



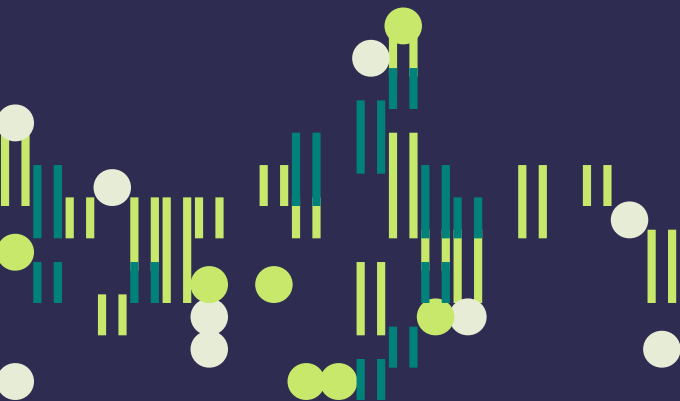
Just Transition

Enabling
environments for
just implementation
of land tenure
commitments

A Guidance Booklet

(TMG)
ThinkTankforSustainability
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Table of contents



Key messages	3
Introduction	4
Land tenure in environmental governance	5
Understanding the implementation gap	7
Enabling environments for just implementation	10
Diagnostic tool	13
Diagnostic dimensions and guiding questions	15
1. Institutional environment	16
2. Policy environment	18
3. Financial environment	20
4. Science–policy–society interface	22
Conclusion	24
Contact	25

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Key messages

→ Secure and equitable land tenure is an enabling condition for achieving climate, biodiversity, and land restoration objectives.

→ Global land tenure commitments only become meaningful when national governance systems can translate them into coordinated, inclusive, and adequately resourced action.

→ Justice-oriented commitments depend on governance systems that support meaningful participation, fair distribution of benefits and burdens, and recognition of historical and structural injustices.

→ Implementation gaps often reflect weak enabling environments rather than a lack of commitment. Institutional mandates, policy frameworks, financial resources, and knowledge systems all shape what is possible.

→ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) National Focal Points (NFPs) are central bridging actors between international commitments and national implementation. Their ability to support just implementation depends on the wider enabling environment in which they operate.

→ A just implementation approach asks not only whether commitments can be implemented, but also who participates, who benefits, who bears the costs, and how historical and structural injustices are addressed.

→ This booklet presents a diagnostic framework to help policymakers, UNCCD NFPs, civil society organizations, researchers, and partners identify bottlenecks and entry points for reform.

Introduction

At a glance

Land tenure is increasingly recognized as a foundation for addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. Yet global commitments do not implement themselves. Their implementation depends on national governance systems that can coordinate actors, allocate resources, recognize rights, and support inclusive decision-making.

By combining enabling environment analysis with just transition principles, this booklet explains why gaps in the just implementation of land tenure commitments persist and how they can be addressed.

This booklet provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how justice-oriented land tenure commitments at the global level can be translated into national implementation. It does not make the detailed case for just transition in Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Transformative Projects and Programmes. Instead, it explains the underlying governance logic: why global commitments are difficult to implement, why UNCCD NFPs are central to translating them into national processes, and why enabling environments are necessary for implementation to be effective and just.

Who this booklet is for and how to use it

The diagnostic tool, analytical framework, and guiding questions in this booklet are designed for stakeholders involved in just transition: policymakers, UNCCD NFPs, civil society organizations, researchers, and international partners working to strengthen land governance and implement land tenure commitments under the UNCCD. It responds to a growing recognition that, while global land tenure commitments have advanced significantly in recent years, translating them into national policies and local outcomes remains challenging.

The framework supports stakeholders in understanding the governance conditions that enable or constrain implementation. Rather than offering prescriptive solutions, it provides a structured approach for diagnosing how institutional arrangements, policy frameworks, financial resources and knowledge systems influence what is possible.

By integrating enabling environment analysis with just transition principles, the booklet highlights how governance systems shape both the effectiveness and fairness of implementation. It asks not only whether commitments can be implemented, but whether implementation is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to different stakeholders.

In practical terms, the framework works as a diagnostic and dialogue tool. It can support NFPs and policymakers in assessing national implementation conditions, help civil society and research institutions engage in policy discussions, and contribute to more informed collaboration across ministries, sectors, and stakeholder groups. The guiding questions are designed to facilitate reflection on how governance systems can better enable the implementation of land tenure commitments in ways that are both effective and just.

Chapter 1

Land tenure in environmental governance

From local action to
global commitments

Land governance lies at the heart of some of today's most pressing environmental and social challenges. Decisions about who can access land, how land is used, and whose rights are recognized shape the ability of societies to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. Secure and equitable land tenure is therefore increasingly recognized as a critical foundation for achieving the objectives of the Rio Conventions while protecting livelihoods and reducing social inequalities.

Over the past two decades, land governance has become more prominent in global policy debates. A renewed global land rush—driven by agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, urbanization, conservation initiatives, climate action, and biodiversity preservation—has intensified competition over land and exposed long-standing inequalities in access, control, and decision-making. These dynamics have heightened the vulnerability of smallholders, pastoralists, women, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized groups whose tenure rights remain insecure, informal, or unrecognized.¹

Against this backdrop, secure land tenure has become a foundational condition for addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, while protecting human rights and livelihoods.

Land tenure in global environmental commitments

After sustained advocacy by civil society, research institutions, and international organizations, land tenure has gained formal recognition within global environmental governance. Among the Rio Conventions, the UNCCD was the first to adopt explicit decisions on land tenure, beginning at COP14.

Although institutionally limited to the UNCCD, three consecutive land tenure decisions from COP14 to COP16 represent a significant normative shift elevating land tenure from a peripheral concern to a recognized enabling condition for achieving LDN, while raising expectations for national-level implementation.

From recognition to implementation

Recognition of land tenure in international decisions is only the beginning of a longer process. Translating global commitments into meaningful national action requires more than policy endorsement. It requires governance systems that can implement commitments in ways that are inclusive, coordinated, adequately resourced, and responsive to realities on the ground.

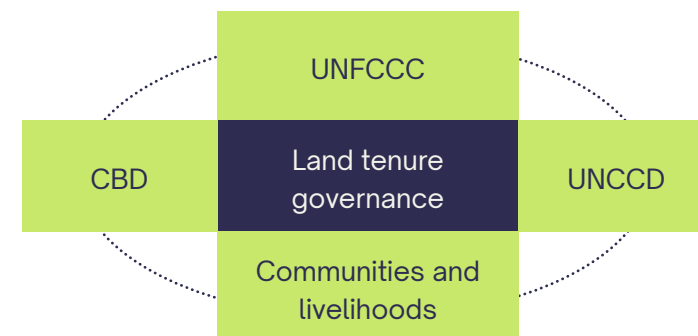
This raises an important question: why do justice-oriented commitments on land tenure still struggle to translate into national implementation? This booklet examines how enabling environments and just transition principles can support their effective and equitable implementation.

COP land tenure decisions:

COP14 – New Delhi, 2019: Land tenure formally entered UNCCD agenda. Parties encouraged to apply the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) in LDN efforts.

COP15 – Abidjan, 2022: VGGT operationalized through a joint FAO–UNCCD technical guide. Women's land rights explicitly strengthened.

COP16 – Riyadh, 2024: Parties invited to nominate NFPs for land tenure, the first dedicated institutional mechanism under the Convention.



Land tenure systems shape who has access to land, who participates in decision-making, and how the benefits and costs of environmental policies are distributed. As a cross-cutting issue across the three Rio Conventions—the UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)—it shows how secure and equitable land governance underpins climate action, biodiversity conservation, and land restoration.

¹ Garrett, R., Meyfroidt, P., de Bremond, A. et al. (2025). Policy roadmap for sustainable and just land systems. Working paper.



Chapter 2

Understanding the implementation gap

From global commitments to national realities

The growing recognition of land tenure in international environmental governance is an important step, but global decisions do not implement themselves. Their impact depends on how they translate into national policies, institutional practices, and local realities.

For many countries, this path is neither straightforward nor linear. International decisions establish broad principles and objectives, while national institutions must determine how these fit within existing governance systems, legal frameworks, and political priorities. This translation process grows more complex in policy areas such as land governance where multiple institutions, sectors, and stakeholders interact.

Challenges in implementation

Within the UNCCD, NFPs bridge international policy discussions and national-level implementation efforts. They are not solely responsible for land tenure implementation, but they occupy a strategic position within the governance system, connecting COP decisions, reporting processes, national policy dialogues, technical partners, and civil society engagement. Yet many NFPs operate with limited formal authority, constrained resources, and varying degrees of institutional support, making it difficult to translate international expectations into concrete national action.²

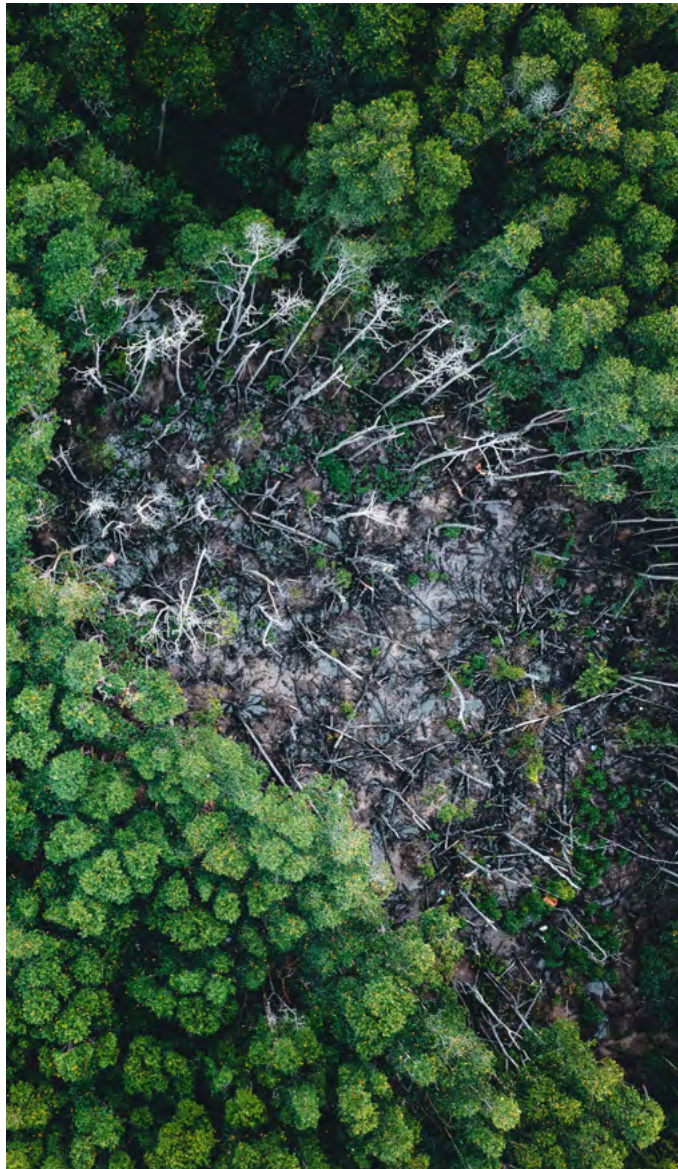
These challenges do not necessarily reflect a lack of political commitment to land tenure, but often reflect the broader governance environments in which implementation takes place. Questions about who has the authority to make decisions, how institutions coordinate, where financial resources are allocated, and how knowledge flows between actors all shape the feasibility of implementation.

Justice-oriented commitments are especially difficult to implement because they require governance systems to do more than deliver technical outputs. They must create space for meaningful participation, recognize diverse tenure systems, manage competing land-use priorities, distribute benefits and burdens fairly, and address historical or structural inequalities. Where mandates are unclear, resources are limited, coordination is weak, or knowledge systems exclude local experience, these commitments can remain aspirational despite formal endorsement.

Implementation gaps therefore often emerge not because the goals themselves are contested, but because the conditions required to support them are not fully in place. This is particularly important in the context of land governance, where effective implementation depends on systems that can facilitate coordination, ensure participation, and manage competing priorities transparently and inclusively.



² Akhtar-Schuster, M., Thomas, R. J., Stringer, L. C., Chasek, P. & Seely, M. (2011). Improving the enabling environment to combat land degradation: Institutional, financial, legal and science-policy challenges and solutions. *Land Degradation & Development*, vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 299–312.



From implementation gaps to enabling environments

Improving implementation requires looking beyond individual policies or projects to the broader governance conditions that enable them to function, i.e. the enabling environments, or the combination of institutional, policy, financial, legal, and knowledge-related conditions that allow progress towards a defined goal.³

Strengthening enabling environments should not focus only on efficiency or administrative effectiveness. It should also ensure that governance systems support inclusive participation, fair distribution of benefits, and recognition of historically marginalized groups. For that reason, this analysis draws on principles from just transition literature, with its emphasis on procedural, distributive, and restorative dimensions of justice.

Land tenure commitments adopted at the global level must pass through national governance systems before they influence local outcomes. Implementation gaps often emerge when institutional mandates, coordination mechanisms, financial resources, or knowledge systems are insufficient to support inclusive and effective implementation.

Global commitments

UNCCD decisions

VGGT principles

LDN targets and LDN TSP 2.0

National governance conditions

Institutional mandates

Inter-ministerial coordination

Policy frameworks

Financial resources

Science-policy interface

Local land governance outcomes

Recognition of legitimate tenure rights

Inclusive decision-making

Reduced conflict

Community trust

Sustainable land restoration

³ Akhtar-Schuster et al. (2011).

Chapter 3

Enabling environments for just implementation

How governance conditions affect just outcomes

Translating international land tenure commitments into national action is rarely simple. To better understand these dynamics, this booklet focuses on the concept of the enabling environment. In simple terms, an enabling environment refers to the conditions that allow policies and commitments to move from intention to practice; including institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, financial resources, knowledge systems, and the capacities of the actors involved.⁴

This matters especially for land governance, where decisions span multiple sectors, such as agriculture, environment, infrastructure, and planning, and affect a wide range of stakeholders, from communities to civil society to private actors.

At the same time, effective governance alone does not automatically guarantee fair outcomes. Even well-functioning administrative systems can unintentionally reproduce existing inequalities if inclusion, representation, and benefit distribution are not carefully considered.⁵ For this reason, the analysis presented in this booklet also draws on insights from just transition frameworks.

4 Allen, C., Metternicht, G., Verburg, P., Akhtar-Schuster, M., Inacio da Cunha, M., & Sanchez Santivañez, M. (2020). Delivering an enabling environment and multiple benefits for land degradation neutrality: Stakeholder perceptions and progress. *Environmental Science and Policy*, vol. 114, pp. 109–118.

5 Amis, J. M., Munir, K. A., Lawrence, T. B., Hirsch, P. & McGahan, A. (2018). Inequality, institutions and organizations. *Organization Studies*, vol. 39, No. 9, pp. 1131–1152.

Why justice matters for enabling environments

Just transition approaches emphasize that policy changes, particularly those related to environmental sustainability and land use, should account for how different groups are affected, through three complementary dimensions of justice relevant for land governance.^{6,7}

- **Procedural justice:** how decisions are made. Do stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making? Are their perspectives considered? Are governance processes transparent and inclusive?
- **Distributive justice:** how costs and benefits are shared. Who gains access to land resources and benefits from land-based investments? Do policies reduce or reinforce existing inequalities?
- **Restorative justice:** how historical and structural injustices have shaped land relations and how they are addressed now. Land governance is often influenced by past dispossession, unequal distribution, or long-standing marginalization, so how do restorative approaches aim to acknowledge these histories and explore pathways toward more equitable outcomes?

6 Abram, S., Atkins, E., Dietzel, A., Jenkins, K., Kiamba, L., Kirshner, J., Kreienkamp, J., Parkhill, K., Pegram, T. & Santos Ayllón, L. M. (2022). Just Transition: A whole-systems approach to decarbonisation. *Climate Policy*, vol. 22, No. 8, pp. 1033–1049.

7 Banerjee, A. & Schuitema, G. (2022). How just are just transition plans? Perceptions of decarbonisation and low-carbon energy transitions among peat workers in Ireland. *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 88, 102616.

What is just transition?

A just transition in land tenure is a shift toward sustainable, climate-resilient, and land degradation-neutral land use that protects legitimate tenure rights, strengthens equitable access to land and resources, and ensures that the people most affected by land degradation and restoration decisions are able to participate meaningfully in, benefit from, and hold accountable the processes that reshape their landscapes.

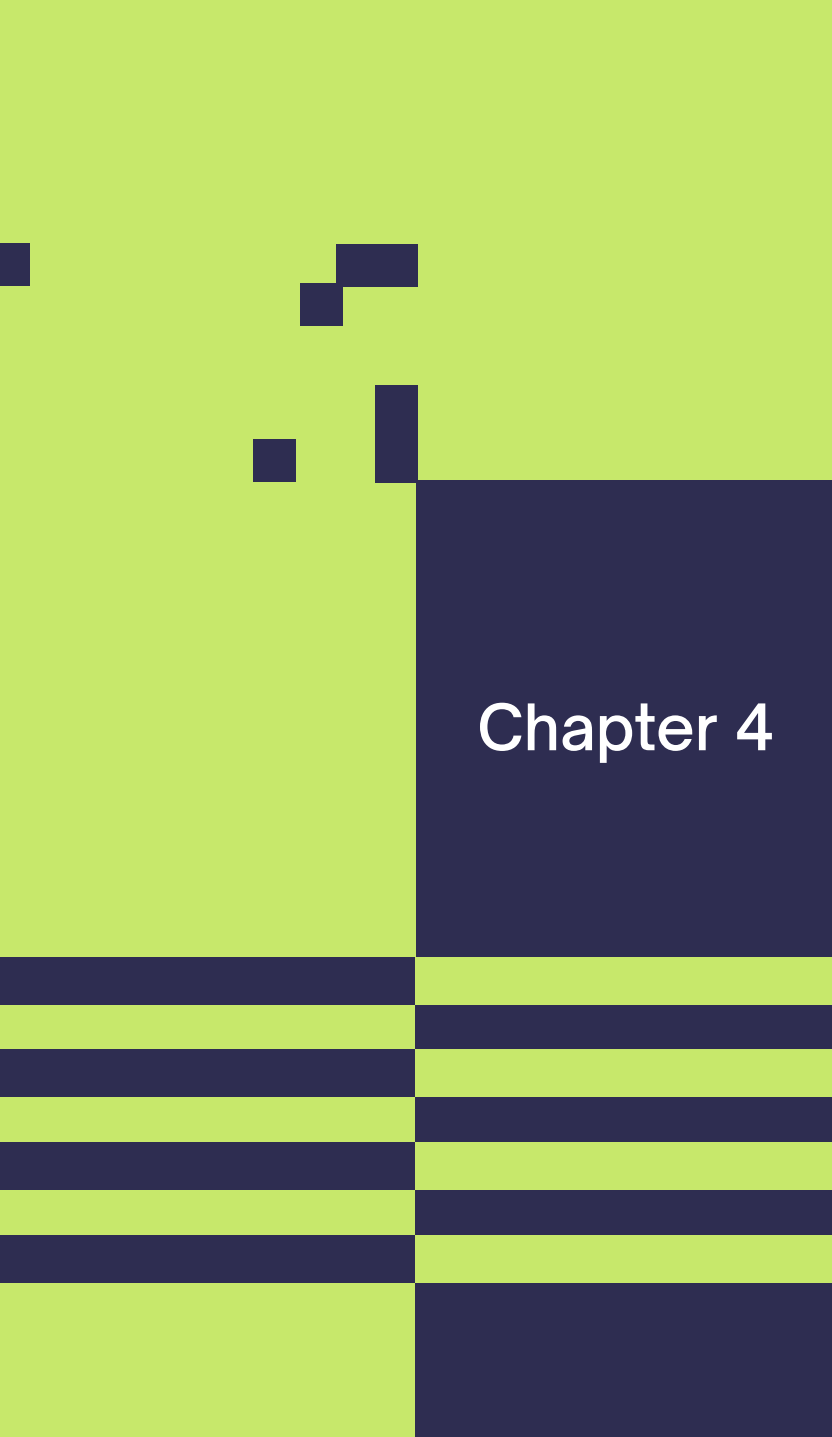
Merging enabling environments and just transition

This booklet brings enabling environments and just transition together as a single analytical approach, examining how different elements of governance either support or limit the ability of actors to implement land tenure commitments in inclusive and equitable ways.

Rather than treating justice as an additional objective that sits alongside governance systems, the framework embeds it directly within the analysis of enabling conditions, revealing where implementation challenges are rooted in institutional structures rather than in a lack of commitment or effort. Weak participation processes, for instance, may may reflect limited mandates, insufficient resources, or the absent consultation mechanisms rather than disinterest. Uneven benefit distribution may stem from how resources, authority, or information flow through governance systems rather than a single actor’s failure.

	Procedural justice	Distributive justice	Restorative justice
Institutional environment	Institutional platforms allow diverse actors to participate in decision-making.	Institutions coordinate responsibilities to distribute benefits fairly.	Institutional reforms address historical imbalances.
Policy environment	Policy development includes clear procedures, consultation, and accountability mechanisms.	Policies protect legitimate tenure rights and prevent unequal land access.	Legal frameworks recognize historical injustices and provide restitution or compensation mechanisms.
Financial environment	Stakeholders can contribute to decisions on how resources are allocated.	Resources support vulnerable land users and inclusive land governance.	Financial mechanisms support restitution, compensation, or recovery.
Science–policy–society interface	Researchers, policymakers, and communities collaborate in generating knowledge.	Land governance information is publicly available to support equitable decisions.	Governance processes acknowledge and integrate Indigenous and local knowledge systems.

This combined framework provides the basis for the diagnostic tool that follows. By examining institutional, policy, financial, and knowledge-related conditions through procedural, distributive, and restorative dimensions of justice, stakeholders can identify not only where implementation is constrained, but why those constraints matter for just outcomes.



Chapter 4

Diagnostic tool

Assessing enabling
environments for just
implementation

This diagnostic survey tool is designed to assess governance conditions for implementing land tenure commitments, translating the booklet's governance logic into a practical framework for dialogue and analysis. Its purpose is not to evaluate the performance of individual NFPs or institutions, but to identify what enables or constrains just implementation. Building on enabling environment frameworks, combined with a just transition lens, it adapts these approaches to the implementation of land tenure commitments under the UNCCD.

How to use the tool

Read the dimension framing

Each enabling environment dimension opens with a short analysis situating the governance element in the context of land tenure implementation.

Work through the guiding questions

Questions are organized by subsections. They can be discussed in a group, completed individually, or used to structure interviews with relevant stakeholders.

Identify gaps and priorities

Use findings across dimensions to map where enabling conditions are strong, where they are weak, and where targeted action could most improve implementation.

The diagnostic framework can be used to assess institutional conditions, analyse collaboration between NFPs and civil society organizations, identify barriers to implementing land tenure decisions, and understand the justice implications of governance gaps. It does not produce a definitive score or ranking. Instead, it makes governance conditions more visible, surfaces implementation bottlenecks, and supports evidence-based dialogue between NFPs, ministries, civil society organizations, and development partners.

The framework and guiding questions can be used in workshops, interviews, institutional assessments, policy discussions, or collaborative planning processes. It may be applied by a single organization seeking to understand its governance and operating environment, or by multiple stakeholders seeking to develop a shared understanding of implementation challenges.

The tool is structured around four enabling environment dimensions, each examined through subsections that break down the key governance elements at stake.

8 Allen, C., Metternicht, G., Verburg, P., Akhtar-Schuster, M., Inacio da Cunha, M., and Sanchez Santivañez, M. (2020). Delivering an enabling environment and multiple benefits for land degradation neutrality: Stakeholder perceptions and progress. *Environmental Science and Policy*, vol. 114, pp. 109–118.

9 McCauley, D. M., and Heffron, R. (2018). Just transition: Integrating climate, energy and environmental justice. *Energy Policy*, vol. 119, pp. 1–7.

Dimension framing overview

Institutional environment

Mandates
Coordination mechanisms
Participation and inclusivity
Decision-making structures

Policy environment

Policy integration
Safeguarding and inclusion
Policy coherence
Policy engagement

Financial environment

Resource availability
Resource mobilization
Funding priorities
Financial sustainability

Science–policy–society interface

Research collaboration
Integration of local knowledge
Data and information systems
Knowledge exchange

Full framework in the next section →

Together, these dimensions provide a structured way to analyse the enabling environment for just implementation, helping stakeholders identify where governance systems are working well, where bottlenecks exist, and where strategic action may be needed.

Chapter 5

Diagnostic dimensions and guiding questions

1

Policy
environmentFinancial
environmentScience–policy–
society interface

Institutional environment

The institutional environment determines whether land tenure commitments move from global recognition to national implementation. Within the UNCCD framework, NFPs often sit at the centre of this institutional landscape, bridging international policy and national governance by coordinating reporting, promoting policy integration, and facilitating dialogue.¹⁰

Yet NFPs frequently operate within structures not designed to address complex land governance challenges. Their mandates may focus primarily on reporting or Convention-related coordination, while authority over land administration, agriculture, rural development, planning, or finance may sit elsewhere, which creates a gap between expectations and actual powers or resources.

This is not unique to the UNCCD. Land governance typically spans multiple ministries and levels of government, so implementation requires collaboration across institutional boundaries.

Clear, well-supported coordination mechanisms allow institutions to integrate land tenure into policy planning and implementation; where mechanisms are absent or weak, even well-intentioned initiatives struggle to gain traction.

From a justice perspective, the institutional environment matters because it shapes who has authority, who is invited into decision-making, and whose concerns are taken seriously. Exclusionary structures risk reproducing existing inequalities. Inclusive, well-coordinated institutions help ensure implementation transparent, participatory, and responsive.

Mandates and institutional roles

Mandates define and clarify institutions' formal roles and responsibilities. Some NFPs can convene ministries, coordinate national strategies, or facilitate stakeholder consultations. Others are limited mainly to reporting, with limited authority to influence broader policy discussions.

Guiding Questions

Does the NFP have a clear mandate to coordinate land tenure-related activities across ministries?

Are institutional roles and responsibilities clearly defined?

¹⁰ UNCCD, E-Learning Course for National Focal Points. UNCCD Capacity Building Marketplace. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/course%20for%20national%20focal%20points.pdf>

Coordination mechanisms

Because land governance cuts across multiple sectors, effective implementation requires collaboration among ministries responsible for land administration, agriculture, environment, rural development, infrastructure, and finance. Where coordination platforms are politically and administratively supported, NFPs can more easily promote integrated approaches through regular communication, clearly defined roles, and shared objectives.

Guiding Questions

Are there formal platforms for interministerial dialogue on land governance?

How regularly do relevant institutions exchange information and coordinate their actions?

Participation and inclusivity

Land governance affects communities, farmers, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations, the private sector, and local authorities, making inclusive participation essential. Participation rarely happens automatically and often requires dedicated consultation processes, accessible information channels, and institutional mechanisms that allow different voices to be heard. Without them, engagement depends on informal relationships rather than structured mechanisms.

Guiding Questions

Are civil society organizations and community representatives included in policy discussions?

Are consultation processes institutionalized or conducted on an ad hoc basis?

Decision-making structures

Authority over land-related policies is often distributed across institutions and levels of government: national ministries may define regulatory frameworks, while regional or local authorities implement them. Recognizing this helps avoid placing unrealistic expectations on individual actors, since implementation challenges often reflect institutional arrangements rather than a lack of commitment.

Guiding Questions

Which institutions have the authority to make decisions about land governance policies?

How do national and subnational levels of government interact in these decisions.

Institutional
environment

2

Financial
environmentScience–policy–
society interface

Policy environment

International commitments gain practical meaning through national legislation, policy strategies, and sectoral plans that translate shared objectives into concrete action. Land tenure is rarely confined to a single policy domain. It is shaped and influenced by policy relating to agriculture, environment, infrastructure, climate adaptation, biodiversity, rural development, land administration, investment, and social protection.

For NFPs, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. International recognition of land tenure can open dialogue with other ministries and strengthen its integration into national strategies, even though NFPs' formal mandate over land policy is often limited.

From a justice perspective, policy matters because it determines whose rights are recognized, which safeguards apply, how trade-offs are managed, and whether historical inequalities are addressed. Policy integration without attention to justice may improve administrative coherence while leaving underlying inequities untouched. Policies embedding procedural, distributive, and restorative justice better protect vulnerable groups and supports more equitable outcomes.

Policy integration

Land tenure commitments need to be reflected in national strategies—land management, climate adaptation, biodiversity, rural development, investment, and LDN-related plans—to bridge global recognition and local implementation. How far this happens depends on institutional mandates, political priorities, and technical expertise. Integrated policies create a basis for sustained action; without it, implementation relies on harder-to-sustain ad hoc efforts. Identifying policy entry points is a key task for NFPs.

Guiding Questions

Are land tenure commitments reflected in national policies related to land management, climate action, or rural development?

Are international commitments considered during national policy planning processes?

Safeguarding and inclusion

Vulnerable and marginalized groups—smallholders, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, and women—often hold land through customary or informal arrangements unrecognized by existing legislation. Without explicit safeguards, policies risk reinforcing tenure insecurity. Safeguards include recognizing customary tenure systems, improving access to land administration services, ensuring development and conservation initiatives respect existing land rights, and creating mechanisms for consultation, grievance, and redress.

Guiding Questions

Do existing policies recognize and protect diverse forms of land tenure, including customary arrangements?

Are vulnerable groups adequately considered in land-related policies?



Policy coherence

Policies developed in isolation can create unintended tensions or contradictions with other national priorities. Coherence does not require identical objectives across sectors—only that trade-offs are managed transparently and inclusively. NFPs can help connect international commitments to national policy debates.

Guiding Questions

Do policies across sectors address land governance in consistent ways?

Are there mechanisms to coordinate land-related policies between ministries?

Policy engagement

Although NFPs may lack direct authority over land policy reforms, their strategic position, technical networks, and international engagement create opportunities to raise land tenure considerations nationally, especially when combined with civil society organizations, research institutions, and other government agencies for more comprehensive dialogue.

Guiding Questions

Do NFPs have opportunities to contribute to national policy discussions on land governance?

Are there partnerships with civil society or research institutions that support policy dialogue?

Institutional
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environment

3

Science–policy–
society interface

Financial environment

Implementing depends on more than institutional mandates and policies—it also requires financial resources. Without adequate funding, even well-designed governance structures struggle to produce concrete action.

The financial environment encompasses how resources are mobilized, allocated, and managed to support policy implementation. This includes national budgets, international funding mechanisms, development cooperation, and project-based financing. It shapes the scope and continuity of NFP-led coordination, stakeholder consultation, research, and implementation.

From a justice perspective, finance matters because resource allocation determines whose needs are prioritized and which activities become possible. Participatory consultation, community engagement, legal support, tenure mapping, grievance mechanisms, and coordination all require funding. Underfunding leaves justice commitments recognized in principle but unsupported in practice.

Resource availability

Some countries allocate specific budget to land administration institutions; in others, land tenure-related activities rely largely on external funding or short-term projects. Limited resources constrain NFPs' ability to convene stakeholders, engage in policy processes, access technical expertise, or support consultations, and thus limit the meaningful participation of communities and civil society organizations.

Guiding Questions

Are there dedicated financial resources supporting land tenure or land governance initiatives?

Are land tenure-related activities funded through national budgets, international projects, or a combination of both?

Resource mobilization

Beyond existing funds, institutions need capacity to mobilize additional resources. This may involve accessing international funding mechanisms related to climate action, biodiversity protection, or sustainable development, and engaging with development partners and philanthropic organizations. NFPs can help connect land tenure to these broader funding initiatives

Guiding Questions

Do institutions have the capacity to access international funding opportunities related to land, climate, or biodiversity?

Are land tenure considerations integrated into proposals for broader environmental or development funding programmes?

Funding priorities

Even where funding exists, allocation choices determine what gets supported. Large-scale infrastructure or land restoration projects may easily receive substantial funding, yet participatory consultation process or community engagement initiatives may receive comparatively limited resources, creating a gap between justice ambitions and the resources to realise them

Guiding Questions

How are financial resources distributed across different land governance activities?

Are resources allocated to support participatory processes and stakeholder engagement?

Financial sustainability

Project-based financing supports pilot initiatives or targeted programmes, but long-term governance improvement requires stable institutional funding. Integrating land tenure considerations into national budgets, development plans, or sectoral funding frameworks creates more durable financial support for implementation efforts.

Guiding Questions

Are land tenure initiatives supported through long-term institutional funding or primarily through short-term projects?

Are resources allocated to support participatory processes and stakeholder engagement?



Institutional
environmentPolicy
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environment

4

Science–policy– society interface

Effective land governance depends not only on institutions, policies, and finance, but on the quality and accessibility of knowledge that informs decision-making. The science–policy–society interface describes how knowledge is produced, exchanged, and integrated across researchers, policymakers, civil society, and communities.

In the context of land tenure, this matters because land relations are shaped by both formal systems and local practices. Understanding these dynamics often requires combining scientific research, administrative data, and local knowledge. For NFPs, access to relevant knowledge supports reporting, policy dialogue, coordination, and implementation. However, knowledge systems are often fragmented: data sits in different institutions, research is disconnected from policy processes, and local knowledge is excluded from formal decision-making.

From a justice perspective, knowledge matters because it shapes what is visible to policymakers. Tenure systems, land users, or historical injustices absent from data may also be absent from decisions. Making inclusive, accessible, and responsive knowledge systems is essential to just implementation.

Research collaboration

Collaboration between government and research institutions strengthens the evidence base for decision-making—through advisory committees, policy dialogues, or national assessments—while also giving researchers exposure to practical governance challenges. Weak institutional exchange mechanisms can leave research unused or policy actors without access to relevant evidence.

Guiding Questions

Do government institutions collaborate with universities or research organizations on land governance issues?

Are research findings regularly communicated to policymakers?

Integration of local knowledge

Beyond scientific research, local communities hold detailed knowledge of land use, customary tenure, and ecological conditions from long-term interaction with specific landscapes. Recognizing and integrating this knowledge improves policy relevance, avoids unintended consequences, and, from a restorative justice perspective, addresses histories of exclusion from formal governance.

Guiding Questions

Are local communities consulted in land governance processes?

Are customary land practices and local knowledge considered in policy discussions?

Data and information systems

Land governance decisions often rely on various forms of data, including land registries, land use maps, environmental monitoring systems, and socio-economic assessments. Accessible, shared information improves institutional coordination and policy coherence. Fragmented systems with incomplete, outdated, or inaccessible data constrain the ability of NFPs and partners to assess implementation conditions or identify risks for affected groups.

Guiding Questions

Are local communities consulted in land governance processes?

Are customary land practices and local knowledge considered in policy discussions?

Knowledge exchange

International policy processes like the UNCCD generate guidance, research findings, and best practices that can support national implementation, while national experience and local innovation feed back into global discussions. NFPs play a key role in facilitating this exchange through their international engagement and reporting roles.

Guiding Questions

Are there mechanisms that allow national experiences to inform international discussions?

Do NFPs have opportunities to share lessons and learn from other countries?



Conclusion: From commitment to action

Global commitments on land tenure mark an important step towards more just and effective land governance, but commitments alone cannot transform national systems or local realities. Their implementation depends on the governance conditions through which they are interpreted, coordinated, resourced, and put into practice.

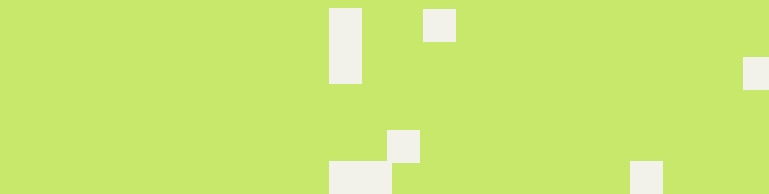
This matters especially for justice-oriented commitments. Implementing justice requires governance systems that can support meaningful participation, recognize diverse tenure rights, distribute benefits and burdens fairly, and address historical and structural inequalities. Where institutional mandates are unclear, policies fragmented, resources limited, or knowledge systems exclusionary, justice commitments risk remaining aspirational rather than operational.

UNCCD NFPs occupy a central position here, connecting international decisions with national policy processes, reporting systems, technical networks, and implementation discussions. However, they cannot carry this responsibility alone. Their ability to advance land tenure commitments depends on the wider enabling environment: institutional authority, policy coherence, financial resources, and knowledge partnerships.

Strengthening enabling environments should therefore be understood as a core part of just implementation. The diagnostic framework presented in this booklet is intended to support reflection, dialogue, and strategic action, helping NFPs, ministries, civil society, research institutions, donors, and international partners identify where implementation is constrained and where support, reform, or coordination is needed.

As the UNCCD community looks towards COP17 and beyond, the challenge is not only to reaffirm the importance of land tenure, but to create the conditions that allow land tenure commitments to be implemented fairly and effectively. A just transition in land governance requires more than ambition. It requires institutions, policies, resources, and knowledge systems capable of turning commitments into practice.

The task ahead is both conceptual and practical: to recognize land tenure as a justice issue, understand implementation as a governance challenge, and strengthen the enabling environments that allow NFPs and their partners to move from commitment to action.



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