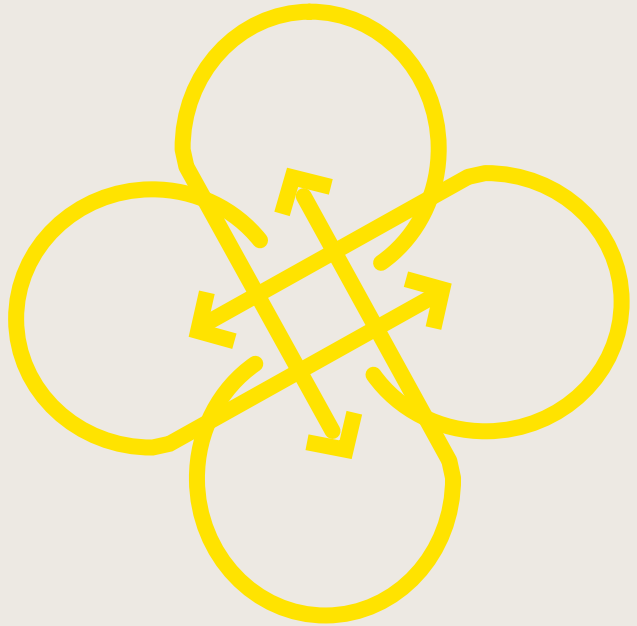


FROM THE BOTTOM UP:

Creating an enabling environment
for sustainable land management



A community-driven investment guide for the UN
decade on Ecosystem Restoration

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We would like to extend our gratitude to the participants of Global Soil Week 2019. Their passion and critical reflections helped develop the investment strategies presented in this guide. A special 'thank you' goes to the various case presenters at GSW 2019, whose collective experiences have contributed to a growing evidence base in support of an enabling environment for sustainable land management.

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Foreword

This guide presents investment strategies designed to create an enabling environment for sustainable land management (SLM) and ecosystem restoration. The investment strategies are based on the main outcomes of Global Soil Week (GSW) 2019, which was held in Nairobi from 26–30 May. The title of the event was “Creating an enabling environment for sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture in Africa”. GSW 2019 was organised by TMG Research in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German international development agency (GIZ), and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). It was co-hosted by the governments of Kenya, Benin, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and Ethiopia.

The strategies presented in this guide are the result of collective deliberations during GSW 2019 and a subsequent literature review. At GSW 2019, more than 200 participants discussed SLM and ecosystem restoration projects from thirteen African countries and India. In a series of workshops, the conditions for success of these projects were analysed in detail and, in plenary sessions, participants jointly developed strategies to create an enabling environment for SLM.¹ These strategies have subsequently been elaborated based on an in-depth literature review of various factors contributing to an enabling environment.

The absence of an enabling environment often undermines the sustainability of investments in ecosystem restoration and SLM. However, an enabling environment is not always the focus of ecosystem restoration or SLM initiatives.

If global goals on healthy ecosystems are to be achieved, and if these achievements are to include communities and individuals that are food-insecure, vulnerable to climate change or socially marginalized, SLM and ecosystem restoration initiatives need to invest in the enabling environment.

Overall, the investment strategies show that it is possible to proactively create an enabling environment, even in the context of short-term, project-based interventions.

¹ Please refer to the [Outcome Report](#) for more detailed information on GSW discussions

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List of acronyms

CBOs	community-based organisations
CSOs	civil society organisations
GSW	Global Soil Week
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
UN	United Nations

Background

We are failing to protect the very ecosystems that sustain our existence, and the impact is already felt by the most vulnerable and marginalized. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) estimates that land degradation negatively affects the well-being of more than three billion people. It is further estimated that, by 2050, four billion people will live in drylands greatly affected by an increased occurrence of extreme weather events, decreasing land productivity and reduced crop yields.² The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its special report on climate change and land, confirms these trends, while stressing that the most severe effects will be felt in less developed regions of the world where the possibilities for mitigation and adaptation for vulnerable and marginalized people are limited.

Investing in nature-based solutions is an effective strategy to address climate change. While land-based strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation can further increase the demand for land, there are responses that contribute positively to sustainable development, that combat land degradation and enhance food security without increasing the demand for land. Inclusive investments in SLM with an ecological and socioeconomic focus can contribute to the reduction and/or prevention of land degradation, the maintenance of land productivity, and, in some places, may even reverse the degrading impacts of climate change on land.³

² IPBES. (2018). The IPBES assessment report on land degradation and restoration. Montanarella, L., Scholes, R., and Brainich, A. (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 744

³ IPCC. (2019). Climate Change and Land—Summary for Policymakers. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The impacts of investments in SLM can be sustained and benefit marginalized smallholders if an enabling environment is in place. Unsustainable land use practices are typically caused by a multitude of factors. These include disputes over land rights, poor access to markets and financial credits, insufficient investment in research and development, single sector-focused development plans, and weak governance institutions.⁴ In order to ensure that investments in SLM last and benefit the most marginalized individuals and communities, smallholders need to be enabled to sustainably manage their land and natural resources. An enabling environment addresses the abovementioned factors. Furthermore, investments in SLM and ecosystem restoration need to support responsible rural governance, so that the necessary services can be provided even after programme investments are phased out. This implies empowering vulnerable and marginal land users so that they can hold service providers accountable.

Yet, insufficient attention is paid to creating an enabling environment. Although scientific research recognises the importance of an enabling environment – which includes secure land tenure, responsive extension services, and social accountability – it is not typically a prominent focus of SLM programmes. The necessary investments are often considered too political or beyond their mandate. Furthermore, discussions on an enabling environment are often conducted in highly abstract terms, and the practical “how to” questions remain unanswered. This lack of attention to an enabling environment is a key barrier to successful and lasting SLM investments.

⁴ IPBES. (2018). The IPBES assessment report on land degradation and restoration. Montanarella, L., Scholes, R., and Brainich, A. (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 744

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the increased focus on nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation and mitigation are welcome developments, and this investment guide aims to support them. To make the most of the window of opportunity offered by the current recognition that healthy ecosystems are needed for sustainable global development, we must bridge the gap between these global processes and local implementation. That is what this investment guide sets out to do.

Methodology:

A collective, bottom-up learning process to create an enabling environment for sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture at Global Soil Week 2019

The Global Soil Week 2019 addressed the challenge of “Creating an enabling environment for sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture in Africa”. GSW 2019 attracted over 200 participants, from practitioners and project implementers to community-based and civil society organisations, farmers’ associations and other interest groups, researchers, local government representatives, and technical experts in the fields of governance, finance and extension services. Discussions were held from 26–30 May at the ICRAF Campus in Nairobi, Kenya.

Global Soil Week focused on local initiatives to create an enabling environment. Without doubt, the policy environment needs to be right to enable sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration. It is a well-known fact that progressive policies often face implementation challenges at the local level. Yet, global challenges require solutions that can be implemented at the local level. GSW 2019 focused on ways to create an enabling environment at the local level. These should be viewed as complementary to policy reforms or initiatives to strengthen policy implementation.

A case-based, bottom-up learning process collectively produced strategies to create an enabling environment. Over the course of four days, participants at GSW 2019 discussed and analysed cases as diverse as securing land use rights for women, sustaining farmer-to-farmer extension, and providing financing models to smallholder farmers.

The cases came from thirteen African countries and India.⁵ In a step-by-step approach, differences and similarities between the cases were analysed, and generally applicable strategies for inclusive investments in SLM were formulated, presented, and peer reviewed. GSW 2019 concluded with a discussion of how these strategies can be supported by various actors, including local and national governments, international development organisations, and research institutes.

⁵ Annex 1 shows an overview of GSW cases

Key investment strategies to create an enabling environment for sustainable landmanagement and ecosystem restoration

What do we mean by key investment strategies? The strategies presented below are a selection of those formulated at GSW 2019. They build on discussions at GSW 2019 and were augmented through a further review of current approaches and studies. They neither provide a complete list of strategies to create an enabling environment nor an exhaustive description of activities to successfully achieve the individual strategies. Rather, they provide possible entry points based on existing successful projects and approaches. Thus, they may serve as guidance and inspiration for strengthening community-based approaches to building an enabling environment. They should be complemented by the results of other initiatives and contribute to a growing body of knowledge on how to create enabling environments. Ultimately, the question of how to implement a strategy needs to be adapted to the specific local context.

Strengthening responsible rural governance for impact beyond projects. Programme and project investments will continue to assume a pivotal role in sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration. The results of GSW 2019 provide three general reference points for the creation of enabling environments: first, an enabling environment needs to rely on service providers that are largely independent of external financial support. These service providers will therefore need to be strengthened during the lifetime of a project. Second, the enabling environment needs to be designed so that project investments in SLM translate into benefits beyond the immediate target group. Third, GSW 2019 showed that community-driven processes are key to creating enabling environments and sustaining investments in SLM at the local level.

Key investment strategies as entry points for creating an enabling environment. Based on the analyses at GSW 2019, strategies have been developed to provide concrete entry points to strengthen processes that support an enabling environment, even where national or subnational policy implementation processes may lag behind:

Cases

Strategy number



Strategies

- Securing land access and use rights for marginalized land users, such as women or landless households, through locally developed tenure agreements.
- Recognizing community level land tenure agreements and land use planning through endorsement by local authorities.
- Investing in equitable benefit sharing of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) receipts for the inclusion of landless households who are often left out if benefits are linked to land ownership.
- Achieving voluntary coordination of SLM/extension service providers for better service provision and broader outreach.
- Creating opportunities for value addition, economies of scale, and enhanced market access at the local level by setting up community production, processing, marketing and training facilities.
- Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups in SLM interventions and strengthening post-project sustainability through improved targeting mechanisms.
- Strengthening the role of civil society organisations and community-based organisations as process facilitator.

#1: Securing land access and use rights for marginalized land users, such as women or landless households, through locally developed tenure agreements

● The issue:

The link between secure land tenure and investment in ecosystem restoration and sustainably managing land resources has long been recognized.⁶ It is difficult for land users to invest in SLM where ownership, access to or use of land is insecure or lacking. For instance, SLM measures typically involve high implementation costs at the outset, yet only mature in the medium to long term. Farmers who fear losing their land due to insecure tenure have little incentive to invest in such measures. Therefore, security of tenure, secure rights to access and use land are a vital prerequisite for land users' engagement in SLM on a continuous basis.⁷ Yet SLM projects are often implemented in contexts where smallholder farmers, women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups neither formally own the land, nor enjoy secure rights to use it. As a result, the land users lack the necessary incentives to employ SLM techniques, and therefore do not benefit from SLM practices in the medium to long term. Furthermore, women often face particular challenges within families when it comes to secure tenure rights.

⁶ See for instance: Holden, S. and Ghebru. H. (2016). Links between Tenure Security and Food Security in Poor Agrarian Economies: Causal Linkages and Policy Implications. CLTS Working Papers 7/16, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Centre for Land Tenure Studies.; Kabubo-Mariara, J., Linderhof, V. and Kruseman, G. (2010). Does land tenure security matter for investment in soil and water conservation? Evidence from Kenya. AfJARE 4(2): 123–139.; Lovo, S. (2016). Tenure insecurity and investment in soil conservation. Evidence from Malawi. World Development, 78: 219–229.

⁷ Meinzin-Dick, R., Markelova, H. and Moore, K. (2010). The role of collective action and property rights in climate change strategies. CGIAR CAPRI Policy Brief No. 7. IFPRI: Washington.

In some cases, they have been expelled from plots of land after having invested in measures to enhance soil fertility, rendering them unable to reap the benefits of their investments. Another example of insecure tenure involves inaccessible formal land leasing procedures or unregulated informal lease agreements. These often render lessees unable to assert their rights in situations of crop theft, crop damage, or conflicts over arbitrary changes to boundaries. Also, landowners may break contracts without due notice.

● Investment Opportunities:

Securing land access and use rights for marginalized land users does not always require national policy reforms. Indeed, in many countries, national legal frameworks are already quite progressive in terms of safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups such as women or indigenous communities. However, enforcement and implementation of these frameworks at the local level is often weak. Locally developed and endorsed tenure agreements may offer a viable solution to securing land access and use rights for vulnerable land users where appropriate national policies are lacking or insufficiently implemented.

Examples of locally developed agreements include:

i. **The recognition of women's land use rights within the family/household through intra-family transfer of use rights.** The male head of household is often more willing to accept the transfer of use rights than ownership rights. This may therefore prove to be a more feasible strategy for the redistribution of power in the household.

ii. **Securing landless farmers' access to land through lease agreements that are accessible, affordable and based on community-developed land lease guidelines.** Developing the guidelines through a community-driven process ensures ownership of the guidelines and supports later adoption and use.

● How to go about it:

The following activities and processes have proven to be effective in gaining support for locally developed tenure agreements that strengthen the use rights of vulnerable land users:

i. Investing in and building on **locally recognized processes of consensus building**. This has proven to be an important procedural precondition for widespread support and acknowledgement of tenure agreements within families and the community as a whole.

ii. Creating awareness and **holding consultations at the lowest administrative levels** to enhance acceptance and participation in the process. Participation by local authorities in different stages of the agreement process has been vital in ensuring their subsequent formal recognition by local authorities (see also strategy #2).

iii. **Engaging community members directly in the drafting of agreements or guidelines** facilitated by a community-based organisation building on agreed criteria for roles and responsibilities.

iv. **Empowering communities to jointly** negotiate tenure agreements or guidelines, with a focus on rights awareness. A community-based organisation as process facilitator was a critical factor in the success of such guidelines (see also strategy #10).

v. Increasingly **formalising agreements with community-validated processes** where other legal structures or official and accessible processes are lacking. The formalisation of tenure agreements needs to be ensured at some level in order to provide effective tenure security. Where formal legal avenues are inaccessible, a step-by-step process of formalisation based on widespread community acceptance can provide tenure security.

vi. **Involving traditional leaders throughout the process** and respecting traditional approaches to decision-making and land allocation. Where traditional governance systems are in place,

these need to be respected, and jointly altered if necessary, to provide tenure security, especially for women. To ensure that norms which discriminate against women or other groups are overcome, the presence of an external facilitator is essential.

vii. **Raising awareness of the economic benefits of women's secure access to land**. Educating men and women on women's socio-economic rights to foster a common understanding of the importance of improving women's access to land has proven to be an important tool in strengthening women's access to land.

#2: Recognizing community-level land tenure agreements and land use planning through endorsement by local authorities

● The issue:

Local-level authorities often lack the capacities to support local land tenure agreements and to develop land use plans at the community level. Involving communities in land use planning processes is therefore not only advisable from a perspective of subsidiarity but is often necessary to make land use plans come about at all. Once developed, local authorities must recognise communally developed land tenure agreements and land use plans. Two reasons stand out: first, community-level land tenure regulations and agreements require protection against external threats who often come from more powerful or resourceful actors. This requires a thorough understanding by all stakeholders of the nature of the agreements and access to grievance mechanisms if these are not respected. Second, statutory planning processes developed at municipal level or higher should reinforce rather than contradict land tenure agreements and land use plans developed by the community, allowing for appropriate budget allocation.

● Investment Opportunities:

Where municipal statutory planning authorities lack the capacity to develop land use plans at the community level, communities themselves can develop these. The endorsement of agreements is facilitated through the active engagement of local authorities from the beginning of the agreement/negotiation process. This engagement and ongoing consultation at the lowest administrative levels enhances acceptance of and support for the recognition of such agreements by local authorities, and ensures coherence with existing legal frameworks. Existing stakeholder platforms and other collaborative structures such as those for development and land use planning processes can provide the basis for a common understanding of the agreements by all par-

ties involved. These platforms and processes also facilitate the identification of relevant grievance mechanisms if agreements are violated.

● How to go about it:

Acknowledging the differences and complexities of individual countries' legal frameworks and administrative procedures, the following examples show how the recognition of community-developed tenure agreements and land use planning by local authorities can be supported:

- i. Working with civil society organisations as process facilitators that assist in blending community norms with requirements of gender equality and the inclusion of marginal groups within the community (see also strategy #10).
- ii. Ensuring active participation by local officials throughout the process by giving them key roles in meetings; e.g., the mayor chairs important meetings, and land tenure arrangements are documented at the municipal offices.
- iii. Integrating communal land tenure agreements, as well as use and management rights, into local development and land use planning processes. The inclusion of land classification and land use registration in planning processes contributes to the recognition of community-level tenure agreements that protect tenants' rights against competing claims.
- iv. Supporting the **formulation of communally agreed by-laws** at municipal or district level to ensure that they align with national frameworks and are respected throughout the community. Such by-laws can both promote SLM measures (e.g., the amount of space to leave between crops or agreements on use of vegetative cover to protect soil) and support the recognition of local tenure agreements, especially where customary tenure prevails.

#3: Investing in equitable benefit-sharing of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) to include landless households which are left out if benefits are linked to land ownership

● The issue:

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is a well-known mechanism to incentivize conservation efforts. Land ownership or other forms of secure tenure are often a prerequisite to receive PES benefits for SLM or other sustainable agriculture and/or natural resource management measures. Landlessness may therefore exclude people from accessing benefits under PES schemes, even where they are engaged in SLM practices. Where existing land rights provide the basis for PES, not only landless households but also households or communities with informal land tenure arrangements may be excluded from receiving benefits under PES schemes. Furthermore, because conservation outcomes are hard to measure, cost-effectiveness is often used as the main criterion to evaluate the performance of PES.

This results in a tendency to target large-scale landowners rather than smallholder farmers as the transaction costs to engage smallholder farmers are considered too high.⁸

However, it is widely acknowledged that a failure to consider dimensions of equity can undermine the ultimate goal of maintaining and restoring ecosystems.⁹

⁸ See e.g. Pagiola, S.; Arcenas, A.; Platais. (2004). Can Payments for Environmental Services Help Reduce Poverty? An Exploration of the Issues and Evidence to Date from Latin America. *World Development* 33(2). Pp. 237–253); Porras, I. (2010). Fair and green? Social impacts of payments for environmental services in Costa Rica. International Institute for Environment and Development.

⁹ See e.g. Pascual, U., Phelps, J.; Germendis, E.; Brown, K.; Corbera, E.; Martin, A.; Gomez-Baggethun, E.; Muradian, R. (2014). Social Equity Matters in Payments for Ecosystem Services. *BioSciences*. 64 (11); Calvet-Mir, L., Corbera, E., Martin, A., Fisher, J., Gross-Camp, A. (2015). Payment for ecosystem services in the tropics: a closer look at effectiveness and equity. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. 14. Pp. 150–162.

● Investment Opportunities:

Benefits generated from PES schemes can be distributed to individuals or communities, or to a combination of both. Investing in benefits that serve an entire community helps to reduce exclusion and conflict, thereby supporting restoration objectives. This is particularly important where non-participants in PES have lost access to resources. Where benefits are distributed at community level there is a need for informed communities and trusted local governance systems.¹⁰ Hence, the strengthening of community institutions should be an integral part of any PES scheme.

● How to go about it:

The success of community-wide PES investment schemes largely depends on well-functioning community institutions. The following examples illustrate ways to ensure that PES also benefits landless households:

- i. Using PES to **invest in community** infrastructure, e.g., equal access to water, construction of schools, and inclusive extension services.
- ii. Including landless households in benefit schemes by **investing in income-generating activities** such as beekeeping and poultry farming.
- iii. Supporting **land access for landless farmers** to enable them to receive PES benefits, for example through intra-household tenure arrangements or by supporting lease arrangements between landowners and landless farmers eligible for PES benefits (see also strategy #1).

¹⁰ Dougill, A.J., Stringer, L.C., Leventon, J., Riddell, M., Rueff, H., Spracklen, D., Butt, E. (2012). Lessons from community-based payment for ecosystem services schemes: from forests to rangeland. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Britain*. 367. 3178–3190.

iv. Working with **community representatives who are elected by different interest groups** to ensure broad representation of interests within the community in the identification of investment priorities.

v. Working with **existing structures** and investing specifically in the **organisational capacities of community-based organisations** (see also strategy #10).

#4: Enhancing access to appropriate finance and markets for smallholder farmers, allowing them to invest in SLM through community-based farmers' saving and investment groups

● The issue:

Smallholder farmers often have difficulty accessing the financial resources needed to invest in SLM. A lack of financial resources and associated investment opportunities may also limit their access to certain markets. Studies reveal self-reinforcing links between economic status and soil quality. For example, poor soil quality implies low capital endowments which farmers use as collateral for loans, thus hampering their ability to invest in soil rehabilitation and conservation measures.¹¹

Hence, access to appropriate finance is often a precondition for smallholder farmers to meaningfully engage in SLM.

● Investment Opportunities:

The cases presented at Global Soil Week 2019 provided evidence of how community-based farmers' saving and investment groups helped smallholder farmers gain access to finance and markets. For example, these groups helped smallholder farmers raise capital for investments in SLM, reducing the adoption costs of SLM technologies. They improved their bargaining power when negotiating supply contracts or contracts to access markets. It is important to note, however, that even though community-based farmers' saving and investment groups are organised collectively, they do not automatically ensure social equity.

¹¹ Barrett, C. B., & Bevis, L. E. M. (2015). The self-reinforcing feedback between low soil fertility and chronic poverty. *Nature Geoscience*, 8, 907–912.

It is therefore important to identify how participation in these groups is determined and to consider ways to increase social equity within them. Such groups have the potential to go beyond the investment of savings; they can also help gain better access to external funding.

● How to go about it:

The following measures improve smallholders' access to finance and markets through community-based saving and investment groups, while also promoting greater social equity within these groups:

i. Supporting **institutional development and initial capacity building through financial training of community organisations** such as farmers' associations, cooperatives, and joint liability groups.

ii. Providing **organisational support** for the formation and operation of savings and investment groups.

iii. Specifically **targeting marginalized groups** in financial and managerial training programmes.

iv. Supporting the establishment of **women's saving** groups, including **training in economic and social rights** targeted at girls and women

v. Supporting the development of **business models for SLM** to gain access to finance and provide incentives for farmers to engage in SLM.

#5: Creating opportunities for value addition, economies of scale, and enhanced market access at the local level by setting up community production, processing, marketing, and training facilities

● The issue:

Smallholder farmers often struggle to produce consistent and sufficient volumes to gain access to certain markets. There are a number of reasons for this. First, they may lack the negotiating power to secure favourable agreements. Second, limited access to training can hinder effective coordination in efforts and production choices. Third, smallholders often have limited opportunities to engage in value-adding activities beyond primary production, leaving them highly vulnerable to fluctuating primary commodity prices.

● Investment Opportunities:

Economies of scale are often associated with large-scale agriculture and processing. However, the issue of economy of scale is not intrinsic to the size of a farm, but rather to a transition from informal and personalized to institutionalized forms of organisation. Institutionalized processes decrease transaction costs by reducing uncertainties and supporting the adoption of technology.¹² Smallholder farmers can develop economies of scale through models of collective action. Collective action allows small-scale farmers to combine their produce and gain access to larger markets that require the provision of consistent and larger volume of products. Models of collective action include cooperatives and business models that help smallholder farm-

¹² Collier, Paul, and Stefan Dercon. (2014). 'African Agriculture in 50 Years: Smallholders in a Rapidly Changing World?' *World Development* 63: 92–101.

ers become part of value-added chains. Creating economies of scale at the local level and developing value-addition activities for natural resources near harvesting sites is possible and particularly important for commodities where processing needs to take place near harvesting sites.¹³

● How to go about it:

Specific activities and approaches that support value addition and economies of scale at the local level include the following:

- i. Support the **organisational capacities of local cooperatives**. Investments in organisational capacities are essential to enable smallholder farmers to make use of cooperatives.
- ii. Providing **local and direct access to inputs, storage, and processing facilities** to reduce transportation and transaction costs for small producers. This may involve, for instance, locating processing facilities in rural village centres, or organising transport of products from individual farms thereby removing the financial burden of transport from farmers.
- iii. Support **collective processing and marketing facilities**, for example by strengthening farmer associations as umbrella organisations, providing training (e.g., in governance and financial management), and pooling resources to invest in processing, storage and transportation.
- iv. Support **locally managed training facilities**. One case featured women's groups who were so successful in their sourcing and selling activities based on permaculture practices that they could jointly invest in a multi-functional training centre.
- v. Training in **technical and management expertise** in processing and marketing of products to strengthen local expertise and organisational capacities.

¹³ Morris, Mike, Raphael Kaplinsky, and David Kaplan. (2012). "One Thing Leads to Another"-Commodities, Linkages and Industrial Development!. Resources Policy 37: 408–16.

#6: Achieving voluntary coordination of SLM/ extension service providers to ensure better service provision and broader outreach

● The issue:

At the sub-national level (e.g. villages, catchment areas, communities), there is a multitude of actors that provide services for SLM. These include different governmental agencies (formerly the main providers of extension services), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), producer and other farmer organisations, private-sector actors (including input suppliers and purchasers of agricultural products), training organisations, development cooperation agencies, and religious groups.¹⁴ All of these actors have their own objectives, interests, scope of influence and limitations. While many of them are active in the same areas, interventions and activities are often conducted in isolation, with little or scattered coordination among relevant institutions and organisations. An effective coordination body with oversight of all SLM services and able to make informed decisions in terms of intervention areas, topics and actual needs is often absent. As a result, conflicting advice, inefficient use of resources, and the consolidation of dependency on external funding and assistance is often the reality experienced by local communities.

● Investment Opportunities:

There is a need to pool knowledge and ensure smooth coordination amongst different sectors and levels of government. The collaboration between different service providers should be mainly coordinated by local authorities, which may need to be strengthened to assume this role.

¹⁴ Neuchâtel Group. (1999). Common framework on agricultural extension. Paris: Bureau des Politiques Agricoles et de la Sécurité Alimentaire.

● How to go about it:

The need for better coordination and the use of multi-stakeholder platforms risk putting further capacity constraints on local governments. However, there are ways to minimise the additional burden created by the need for coordination. Specific entry points to strengthen coordination of SLM service providers while minimising additional burdens include the following:

- i. Strengthen/build on **locally established cooperation models** – including informal models – that bring together all SLM service providers (public and private).
- ii. Support the **development of guidelines for coordination between stakeholders and government** or amongst stakeholders. While the latter may help to harmonize SLM approaches at the local level, local government should assume oversight functions.
- iii. **Embed public extension services in local development plans and local budgets**, including the allocation of resources for oversight and coordination functions.
- iv. **Support local governments in pooling the resources of municipalities** for better service provision. This can be achieved by giving municipal associations and/or municipal councils the mandate to fulfil coordination functions.
- v. Base project interventions on a **needs assessment carried out with local authorities and other service providers** in a given area to ensure better coordination.

#7: Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups in SLM interventions and strengthening post-project sustainability through improved targeting mechanisms

● The issue:

SLM practices have been promoted by development initiatives and organisations for decades. However, the challenge is to sustain these practices once input from the respective project comes to a halt. Also, there is often no extended dissemination and continuation of successfully tested practices beyond farmers targeted directly by projects.¹⁵ Studies of the reasons for low uptake among smallholder farmers reveal that a lack of access to the services necessary for successful adoption (consulting, financing, outlet markets) is a major obstacle to the dissemination and sustained application of SLM practices. In many cases, the provision of training services to model farmers has led to an increased uptake of practices by these farmers but not to the diffusion of knowledge to other farmers.¹⁶ The need for model farmers to be successful from the perspective of the supporting organisation often results in the selection of such farmers based on their potential for success.¹⁷ As a consequence, extension services often do not reach the most vulnerable and food-insecure farmers, including households headed by women.

¹⁵ Rauch, T; Kersting, D. (2016). Making service systems work for food security and sustainable land management. Strategic recommendations for targeting smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and India. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

¹⁶ Kondylis, F., Mueller, V., & Zhu, J. (2017). Seeing is believing? Evidence from an extension network experiment. *Journal of Development Economics*, 125, 1–20.

¹⁷ Taylor, M., & Bhasme, S. (2018). Model farmers, extension networks and the politics of agricultural knowledge transfer. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 64, 1–10.

● Investment Opportunities:

Targeting mechanisms of SLM interventions need to focus more on vulnerable and food-insecure households, particularly female-headed households. Targeting mechanisms need to look beyond better-off model farmers, in order to facilitate access to services for food-insecure farmers and promote broader uptake and continuation of measures after project activities end. Appropriate methods of equitably reaching women, men and other stakeholder groups differ from place to place, and social norms particular to an area should guide the provision of extension services.

● How to go about it:

Specific entry points to improve targeting mechanisms and more equitably include women in the provision of extension services include the following:

i. Targeting **vulnerable households, including those headed by women, as model farmers**. This provides the opportunity to tailor delivery services to the needs and possibilities of vulnerable households rather than better-off farmers.

ii. Purposefully **including women and young people in community consultations** that are otherwise often dominated by men. This requires that consultation processes are adapted to the needs of different stakeholder groups in specific contexts (e.g., different composition of participants at different times, consideration of time and venue of meetings, etc.).

iii. Supporting the **formalisation and function of women farmer groups** to facilitate their access to extension services.

iv. Supporting **locally accessible and managed training facilities**, including those run by women's groups, to ensure broader and continuous access to training, especially for vulnerable households and women.

#8: Strengthening SLM knowledge diffusion mechanisms by building on local organisations, customary models of knowledge sharing and champions who can ensure a broader outreach

● The issue:

Knowledge diffusion within extension services in many African countries has typically been led by institutions within the ministries of agriculture, though NGOs and other private sector advisory services have been increasingly involved in knowledge diffusion processes as well.¹⁸ Rather than a transfer of knowledge focusing mainly on increased production, extensions services today need to assume much more of a facilitative role in support of skill development for farmer groups.¹⁹ Extension services that support farmers in managing value chains beyond on-farm production are key to rural development.²⁰ However, many knowledge diffusion models fall short of their envisioned outreach and impact. Experience from the GSW cases has, for instance, shown that model farmers, who are often better off to start with, have largely failed to ensure widespread knowledge diffusion in target communities. This creates an inherent hierarchical tension due to socio-economic disparities between the selected and more affluent farmers and the rest of the farming community, impeding the process of knowledge diffusion (see also strategy #7).

¹⁸ Assefa, S., Alemneh, D., & Rorissa, A. (2014). Diffusion of scientific knowledge in agriculture: The case for Africa. *Agricultural Information Worldwide*, 6.

¹⁹ Davis, K. E. (2008). Extension in Sub-Saharan Africa: Overview and Assessment of Past and Current Models, and Future Prospects. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 15(3), 14.

²⁰ Janc, K., Czapiewski, K., & Floriańczyk, Z. (2012). The importance and diffusion of knowledge in the agricultural sector: The Polish experiences. *Geographia Polonica*, 85, 45–56.

- Investment Opportunities:

SLM knowledge diffusion mechanisms need to correspond to the existing socio-economic realities of different farmers and reflect the socio-cultural dynamics of knowledge transfer in communities. Peer-to-peer knowledge diffusion is often the most effective way to spread knowledge, especially where literacy levels are low.²¹ However, attention must be paid to prevailing social norms and values, power dynamics, and customary models of knowledge sharing to ensure a broader and inclusive outreach.

- How to go about it:

Specific entry points to strengthen SLM knowledge diffusion mechanisms to ensure a broader outreach include the following:

- Using **existing farmers' networks** (social infrastructure and regular exchange processes) to support knowledge-sharing.
- Build the capacity of **local champions chosen by the community**, thereby strengthening their obligation to share knowledge with other farmers through increased accountability.
- Train **community moderators** to help disseminate information ensuring a continuing process of knowledge-sharing within a farming community even after external support has ceased.
- Jointly develop diffusion approaches** with the local community. These should build on existing social structures and dynamics to strengthen process ownership. This approach has proven successful in promoting knowledge-sharing even after inputs by external actors have come to a halt.

²¹ Janc, K., Czapiewski, K., & Floriańczyk, Z. (2012). The importance and diffusion of knowledge in the agricultural sector: The Polish experiences. *Geographia Polonica*, 85, 45–56.

#9: Strengthening community governance structures where statutory local government lacks the capacity to effectively implement SLM policies

- The issue:

Local governments often lack the necessary financial and human resources to effectively promote and implement SLM policies. This is the case even where decentralisation processes formally have devolved power and resources to lower administrative levels. This situation can be further aggravated in contexts of fragile governance where local governments may fail to provide even minimum services and citizens have little trust in official institutions. In these contexts, alternative governance models that build on customary systems may become more relevant in promoting SLM.

- Investment Opportunities:

Where statutory local governments lack the capacities to implement SLM policies, partnerships with other customary governance structures have been shown to provide a viable basis for the implementation of SLM measures. The evidence presented at GSW 2019 underlined the value of working with existing structures that continue to exist after external interventions end without overburdening these structures with too many new functions. It needs to be noted, however, that customary governance structures do not necessarily offer all members of society an equal chance to participate and benefit. An active involvement of marginalized individuals and groups should form part of such partnerships.

The activities of informal and formal systems of governance should be aligned in order to sustain SLM effects once interventions end. Even where statutory local governments are considered inefficient, they are usually not absent. The promotion of SLM through alternative governance structures needs to be coordinated with formal government structures.

● How to go about it:

Specific entry points for working with community and customary governance structures to promote SLM include the following:

- i. Working with **groups that are already engaged in natural resource restoration efforts** when implementing SLM measures.
- ii. **Developing frameworks with customary leaders** to manage SLM interventions and **involving customary leaders in awareness-raising** and other community mobilisation events.
- iii. Where appropriate, **formalizing customary governance structures** so that they are legally recognised.
- iv. Supporting traditional governance structures by **formulating by-laws and guidelines for SLM** that correspond to the national SLM framework.
- v. Promoting **coordination and communication between customary and statutory local governance structures**, as well as between local and regional/national governments.

#10: Strengthening the role of civil society and community-based organisations as process facilitators

● The issue:

Marginalized or vulnerable individuals and communities often lack the necessary access to information and capacities, for example to effectively organise themselves, facilitate agreement processes, or successfully claim their legitimate rights. Local governments are often overburdened in fulfilling the demands of their various mandates and consequently fall short in facilitating inclusive processes. Both of the above factors have significant impacts on the inclusiveness of investments in SLM as well as on the post-project sustainability of investments. It is important to keep in mind that civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) are not necessarily legitimized through democratic processes and, hence, cannot fulfil a representative function. Yet, they often play an important role in creating democratic spaces and providing technical and legal assistance to communities and local governments. In addition, both CSOs and CBOs are often present in intervention areas before and after any given project and are trusted by communities. They can significantly contribute to ensuring that investments reach vulnerable and marginalized members of communities and that activities continue after projects come to a halt.

● Investment Opportunities:

The cases presented at GSW 2019 have shown that CSOs and CBOs play a key role in various processes that support inclusive SLM investments if they support the interests of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Strengthening their role as facilitators and mediators in those processes is an important aspect of creating

an enabling environment. These processes include negotiations and agreements on access to and use of land within communities and in exchange with local and national authorities; support in facilitating decision-making within communities; providing sensitisation training or conducting lobbying and advocacy work at the community, local and national levels. The cases also provided examples of the vital role of CSOs and CBOs in strengthening collaboration between local governments, grassroots organisations and the community, in facilitating access to SLM services for marginalized groups, in developing statutes and bylaws to qualify communities as legal entities or promote SLM measures, and in ensuring that local legal recognition processes are linked to sub-national and national policy processes.

● How to go about it:

When working with CSOs and CBOs it is important to understand whose interests they represent and whether their outreach includes the most vulnerable and food-insecure households. Strengthening the role of CSOs in processes of facilitating the adoption of SLM measures through inclusive investments and ensuring that measures are sustained has proven effective when the following criteria are fulfilled:

- i. Involving CSOs and CBOs in project design from the start and offering **opportunities for partnerships through formal cooperation agreements**.
- ii. Working with **CSOs that have strong ties in the community/region**, whose staff speak the local language, and which remain present in the area after project completion.
- iii. Working with **CSOs that are trusted by community members** due to their long-term presence in the intervention area. This underlines the importance of **investing in trust-building activities**.

- iv. Working with CSOs and CBOs that have **long-standing experience in SLM and land governance issues specific to the intervention area** thanks to their long-term presence in the area.
- v. Supporting **CSOs that provide rights awareness training to citizens** so that they know their legitimate rights and how to protect them.
- vi. Supporting rights and leadership training to **build bargaining and collective action skills amongst women farmers**, helping them effectively organise and engage in politically mandated participatory processes.
- vii. Supporting **inclusive and participatory platforms** that give CSOs and CBOs a forum to share their expertise and experiences with other actors (from the public and private sectors). This may include, for example, involving CSOs and CBOs in regular coordination meetings with local governance structures, such as village development and natural resource management committees.
- viii. Supporting **legal frameworks that recognise and ensure the institutional participation** of CSOs and CBOs.

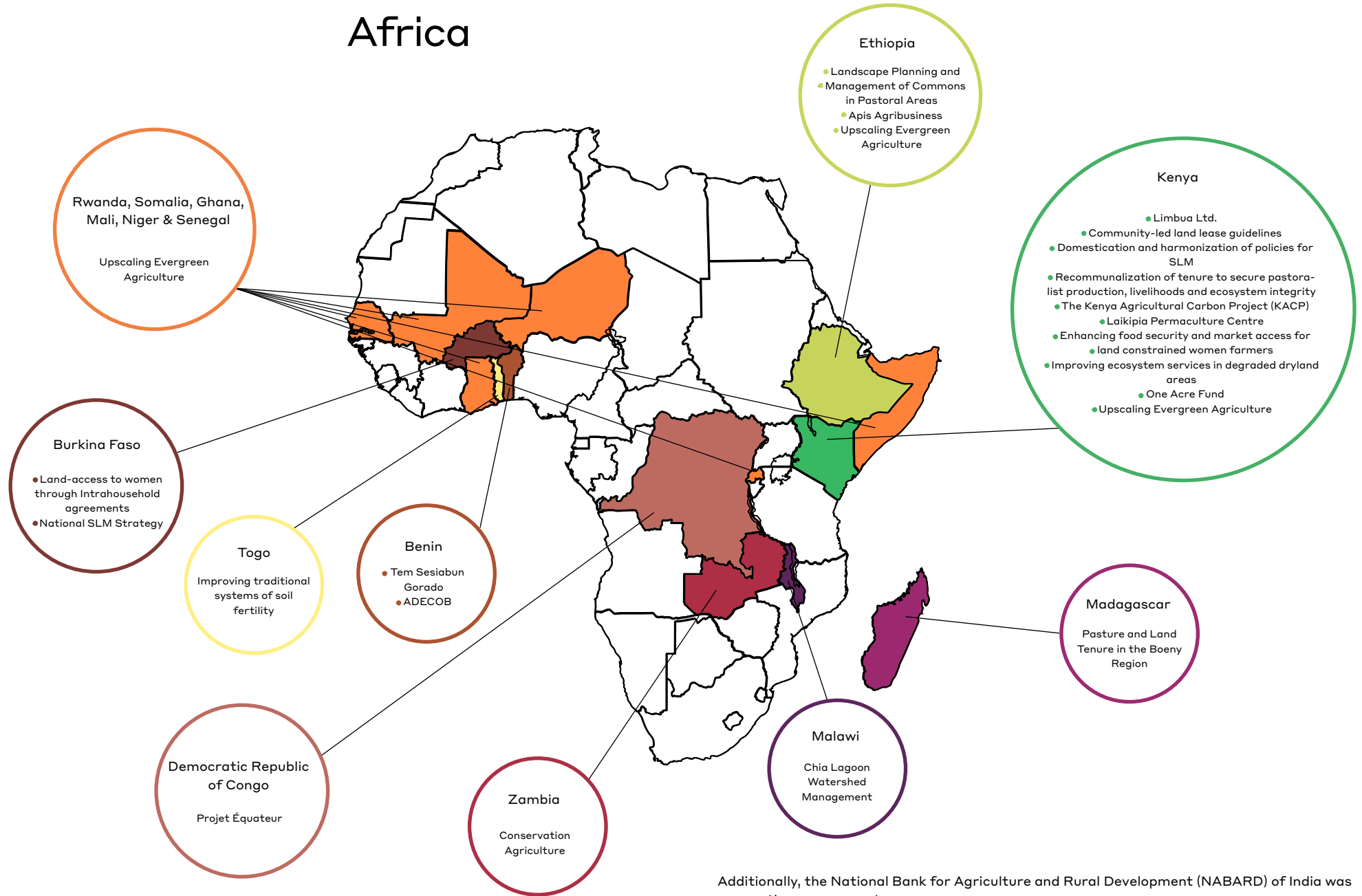
Outlook: investments in local solutions to create an enabling environment for sustainable land management

It is possible to create an enabling environment through community-driven processes at the local level. This community-driven investment guide shows that it is possible to create an enabling environment for sustainable land management even in the context of short-term, project-based interventions. It shows that an enabling environment does not always require national policy reforms, but can be complemented through community-driven processes at the local level. These processes support different aspects of an enabling environment, from more equitable access to land resources and the provision of appropriate and accessible extension services to more inclusive financing mechanisms for SLM that benefit vulnerable smallholder farmers.

There is no blueprint for how to create an enabling environment; rather, context-specific local solutions need to be found. While the cases presented at GSW 2019 cases have shown that similar processes can support an enabling environment in different contexts, those contexts may also require different approaches. If communities are to become active partners in developing solutions, active engagement will be needed from the start of a project, both to identify existing challenges to SLM and to design processes to address them. Investments in SLM need to be guided by context-specific solutions to create enabling environments at the local level.

Decades of investment in SLM have not brought about the intended impacts – different investments are needed if ecosystem restoration goals are to be met. We are at a turning point, where investments in ecosystem restoration need to be more effective in producing long-term impacts. In the face of a rapidly changing climate whose effects are already being felt, especially by the most vulnerable and marginalized groups who often are most directly dependent on a healthy natural resource base, business as usual is no longer an option. We need investments that enable communities and individuals to sustainably manage their natural resource base and to ensure a sustained functioning of ecosystem services. We need to invest in enabling environments for sustainable land management. This investment guide offers practical solutions to key challenges in creating such an environment – through investments in community-driven processes, from the bottom-up and complementary to national policy reforms.

Africa



Additionally, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) of India was among the case presenters

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