



land  
portal

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2021 Annual Report

**1,454,677**  
page views

**61**  
datasets

**66,443**  
Land Library Resources

**772,252**  
visits

**7,994**  
Twitter followers

**4,561**  
Land Portal users

**9,743**  
news articles

**2,523**  
likes on Facebook

**1,971**  
sources of information

**1,729**  
blog posts

**66%**  
of Land Portal users  
are from the Global South

Liberating  
land information  
for social and  
environmental justice



Land Portal is grateful for  
the generous support of our donors:

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OMIDYAR NETWORK



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

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## Message from the Chair of the Board

The Land Portal Foundation is a virtual organization that is lean and agile and this has allowed it to easily adapt to the circumstances created by the pandemic over the past years. I want to thank our dedicated team for their flexibility during these difficult times but also congratulate them for all the excellent work they have accomplished throughout the year.

The circumstances of the pandemic and the inability to travel has required a shift to webinars and virtual event support, which picked up significantly over the past few years. Moreover, we have seen progress in some new and important areas. This includes expanding the number of country profiles, data stories, thematic portfolios, and also starting to work a lot more closely with government land data.

Our efforts over the past year to engage with governments is a very important advancement. Government stakeholders are critically important information providers in the land sector. Many government stakeholders have yet to make important progress when it comes to standardizing their data and making it usable and accessible to the public. The Land Portal Foundation's work in preparing the State of Land Information reports, the Land Governance Module of the Global Data Barometer, as well as the Open Up Guide on Land Governance are very critical efforts that contribute to closing an important gap in the land sector.

I would argue that open data principles and concepts are not yet fully understood by a lot of the stakeholders in the land sector, and neither are the challenges, benefits, and avenues for addressing it. I would also argue that the Land Portal Foundation is filling this important niche. The Land Portal has created an information infrastructure for land that has grown in both the quantity and the richness of resources making it one of the most visited, if not the most visited, site in the land sector with more than 20,000 subscribers worldwide and a majority of them coming from the Global South.

I believe I speak on behalf of the entire board when I say this, but we continue to be impressed with both the quantity and quality of the information products and services being generated by the Land Portal team, and we are very excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

We are also extremely grateful that our donors have chosen the Land Portal Foundation to deliver on their development objectives.

**Tim Fella,**  
*Chair, on behalf of the board*

## Letter from the Team Leader

The Land Portal Foundation is proud to support land stakeholders around the world to nurture a growing information ecosystem that is informing and improving land-related decision-making, policy, and practice at all levels.

Our global partnerships have become stronger. User trust and satisfaction in our work is higher than ever. Open data principles and concepts are becoming better understood. The land sector has made great strides in contextualizing key land issues vis-a-vis climate change, gender equity, and indigenous rights, among other issues.

The Land Portal continues to evolve and innovate. From a simple information gateway, we have become a true hub for knowledge. This year, we invested greatly in delivering original research and content where we saw opportunities to add value. I'll share just two examples.

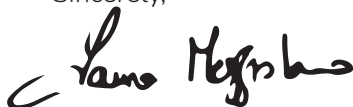
The Country Insights initiative provides a curated and highly researched entry point for people to learn more about land situations in individual countries. Users now rate it as one of our most valuable services.

The publication of the Open Up Guide for Land Governance was another milestone. The Open Up Guide is a tool for governments to publish land-related data for improved decision-making and public service. The publication is just the starting point! We will be piloting the guide implementation in Senegal and Madagascar with our trusted partners and the support of GIZ.

Opening up land data properly is not the end in itself, but we strongly believe that it can help advance social and environmental justice. Over the last two years the Land Portal has worked hard to embed land issues within key open data activities. Our partnerships are fundamental to this effort, and we are grateful to the Open Data Charter and Global Data Barometer for forging this new direction of work with us.

Thanks to all Land Portal partners, donors and users for your continued support and confidence in our work. What we have achieved in 2021 is the result of a joint effort.

Sincerely,



*Laura Meggiolaro,*  
Team Leader



# Inform

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Information on land continues to be fragmented and inaccessible to people and communities around the world. In response, the Land Portal created a unique multilingual platform to make dispersed content easy to discover and access. While we started by hosting, aggregating, and publishing data, articles, and publications, we now also curate and develop original knowledge products.

## Country insights

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Our Country Insights Initiative seeks to expand knowledge about how countries govern their land, the challenges they face, and the innovative solutions they find to manage land tenure issues.

In 2021, we launched thirty-five new country portfolios as part of this initiative. **Each country portfolio** features a detailed narrative written by Land Portal researchers and are peer-reviewed by leading land experts around the world. Narratives delve into the history of land governance in the country and include a timeline of major developments in land governance over the country's history. Portfolios provide access to key socioeconomic and land-related indicators, such as percentage of women owning land and perceived tenure security.

We strive to be a multilingual platform that reaches stakeholders in local languages around the world. We are increasingly investing in the translation of knowledge products and making them more accessible. Our country portfolios are now available in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Additionally, our new **Country Insights Digests** offer a reflection on some of the most important new articles and reports covering current land-related trends in different countries, while distilling key messages and points of debate, and offering entry points for further learning.

*"The Land Portal's Country Portfolios provide very useful syntheses of political and history regarding countries' land legal regimes, land usage and ownership patterns, and the rights of various land stakeholders, among other key issues. These Country Portfolios, together with the Portal's "land issues" and land data collections, make the Portal a key go-to information resource on a range of global land issues and policy challenges. It is set out in a manner that is accessible and of use both to experts and to general readers in need of authoritative information on such matters, whether of a summary or more in-depth nature."*

**Nicolas Cook,**  
Specialist in African Affairs, Congressional Research Service,  
United States Library of Congress



## Data stories

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Data stories combine a compelling narrative with data visualizations and other visual elements. Over the course of 2021 we collaborated with several organizations to produce data stories featuring and promoting the role of indigenous peoples in combating climate change.

### **Deforestation in Cambodia: A story of land concessions, migration and resource exploitation**

This data story shows that between 2002 and 2019, 27,000 square kilometers of land in Cambodia – 14% of the total area of the country – was deforested. The data story unpacks this figure, showing that 70% of the total deforestation took place outside of areas delineated as land concessions.

The story reveals that deforestation in Cambodia is driven by the migration of smallholder farmers moving from lowland areas to upland regions where more agricultural land is available. The underlying process is the very limited and incomplete transition of the national economy towards industries and services, while land and agriculture remain central to the livelihoods of the majority of the rural population.

These findings validate a study that presented scenarios of the future land needs of smallholder farmers, which were based on the increase of the active population in rural areas and job creation in the non-farming sector of the economy. The data story discusses the implications for land use planning and land governance in general.

*“Land Portal data stories offer a fantastic interface for data visualization and presentation. The service that the Land Portal team provides is top-notch and helps researchers reach out to a wide community of land aficionados. Highly recommended to all land researchers.”*

**Jean-Christophe Diepart,**  
Independent Researcher, Cambodia,  
[www.peasants-territories.org](http://www.peasants-territories.org)

## SDG Land Tracker

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Six years into the establishment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we re-examined progress made on land-related SDG indicators. We launched the updated SDG Land Tracker, which features completely revised and updated narratives for 13 land-related indicators in collaboration with SDG custodian agencies.

The **SDG Land Tracker** provides easy access to data and information on the land-specific SDG indicators. Land is a key economic resource inextricably linked to access, use, and control over other natural resources and thus is critical to achieving the SDGs.

The SDG Land Tracker includes official data for 10 out of the 13 indicators, sourced from the United Nations and custodian agencies and made available on the Land Portal as Linked Open Data. The SDG Land Tracker provides a timeline featuring important decisions and key events that have been made for land indicators and consolidates a wide range of blogs, news, events, debates, and library resources relating specifically to each indicator.

*“The SDG Land Tracker offers a comprehensive and interactive tool for users to monitor the forest-related SDG indicators and make evidence-based decisions regarding the conservation and sustainable management of forests.”*

**Anne Branthomme,**  
Forestry Officer, FAO





# Open



Our work is helping to build a democratic and open land information ecosystem in which all perspectives are visible and equally valuable, and where data and information can support positive change in land governance around the world.

# Unveiling Country Data Ecosystems At Scale

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## State of Land Information (SOLI) Reports

Our State of Land Information (SOLI) reports seek to provide an overview of publicly available data and information on key land issues. The aim of the research is to uncover the many different sources of land data and information at the country-level and help to identify actual data and information gaps, with a view to establishing a baseline for targeted interventions to improve the information ecosystem.

Our robust methodology demonstrates not only trends and gaps in land data collection, but functions as a practical guide in support of improved visibility and usability of land data and information. SOLI reports serve as the first step in the implementation of the Open Up Guide for Land Governance.

In 2021, we kicked off SOLI research in five countries in Africa. We aim to develop SOLI reports for a dozen countries in Africa by 2024.

## Leading the open data revolution

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### The Open Up Guide for Land Governance

We launched the Open Up Guide for Land Governance together with the Open Data Charter as a practical resource to be used by governments to publish land-related data to improve data quality, availability, accessibility, and use for improved citizen engagement, decision-making, and innovation.

Land is a critical global asset, and land governance – the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority over land – should include processes for citizens participation. Open data may not be a panacea for land governance problems, but it is an important tool for achieving good land governance and securing land rights for vulnerable people.

We are piloting this guide in collaboration with the governments of Senegal and Madagascar with the support of GIZ in an effort to realize the full potential of open data.

*“The Open-Up Data Guide developed by the Land Portal supports countries in national discussions on intensified as well as harmonized (geo)data use. Such discussions are necessary as a basis for digitized work processes within the governance sector and have huge potential for improved government services, which also includes a more effective use of resources. We are looking forward to further exchange and cooperation.”*

**Alexander Strunck,**  
Advisor for Land Governance, GIZ

## Towards inclusive land data monitoring

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### Land Module in the Global Data Barometer

Land governance was selected as one of the key modules in the **Global Report by the Open Data Barometer**. In collaboration with the Global Data Barometer, we developed the **Land Module** to understand the state of land data around the world and to contribute to the overall Global Data Barometer message of data as a public good.

The Land Module will provide a high-level overview of land data availability, accessibility, and use, supporting advances in the debate over land data. The Land Module will serve as a tool for policy makers to identify data management gaps and develop strategies for improved digitalization strategies.

The Land Module will also help international organizations to inform investment, decisions, and strategies related to land data, and generate understanding of the land data landscape among local and national entities to address land related problems.

*“Land Portal has been a strategic partner for the Global Data Barometer project. We have joined efforts on research and dissemination strategies on open land data and the skills, knowledge, collaboration and commitment of Land Portal team have been key assets for our partnership”*

**Nicolás Grossman,**  
Research and Data Lead, Global Data Barometer



## Democratizing land information with metadata

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### The Land Governance Thesaurus–LandVoc

Metadata is the data that describes data. Descriptions include author, title, date, geography, abstracts, keywords, and much more. These data are the primary tool for linking, organizing, and connecting data that are generated in different geographies, different languages, and across different industries. Metadata is what makes information machine-readable and therefore discoverable. It is how we demonstrate relevance to search engines.

Our powerful information tool called **LandVoc** is a thesaurus covering 310 concepts related to land governance. LandVoc is hosted by the FAO as a sub-vocabulary of **AGROVOC** and curated by the Land Portal Foundation.

LandVoc is organized hierarchically and shows both horizontal and vertical relationships between concepts, enabling greater understanding. It is available in 12 languages and is an extremely powerful tool in making data and information more discoverable. LandVoc serves to connect knowledge and experiences from across the world, bridging both language and culture barriers.





# Debate

The background of the entire page is a deep purple. Overlaid on this are several large, overlapping circles in three colors: teal, green, and orange. The circles are arranged in a pattern that partially obscures the word 'Debate'.

Our work seeks to promote debate, foster dialogue, and support innovative storytelling techniques and approaches that provide platforms for everyone, including marginalized communities, to share their experiences and articulate their perspectives.

## Promoting indigenous land rights in the climate agenda

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### Elevating the voices of Indigenous and local communities

We partnered with the Tenure Facility, the Thomson Reuters Foundation, and the Ford Foundation on a series of Land Dialogues promoting the centrality of indigenous and community land rights in advancing global efforts to halt the climate crisis, achieving a healthy planet, and progressing towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We hosted seven Land Dialogues on a variety of topics pertaining to **Indigenous land rights in the framework of the leadup to COP26**. The dialogues focused on the importance of formally recognizing and securing the customary lands of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a crucial contribution to the overall climate health of the planet. Each webinar elevated the voices of Indigenous leaders and were held in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

We supported the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC), a coalition of Indigenous and local community organizations from Latin America, Africa and Asia, to amplify their work leading up to the COP26 climate change summit. We produced a **short video** to highlight their historic involvement in bringing forward some of the greatest achievements at COP26.

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*“The Land Portal’s webinars were useful to help generate the momentum in favor of Indigenous Peoples and Local Community land rights and forest management, which led to the historic pledge of \$1.7 billion to support these goals in COP26 in Glasgow.”*

**David Kaimowitz,**  
former manager of the Forest and Farm Facility, administered by FAO


## Capturing knowledge

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### Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure (VGGT)

“Supporting the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT)” was a nine year and \$15,000,000 project that enhanced global processes to improve governance of tenure through collaborative partnerships for sustainable impacts, while promoting the application of VGGT tools and materials.

We partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to hold **an online discussion** and **two webinars** to collect and share concrete experiences, good practices, knowledge sharing, and lessons learned that emerged from the project.



We also created **a virtual hub** containing links to a wide range of resources describing the activities and outcomes of the Project. The virtual hub, in addition to the records of the live discussions we hosted, comprise an important knowledge repository. They help VGGT stakeholders take stock of the work done to date and can help shape where the community of practice goes next.

*“The Land Portal is a partner in the land community that has been very proactive to help disseminate and promote the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT). Thanks to the joint work with the Land Portal, we have been able to effectively promote exchange of experiences and best practices on improving governance of tenure, particularly on securing tenure rights under customary tenure, among different countries and regions. Their contribution to capacity development of different constituencies in the land sector has been significant, making the Land Portal one of the relevant partners to work with in the future, as we move forward to scaling up VGGT implementation and improving land governance at large.”*

**Javier Molina Cruz,**

Senior Land Tenure Officer, Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

## Secure land rights: the key to sustainable food systems

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Securing land rights is critical for realizing sustainable food systems that provide food security and overcome poverty. Property rights help preserve livelihoods, maintain social stability, and increase incentives for investment and for sustainable, productive land use.

We convened a global Food Systems Summit Dialogue, **Secure Land Rights: The Key To Sustainable Food Systems**, together with the European Commission, the International Land Coalition (ILC), LANDac–The Netherlands Land Academy, RVO, and Welthungerhilfe. The event attracted nearly 900 registered participants.

Secure land tenure provides women, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and others with incentives to invest in land improvements and also enables farmers to increase their access to financial services, government programs, and social safety nets, particularly for women. This dialogue drew attention to improved land governance as a cross-cutting thread that underpins success of the Summit’s 5 Action Tracks.

*“Land Portal’s webinars and online discussions convene a large and diverse audience interested in the connections between land tenure and other global issues. Through this work, Land Portal provides a critical platform for Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants, and local communities to share scientific evidence and personal stories on how their efforts to secure and defend their land and resource rights also contribute to climate, conservation, and public health goals.”*

**Kevin Currey,**

Program Officer, Ford Foundation

## Media partnerships

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We foster diverse media partnerships to raise awareness of land governance issues at international, regional, and national levels. We also support our partners' media coverage by making local events more visible at the global level.

We offered comprehensive communications support for several key land events in 2021. This involved publishing blogs, interviews, and daily bulletins covering the entire event, including publishing materials in local languages.

The **2nd Arab Land Conference** marked an important moment for stakeholders promoting and establishing good land governance in the Arab region. The Conference focused on the priorities of the Arab Land Initiative.

We were a co-organizer for the **3rd Mekong Regional Land Forum**, which focused on land tenure in Mekong forest landscapes and advancing the recognition of customary rights and responsible investment practices, which attracted more than 1,000 registered participants.

The **LANDac Conference 2021** focused on 'Land, Crisis and Resilience' and the challenges that global, intertwining crises pose to land governance systems, processes and actors. We provided unprecedented coverage of this event, including interviews with keynote speakers, session summaries, and a wide range of interviews with key stakeholders.

The Land Portal also participated in the **India Land Development Conference** and the **Conference on Land Policy in Africa** as a media partner and session organizer for both.

*"Due to restrictions related to COVID-19 pandemic, we moved the Mekong Region Land Forum online in 2021. Partnership with the Land Portal was instrumental in this process. Their expertise in delivering online events was hugely helpful to our team, as was their global credibility and broad network of partners. This Forum proved to be our largest and most participatory ever, drawing presenters and participants from around the world. We look forward to continuing this partnership in future events."*

**Micah Ingalls**, Team Leader,  
Mekong Region Land Governance

# Land Portal People

## Our Board of Directors

### Tim Fella

Chair, Team Lead, Geospatial Authorities, ESRI

### Prof. Jaap Zevenbergen (Treasurer)

Full Professor Department of Urban and Regional Planning and Geo-Information Management, University of Twente

### Dr. Ritu Verma

Anthropologist, International Development Expert and Civil Engineer

### Chris Addison

ICT and knowledge management expert

### Dr. Elizabeth Daley

Team Leader of the global WOLTS project and a Principal Consultant with Mokoro Ltd.

## Policy Advisory Group

### Chris Penrose Buckley

London, United Kingdom

### Ward Anseeuw

Rome, Italy

### Harold Liversage

Rome, Italy

### Andreas Lange

Eschborn, Germany

## Technical Advisory Group

### Tim Davies

Portsmouth, United Kingdom

### Mike Powell

Alnwick, United Kingdom

### Valeria Pesce

Rome, Italy

### Marcello De Maria (Advisor)

Reading, United Kingdom

# Our Team

In 2021, we established dedicated data and research teams to scale up our work on country-level research and open data. We brought on six experts from around the world to be part of the Country Insights initiative and author country portfolios. We also established a data team to expand our work in this area, particularly the State of Land Information (SOLI) reports and the pilot of the Open Up Guide on Land Governance in several countries. This team is well situated to support us in bringing forward our mission over the coming years.

## **Charl-Thom Bayer**

Land Information Management and Advocacy Consultant

## **Erik Bennema**

Finances Officer

## **Konrad Hentze**

Data Analyst

## **Muhammad Iqbal**

Web Developer

## **Lilian Lee**

Communications Consultant

## **Laura Meggiolaro**

Team Leader

## **Silvina Rusinek**

Web Manager

## **Adam Sánchez**

Technology Officer

## **Romy Sato**

Local Knowledge Engagement Network Coordinator

## **Neil Sorensen**

Communications Specialist

## **Stacey Zammit**

Communications Officer

## **Local Knowledge Engagement Network**

### **Rick de Satgé**

Country Research & Engagement Consultant Cape Town, South Africa

### **Daniel Hayward**

Country Research & Engagement Consultant  
Bangkok, Thailand

### **Anne Hennings**

Country Research & Engagement Consultant, Germany, South Africa,  
Sierra Leone

### **Nieves Zúñiga**

Country Research & Engagement Consultant, Berlin, Germany

### **Salah Abukashawa**

Country Research & Engagement Consultant, Khartoum, Sudan

### **Marie Gagné**

Country Research & Engagement Consultant, Montreal, Canada

### **Amanda Martinez**

Local Content Associate, Recife, Brazil

### **Sandra Apaza Lanyi**

Local Content Associate, Madrid, Spain

### **Israel Bionyi**

Local Content Associate, Cameroon



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