing benefits.
- **Facilitation of government schemes:** actively facilitating community access to government schemes, helping them secure agricultural inputs (food grains, seeds, sprinklers) and file land rights applications under the FRA.
- **Knowledge exchange:** organising a state-level workshop for women representatives, CSOs and government officials to share knowledge on strengthening FRA implementation, also launching a monthly online gathering, 'Meet the Experts', to connect grassroots leaders with global experts.

Key impacts/Outcomes

ALIGN's technical and financial support proved helpful in enabling Swadhina to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Progress on land rights claims:** Swadhina helped communities file 102 applications for land rights under the FRA. This foundational work has created a clear pathway for securing tenure rights, with the number of applications expected to rise as awareness and government support grow.
- **Improved capabilities:** ALIGN's technical support increased awareness of comparative strategies and approaches adopted in other country contexts. This enhanced the capabilities of Swadhina's staff and volunteers, improving their ability to engage effectively with both beneficiary communities and government officials.
- **Enhanced food security and nutrition:** part of ALIGN's support focused on the reclamation of fallow land, enabling families to grow nutritious vegetables and fruits. This directly improved local food security and household nutrition and provided a contextually relevant, direct impact that built community trust and support, which could then be leveraged to generate momentum for more abstract governance-strengthening activities.
- **Increased women's leadership in resource management:** Swadhina's leadership workshops for tribal women led to their increased participation in managing natural and community resources, such as patrolling forest boundaries and conducting resource-mapping of villages.
- **Strengthened government support and collaboration:** advocacy efforts successfully sensitised local and state government officials to the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in accessing their rights under the FRA. This has led to greater government support in helping communities access other benefit schemes, such as those for food grains, water sprinklers and seeds.
- **Improved resilience:** contextually responsible and tangible actions to restore degraded land, implement ecoagricultural practices and protect existing forest land improved opportunities and household resilience.



Approaches and political economy factors

The technical support provided by the implementation team was driven and shaped by a deep understanding of the local political economy, which required the navigation of formal power structures, bureaucratic hurdles and deeply ingrained social norms. The team achieved impact using multiple carefully considered approaches and an ability to pivot in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. Swadhina adopted three broad areas of political economy-informed engagements, as follows:

Firstly, **building local legitimacy and alliances** was a core strategy. Swadhina recognised that successfully navigating the FRA application process would require a concerted effort with both elected officials and the bureaucracy. Their approach was twofold: leveraging social capital and social openings, and cultivating political allies. From the very beginning, the ALIGN work strategically focused on villages whose heads were sympathetic to Indigenous community and gender rights. This initial assessment of the political landscape was crucial. Furthermore, the established presence of Swadhina and the project manager, who was a very respected teacher at a local school, provided significant social capital. This increased the legitimacy of Swadhina's work and was pivotal for making connections with local officials. When it came to cultivating political allies, Swadhina made sure to invite relevant officials to their workshops, training and events. By publicly highlighting their support, these events also became a platform for officials to showcase their own achievements, creating a reciprocal relationship that turned potential gatekeepers into invested partners.

A second strategy for navigating the political economy was **overcoming systemic barriers**. Facing significant bureaucratic inertia and a complex legal landscape, Swadhina was able to leverage two opportunities with great success. An unplanned visit by the UK's Deputy High Commissioner to the remote project area enabled Swadhina to leverage the external influence and capture the attention of local government officials. The perceived diplomatic importance and high-profile engagement lent greater attention to the work and helped to overcome bureaucratic inertia. The second opportunity came via a network-facilitated contact within the state FRA cell. This connection allowed Swadhina to capitalise on insider knowledge to navigate complex legal procedures, which were a significant barrier to the successful submission of applications under the FRA. ALIGN had appointed an Indian legal consultant to provide critical insights into local contexts and laws, and this consultant was able to facilitate an introduction to an ally in the state FRA cell, which proved to be a watershed moment. This ally not only navigated the process but also volunteered to participate in the state-level workshop, which proved indispensable for completing the applications and engaging with the submissions process later.

The third engagement strategy involved remaining **adaptable in response to power dynamics**. Throughout the project, Swadhina demonstrated the ability to adapt its strategy to on-the-ground realities, for example, pivoting to multilevel advocacy and ally establishment. During the engagement with ALIGN, Swadhina shifted from solely focusing on the grassroots to including advocacy with local and state-level officials. This reflected a critical realisation that political support and impetus from the top were essential to accelerate claim filing and allowed for pressure to be applied both bottom-up and top-down simultaneously. Closely linked to this, Swadhina actively built rapport with local officials to expedite processes on the ground while also meeting with state-level cabinet ministers to secure high-level political support.

Swadhina's navigation of **gendered power structures** was especially significant. Facing challenges in gathering women due to the patriarchal social norms and restrictions, Swadhina conducted focused outreach to men and identified allies who would support women's participation. This strategic engagement slowly reduced hesitation among men and made it possible for women to gather for training and workshops.

Approaches

The following approaches were key to the success of this work:

- **Advocacy**
- **Awareness raising and sensitisation**
- **Network building and mobilisation**
- **Community legal empowerment**
- **Participatory resource mapping**
- **Politically informed government engagements, and**
- **Technical backstopping.**

Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

1. Partnership and support dynamics

- **Address power imbalances:** it is critical when implementing technical support interventions to consciously create space for national counterparts to set priorities. This fosters genuine ownership and provides space to identify openings and pivot in political economy-informed and strategic ways that are essential for achieving project goals.
- **Adopt a supportive, facilitative approach:** building a meaningful partnership in which the implementing organisation feels comfortable asking for help requires a foundation of trust, facilitation and value addition — not just oversight.
- **Prioritise in-person engagement:** direct, in-person visits are crucial for understanding a partner's strengths and the local context, facilitating direct knowledge exchange and identifying synergies.
- **Leverage local expertise:** engaging local consultants helps appreciate local realities and serves as a cultural and strategic bridge between partners, particularly when undertaking short-term technical interventions.

2. Project strategy and community engagement

- **Link abstract goals to tangible benefits:** to build community trust for long-term goals like land rights, it is vital to invest in activities with immediate outcomes. Supporting land reclamation and seed distribution directly improved lives, creating the buy-in needed for the more abstract legal work.
- **Identify and cultivate bureaucratic allies:** finding supportive individuals within the bureaucracy is a critical strategy for breaking through institutional inertia and accelerating progress toward a project's goals.
- **Provide opportunities for 'political wins':** providing local elected officials or bureaucratic officials with an opportunity to claim quick wins associated with the work can facilitate ongoing support and interest.

3. Risk management and adaptability

- **Diversify advocacy efforts:** relying on a single political champion poses a significant risk. When a key senior official passed away, several tasks were derailed, highlighting the importance of building a broad base of political support rather than depending on a single individual.
- **Maintain strategic flexibility:** work must be able to adapt to external events. When state elections and the harvest season halted progress on land claims and training, the project successfully pivoted its strategy to focus on land reclamation, ensuring continued momentum.

Endnotes

- 1 Hayward, D (2023) Land & Investments, Land Portal, 30 March.
- 2 Cotula, L (2016) 'Land Grabbing' and International Investment Law: Toward a Global Reconfiguration of Property? *Yearbook on International Investment Law & Policy 2014–2015*, pp.177–214. Oxford University Press, Oxford. www.iied.org/g04091
- 3 Cotula, L and Berger, T (2017) *Legal empowerment in agribusiness investments: harnessing political economy analysis*. LEGEND, London.
- 4 Kazemi, L (2025) *Working in Politically Savvy Ways to Improve Land-Based Investment Governance*. ALIGN.
- 5 Domingo, P and O'Neil, T (2014) *The politics of legal empowerment: Legal mobilisation strategies and implications for development*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London.
- 6 The ALIGN diagnostic tool was developed to guide work across all the ALIGN project workstreams. The tool built on approaches developed in Cotula, L (2016) *Foreign investment, law and sustainable development: A handbook on agriculture and extractive industries*. IIED, London. www.iied.org/12587iied, as well as practitioner experience and insights of the TSF design and set-up team.
- 7 Kajumba, T (2023) *Exploring equity in partnerships: lessons from five case studies*. IIED, London. www.iied.org/21861iied
- 8 Mwamba, W (2025) *TWP in the hotseat: Hard lessons from the frontline. Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice*.
- 9 Cotula, L, Berger, T, Knight, R, McInerney, TF, Vidar, M and Deupmann, P (2016) *Responsible Governance of Tenure and the Law: A Guide for Lawyers and Other Legal Service Providers*. FAO Technical Guide. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome.
- 10 Hudson, B, Hunter, D and Peckham, S (2019) Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: can policy support programs help?, *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(1), pp.1–14. DOI:10.1080/25741292.2018.1540378.
- 11 World Bank (2016) *Making Politics Work for Development: Harnessing Transparency and Citizen Engagement*. Washington DC.
- 12 Piron, LH (2025) *Understanding options for politically informed context analysis*. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice, University of Birmingham.
- 13 FCDO (2025) *Understanding a quick political economy analysis (PEA) approach*. UK Government.
- 14 See: IIED, ALIGN: Enhancing understanding and improving practices, www.iied.org/align-enhancing-understanding-improving-practices
- 15 Government of Togo (2018) *Loi n°2018-005 du 14 juin 2018 portant Code foncier et domanial [Law 2018-005 establishing a Code on Private and State-owned Land]*. www.cfntogo.org/download/loi-2018-005-du-14-juin-2018-portant-code-foncier-et-domanial-du-togo
- 16 Togo Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development (no date) *Strategie de securisation fonciere des perimetres amenes* [Strategy for securing developed areas].
- 17 Ministry of Agriculture, ALIGN and CFN Togo (2025) *Guide methodologique pour la cartographie participative et inclusive des ZAAP au Togo [Methodological guide for participatory and inclusive mapping of ZAAPs in Togo]*.
- 18 Kabaka is the title given to the traditional leader of the Buganda Kingdom. It is a specific cultural term and should not be translated or equated to 'king'. Kabaka is specific to the Buganda heritage and cannot be used in reference to other cultural leadership offices. There is only one Kabaka, across the globe.

- 19 Ajayi, F (2024) The influence of mining on Zambia's economy, *The African Spectator*, 6 November.
- 20 Ajayi, F (2024) Central attraction, *African Decisions*.
- 21 Zambia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (2023) ZEITI Annual Report – 2023.
- 22 Parliament of Zambia (2025) Report of the Committee on Lands, Environment and Tourism on the Auditor General's Report on Environmental Degradation Caused by Mining Activities for the Fourth Session of the Eleventh National Assembly. National Assembly, Lusaka.
- 23 CEJ (2024) Strengthening the Environmental Protection Fund in Zambia: a gap analysis. CEJ, Lusaka.
- 24 CEJ (2024) Traditional Leaders Caucus on Forest/Bush Fires | Solwezi District [online video], <https://youtu.be/3mHrqpQijk>. Accessed 16 March 2026.
- 25 CEJ (2024) RISE: Traditional Leaders Dialogue in Serenje District [online video], <https://youtu.be/m6krm6vpg5o>. Accessed 16 March 2026.
- 26 Hennings, A (2021) Ghana – Context and Land Governance, Land Portal, 9 March.
- 27 World Bank (2021) Nigeria: Land Reforms to Facilitate Responsible Agribusiness Investments. World Bank, Washington DC.
- 28 The Citizen Reporter (2023) Sotta mining starts compensation payments, *The Citizen*, 6 September.



Knowledge
Products

Case study collection

May 2026

**Governance; Land acquisitions
and rights**

Keywords:
Land-based investments, Legal tools

Across the global South, land-based investments are triggering sweeping livelihood changes and increasing land pressures. The ALIGN Technical Support Facility (TSF) was designed to respond to the challenges of these projects by providing practical support for improving governance of land-based investments. Set up under the Advancing Land-based Investment Governance (ALIGN) project, the TSF provided targeted and responsive support to governments, civil society and other relevant actors, in a diversity of contexts. This provided a rich source of insights on approaches, strategies and politically savvy ways of working to deliver more systemic governance reforms. The work of the TSF offers helpful lessons on delivering effective technical support, as well as the types of interventions and ways of working that can meaningfully contribute to more systemic change. The case studies presented in this publication represent a small sample of the requests supported through the TSF and are intended to highlight some of the key insights that have emerged.



IIED is an international policy and research organisation working with partners globally to build a fairer, more sustainable world. Together, we challenge the destructive economic models, unjust power dynamics, entrenched mindsets and protectionist laws that perpetuate poverty, suppress rights and hinder progress towards a thriving world. We explore solutions to complex economic, social and environmental crises, using research, action and influencing to tackle the root causes of climate change, nature loss and inequality.

International Institute for Environment and Development
44 Southampton Buildings, London WC2A 1AP, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399

www.iied.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/theIIED

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/iied/

Download more publications at **pubs.iied.org**

Funded by:



This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government. However, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.