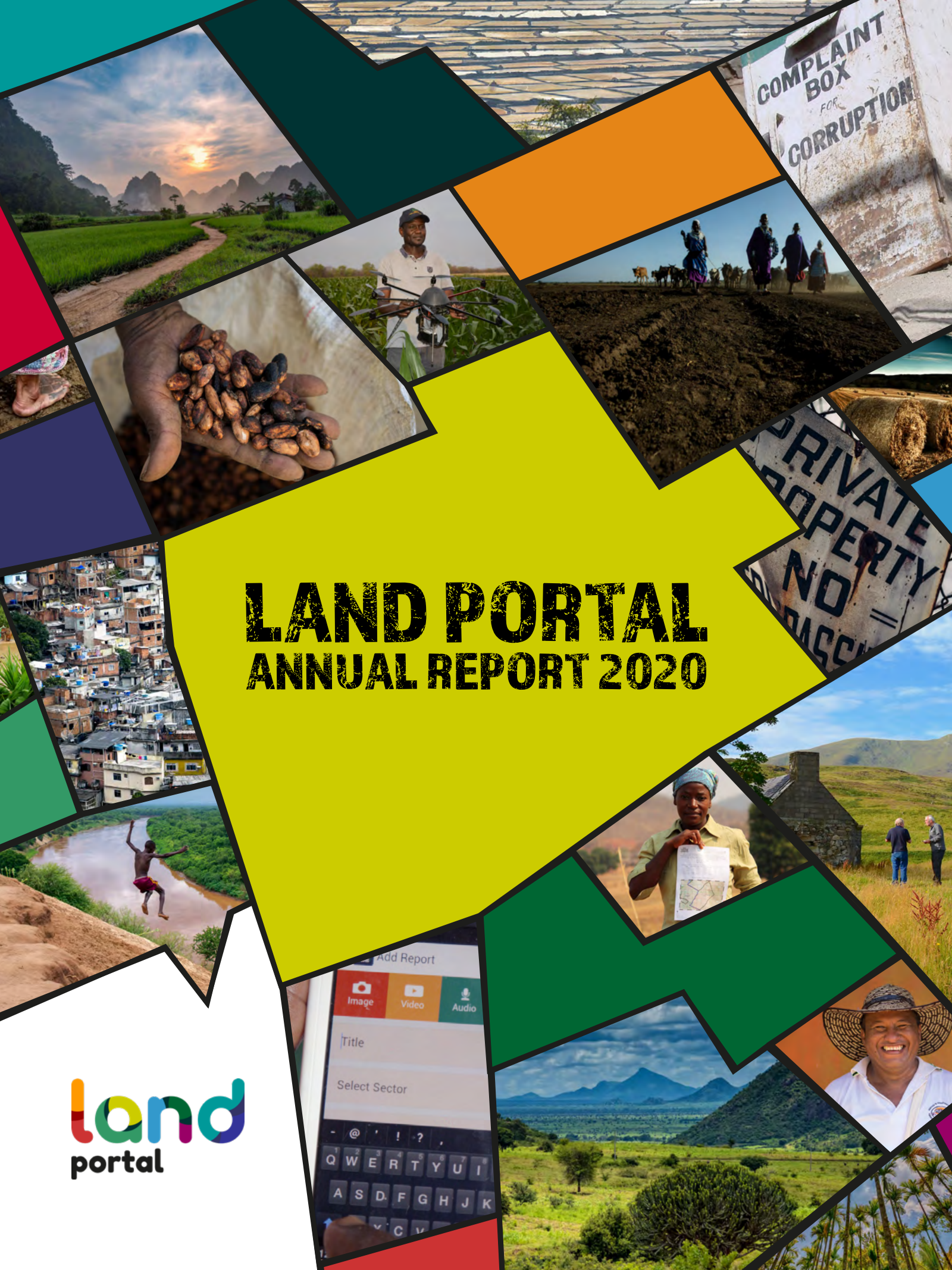


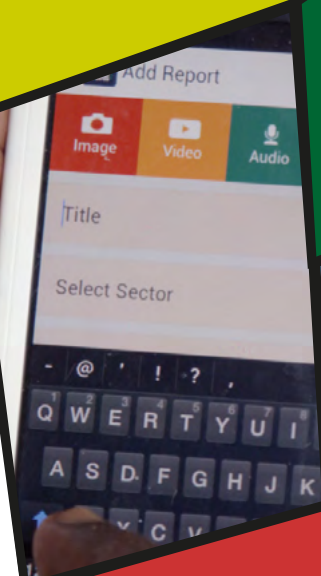
# LAND PORTAL ANNUAL REPORT 2020

COMPLAINT  
BOX  
FOR  
CORRUPTION

PRIVATE  
PROPERTY  
NO  
PASS



land  
portal





**MESSAGES FROM CHAIR AND TEAM LEADER**

**OUR WORK IN FOCUS**

**OUR WORK IN NUMBERS**

**LAND PORTAL PEOPLE**

**DONORS**

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

2020 was a challenging year for the land sector. While the COVID-19 pandemic tested our resolve in the face of adversity – threatening to reverse decades of development and investment in the land sector – it also clearly demonstrated how land tenure security is a critical component of sustainable development and essential if we are to *build back better*.

The Land Portal Foundation has been a fully digital organization since its inception, and our agile team was able to easily shift to providing 100% online services to the land community. We have been working for years to develop effective knowledge management practices, that harness the tacit knowledge generated in conferences and events, and during the COVID-19 pandemic we provided highly professional communications services for webinars, virtual conferences and online workshops that enabled the land governance sector to increase the visibility of its work.

The Land Portal Foundation's governance has also substantially evolved in 2020. Leon Verstappen stepped down as Chair of our Board of Directors after 11 years with the organization. Leon is responsible for the Land Portal becoming an independent organization and he leaves behind a legacy of transparency, participation and collaboration at the heart of the Land Portal. We are sincerely grateful for his contributions and dedication to the success of the organization. We also welcomed three new members of the board: Professor Jaap Zevenbergen from the University of Twente, Chris Addison, an ICT and knowledge management expert, and Dr. Elizabeth Daley, a tenure specialist. Jaap Zevenbergen was elected as our Treasurer, and I am proud to have been elected as the new Chair of the Board.

Our dedicated team works diligently to ensure the success of our organization. We are also thankful for the continuous support of the members of our policy and technical advisory groups, the LandVoc Community of Experts and all those who volunteer their time and efforts to make the Land Portal Foundation the successful organization that it has become. We are extremely grateful for the generosity of our donors, which has made our work possible.

Tim Fella, Chair (on behalf of the board)

## **LETTER FROM THE TEAM LEADER**

Long-term, sustainable and responsible ways to access and share data are fundamental to all efforts to support sustainable development and particularly salient to improving land governance and securing land rights for landless and vulnerable people. The COVID-19 pandemic has unequivocally demonstrated that the need for land rights has never been greater, as governments have shut down land administration systems and rolled back regulations protecting vulnerable communities.

In these difficult times, access to accurate and timely information became an essential service, and at the Land Portal Foundation we realized that it was our responsibility – as a leading open data organization – to ensure land information was kept out of lockdown.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Land Portal Foundation began tracking its impact on land governance and looking for solutions to protect communities from displacement and eviction, to keep women from facing intensified discrimination, to encourage continuing due diligence in land deals and to protect indigenous and local communities from regulatory rollbacks. In documenting this work, we found two common threads: communities are resilient and are coming together during this time of crisis, and access to land data and information underpins all work to protect the interests of affected communities.

This past year was difficult for everyone in so many different ways, testing the limits of our social fabric, but for those struggling for land rights it was even more difficult. At the Land Portal Foundation, we took pride in rising to the occasion to help bring unity and focus in the land sector, to provide a space for collaboration and debate to contemplate the implications of this shocking new reality and to define paths forward that lay the foundations for improved access to land information and land rights for those who need them.

We greatly appreciate your continued support and confidence in our work.

Laura Meggiolaro, Team Leader



# INFORM

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 – hosting, aggregating and publishing data, portfolios, articles, publications and much more – to make dispersed content easy to discover and access.

## COVID-19 HUB

We have launched the Land and COVID-19 hub to ensure that the pandemic is not used as an excuse to limit access to key information – needed for communities to defend and secure their land rights – and monitor the impact of COVID-19 on land rights in general.

As nations across the globe faced unprecedented challenges from COVID-19 in early 2020, it became clear that the pandemic would have a major impact on the world's poor and, in particular, on those struggling to obtain/retain their land rights. Access to accurate and timely information became an essential service while the need for openness, transparency, inclusion and accountability was never greater.

The [Land and COVID-19 hub](#) brings together key debates, news, blogs, events and publications on the pandemic and land-related issues, visualizing the information according to theme and country. The hub features nearly 400 land-related pandemic resources (plus recommendations for protecting and supporting vulnerable communities around the world) making it the destination of choice for those in the land sector hoping to understand the implications of the pandemic on land governance worldwide.

## DATA STORIES

We have developed a series of data stories using photos, quotes, maps and infographics to create engaging narratives that helps to bring data to life. In 2020, we created the data story [Does South African Law Engender Women's Land Rights?](#) to explore the role of gender within land rights struggles in South Africa.

Women are responsible for producing up to 80% of food in Africa, yet women very rarely own or control the land they cultivate. Gender sensitive data is, therefore, particularly important for understanding the role that gender plays in determining land rights, particularly in rural areas.

The data story reveals the largely informal nature of land holding in South Africa – almost 60% of landowners fall outside of the formal system, including nearly 17 million people living on communal lands without recorded land rights – and exposes the barriers facing women who want to independently own and manage land within customary systems.



## **AGGREGATING LAND INFORMATION**

We have created the largest known database of global land projects, helping to support practitioners, researchers, and donors around the world. Launched in March 2020, the [Land and Property Rights Global Database](#) includes more than 1,000 projects from the Land Governance Program Map (produced by the Global Donor Working Group on Land) and the land tenure projects of USAID.

As resources within the land sector are increasingly stretched and scarce, there is ever-greater need to avoid duplication and ensure coordination among donors, international organizations, and others working to improve land governance. Effective collaboration and efficient working starts with accurate and accessible information – showcasing projects, their location, partners, the level of investment – presented in formats that enable comparisons between projects to reveal potential gaps and existing overlaps.

Our database responds to this urgent need by enabling its users to discover projects taking place around the world, track funding, explore timelines, collaborate with others, and learn from peers. All of the information is further enriched with metadata (following International Aid Transparency Initiative standards), which enables project comparisons and increases the chances of content being discovered online.





## TRACKING LAND GOVERNANCE

In March 2020, we launched a revamped version of our [thematic portfolio on Land and Investments](#), featuring a range of tools for promoting and facilitating responsible land investments. The portfolio provides up-to-date information and resources for business investors, affected communities and development practitioners.

The nature and scale of land investments across the developing world is controversial given the potential negative impacts on existing land users and local communities, particularly those dependent on land for agriculture. As a consequence, responsible land investments – where projects are designed around the land rights of local people, helping to mitigate the risks for communities and investors – are gaining ground among businesses in the agricultural, extractive and infrastructure sectors.

Developed in partnership with the LEGEND program and Natural Resources Institute at the University of Greenwich, the portfolio provides direct access to 10 land and investments datasets, 1,992 publications and resources related to land investments, 222 blogs and news items, as well as a database of organizations working on investment-related issues. Practical lessons for businesses looking to make responsible land investments – developed during recent pilot projects in various African countries – are included alongside a [Responsible Land-Based Investment Navigator](#), which helps businesses access practical tools and guides relevant to their specific industry.

*The Land Portal plays a critical convening and connecting role in the land sector. They have been an incredibly dynamic, innovative and responsive FCDO partner under the LEGEND programme. In just a few years they have delivered on their goal to become the go-to site for land governance information and are now also facilitating important global discussions on land. We value Land Portal's central commitment to open data and to connecting people and stories on land in the global north and south.*

**Chris Penrose Buckley**  
**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)**



# 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.



## UNLOCKING THE LAND DATA ECOSYSTEM

We published the State of Land Information (SOLI) report on South Africa in September 2020, presenting unique insights into the nation's most important and pressing land issues. The report systematically reviews and categorizes the data/information landscape and provides a high-level overview of land data availability and accessibility in the country.

Land governance in South Africa is a hugely significant and highly-charged political issue. The information landscape reflects the complexity and diversity of the land governance sector, with sources ranging from sophisticated statistical datasets and satellite imagery through to oral records of customary ownership.

The [SOLI report](#) – created through a collaboration with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in South Africa – is based on a wide-ranging survey of sources and was produced using an original scoping and assessment methodology that builds on recognized international frameworks. The report includes practical recommendations for improving the visibility and usability of information, which we hope will contribute towards improving the overall land information ecosystem in South Africa.



## LANDVOC 2.0

We have created a new and improved version of the groundbreaking land governance thesaurus [LandVoc](#). As a living thesaurus of concepts related to land governance, LandVoc links terms and diverse concepts across multiple languages\*, connecting together thousands of pieces of information from all over the world.

In these difficult times, access to accurate and timely information has become an essential service, and it is our collective responsibility to make sure that land-related information is kept out of lockdown. Land information is often fragmented, inaccessible or inconsistently managed, and the pandemic highlighted the great need to improve land information systems.

As a controlled vocabulary and linking tool, LandVoc promotes consistency in land information, including for land administration, thus increasing transparency and accountability. The latest evolution of LandVoc reflects changes in the language and terminology surrounding land governance – including the addition of 80 new concepts and consolidation/removal of many others – based on guidance from a range of experts. We are currently establishing a ‘community of experts’, to help manage and develop the thesaurus, and we are assembling a ‘knowledge lab’ which aims to improve usability by diverse institutions and organizations ranging from local CSOs and land commissions through to international NGOs and research institutions.

\* LandVoc is currently available in Arabic, Burmese, English, French, Khmer, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Thai and Vietnamese.



## OPEN DATA & LAND GOVERNANCE

In land governance, transparency is critical in ensuring land use and allocation is fair and accountable and that tenure rights can be defended and protected. The consequences of a lack of transparency include increased difficulty in unlocking the value of the land as an asset and a lack of awareness of land policies and legal frameworks that can undermine land tenure security,

We believe that land governance information information can be used to empower people in order to build more prosperous, equitable and just societies. In March 2020, just at the beginning of the pandemic, the Land Portal Foundation, The Open Data Charter, the Open Government Partnership research team and the Global Data Barometer organized an online workshop with participants from across the world to discuss key data and key open data use-cases for land governance, with a view toward creating an *Open Up Guide on Land Governance* that will provide guidance to governments on how to make open data available, and to support the use of open data.

This online workshop made a substantial contribution to the discussion on open data for anti-corruption in land governance. It demonstrated the diverse data needs around land governance, and provided a solid foundation for further development of an Open Up Guide. Moreover, we successfully advocated for the inclusion of a land governance module in the Global Data Barometer to map data governance, capability, availability and use for the public good

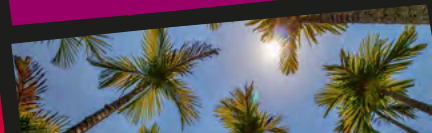
*Data-driven decision making and advocacy is key to today's world and Land Portal is the key reference when it comes to land data anywhere in the world. Their work is helping understand the power struggles within the land governance sector.*

**Natalia Carfi**  
**Open Data Charter**



# 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.





## COVID-19 AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In September 2020, we hosted a [series of online discussions](#) to explore the effect of COVID-19 on Indigenous People's organizations and local communities. Over the course of three webinars, indigenous and non-indigenous leaders came together in virtual roundtables to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on their communities and devise strategies for addressing the fallout.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities manage more than half of the world's land, yet governments only recognize their ownership of a small fraction of this land. The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated the expropriation of indigenous lands and natural resources by opportunists, such as illegal loggers and miners. Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic poses a grave health threat to Indigenous Peoples around the world, as their communities already experience poor access to healthcare, significantly higher rates of communicable diseases and lack of access to essential services like sanitation.

The webinar series – organized as in partnership with the Ford Foundation, the Tenure Facility, and the Thomson Reuters Foundation – focused on public health, climate change and biodiversity, and the regulatory rollback versus a 'green recovery'. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum for land rights recognition, explored direct actions by indigenous communities to defend territories against those profiteering from the crisis, and looked at how indigenous communities can benefit from, and contribute to, global efforts to scale up green investments, financing and transitioning to a just and sustainable green economy.

## ONLINE DIALOGUES

In June 2020, we began a [series of online discussions](#) to explore the implications of COVID-19 on land rights around the world, generating a record-breaking 280 comments from 97 people. The webinar and discussion series was organised and presented in collaboration with Landesa, the Global Protection Cluster HLP AOR and GIZ, with organizing support from Environmental Peacebuilding Association, LANDac, New America and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

During the online dialogues, participants developed a set of actionable recommendations for policy-makers, as well as practical recommendations for addressing the impact of COVID-19 on land rights globally. The discussions identified both short-term and longer-term actions that can effectively contribute to supporting land governance stakeholders facing an ongoing pandemic, while looking forward to post-pandemic priorities.





## **MEDIA PARTNERSHIP**

In June and July 2020, we provided core media support services to LANDac – Netherlands Academy on Land Governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development – for their latest [online encounter](#). We undertook the overall coordination and facilitation of this unique virtual event, bringing together [stakeholders from around the world](#).

Despite the current COVID-19 pandemic, LANDac wished to bring the global land governance community together to take stock of research, policy and practice from around the world, as well as to reflect on the current COVID-19 crisis, as alarming observations are coming in about the loss of livelihoods and deepening poverty, government crackdowns on civil society, the suspension of land administration services and irregular land acquisition.

The Land Portal played a critical role in supporting LANDac to convene stakeholders – who might not otherwise meet – particularly academic researchers, private sector and civil society representatives, and policy-makers in the field of land governance and development.

*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  
Ford Foundation**



**18,000  
STAKEHOLDERS**

**1.2m VIEWS**

**576,000 VISITS**

**8,749 ARTICLES**

**65,960 RESOURCES**

**57 DATASETS**

**1,430 BLOG  
POSTS**

**1,901 SOURCES**

**60% USERS  
FROM GLOBAL  
SOUTH**

**OUR WORK IN NUMBERS**

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are terraced fields with a winding path. In the middle ground, a small village with several buildings is visible. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Tim Fella – Chair**

Global Business Development Manager for  
Land Administration, ESRI

### **Prof. Jaap Zevenbergen – Treasurer**

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

### **Magdalena Anna Kropiwnicka**

Founder and Independent Consultant at  
Food and Climate

### **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

A large, gnarled tree with a thick, textured trunk stands in a rocky, hilly landscape. A person wearing a white shirt, dark pants, and a pink and white headscarf is standing at the base of the tree, touching its trunk. The background shows a rocky hillside with sparse vegetation under a clear sky.

## LAND PORTAL PEOPLE

**Erik Bennema**  
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**Konrad Hentze**  
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**Laura Meggiolaro**  
Team Leader

**Silvina Rusinek**  
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**Adam Sánchez**  
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**Romy Sato**  
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Network Coordinator

**Neil Sorensen**  
Communications Specialist

**Carlos Tejo Alonso**  
Data Officer

**Stacey Zammit**  
Communications Officer

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*Land: Enhancing Governance  
for Economic Development*



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