



# ALIGN

## Advancing Land-based Investment Governance



**Columbia Center  
on Sustainable Investment**  
A JOINT CENTER OF COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL  
AND THE EARTH INSTITUTE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



**International Institute  
for Environment  
and Development**



**The Advancing Land-based Investment Governance (ALIGN)** project supports governments, civil society, communities and peoples, and other relevant actors in strengthening the governance and practices of land-based investments – from agriculture to infrastructure, extractives, manufacturing, carbon sequestration and renewable energy.

Land-based investment in low- and middle-income countries can be a key factor to advancing economic development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But risks of land dispossession, environmental degradation and conflict caused by these investments have raised widespread concerns.

As governments, businesses and civil society grow more aware of the importance of secure land tenure and the risks of poor land governance, public and private stakeholders can draw from emerging guidance, such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT). But much remains to be done to translate these soft-law instruments into real change.

### The project

Improving the governance of land-based investment requires systemic change to strengthen local rights, foster public participation and increase accountability in investment processes. Strengthening the policies, institutions and practices that underpin land-based investments can also foster local legitimacy and encourage investment stability and predictability.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) and Namati developed the Advancing Land-based Investment Governance (ALIGN) project to respond to these concerns. Funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and with a 2020-2025 timeframe, ALIGN supports governments, civil society, local communities, and other actors in strengthening the governance and practices of land-based investments.

To achieve this, ALIGN's work is divided into three components:

- Sustained, in-depth work in three countries to support policy development and implementation, legal empowerment, and dialogue between actors, both at the national level and in selected sites
- Responsive technical support to governments, civil society, communities and peoples, and other relevant actors in a wider range of countries, and
- Enhancing understanding and improving practices among key actors, globally and in specific targeted contexts, through developing and disseminating innovative responses to key challenges.

ALIGN focuses its activities within Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indo-Pacific region, working closely with in-country partners to integrate more responsible practices, from the local to the global, around land-based investments.

### Sustained, in-depth work in three countries

ALIGN will implement context-specific and multi-year activities across three countries. Currently engaged in Sierra Leone and scoping for an additional two focus countries, the project collaborates with and supports government and civil society to improve the governance of land-based investment. Focus themes include regulatory strengthening, investment approval processes, inclusive business approaches, transparency, social and environmental safeguards, and public participation and accountability.

The project also develops legal empowerment approaches to support communities and peoples in protecting their rights in the context of land-based investments. These local-level activities focus on geographic hotspots for investment within each country and promote inclusive dialogue with government and companies.

### Find out more and get in touch

Email: [align@iied.org](mailto:align@iied.org)

<https://www.iied.org/align-advancing-land-based-investment-governance>

<https://ccsi.columbia.edu/content/advancing-land-based-investment-governance-align>



## Responsive technical support

ALIGN provides a responsive technical support facility for governments, civil society and other relevant actors. Responding to partner requests, the facility offers short-term, discrete instances of technical assistance at key points within ongoing processes or efforts. These demand-driven interventions are typically implemented over a period of six months, with the possibility of renewal. They support work on policy development and implementation, regulatory assessments, legislative drafting, institutional reforms, and local-level legal empowerment and skill-building.

The technical support facility also offers tailored trainings and facilitates multi-stakeholder collaborations and convenings, and civil society organisations have the possibility of accessing a small grant to support in-country activities.

Support requests are assessed based on their potential for impact and long-term sustainability, particularly where there is scope to contribute to improved policy or practice.

## Enhancing understanding and improving practice

ALIGN's third component captures the themes and lessons learned from across the first two activity streams and disseminates key insights to wider audiences. This work highlights innovative responses to key challenges that can strengthen investment governance and practices, and new evidence, resources and approaches are shared with diverse audiences. Themes covered include the nexus between land-based investments and the climate crisis, key levers in investment approval processes and private sector-focused engagement and guidance. Government and civil society peer-to-peer learning encourages action-oriented dialogue and networks that can help achieve improved outcomes from land-based investments.

## Who we are

IIED, CCSI and Namati have been at the forefront of research, policy and action on land governance and responsible land-based investment. By pooling their expertise and experience, ALIGN is uniquely placed to advance innovative approaches and catalyse broader collaboration and change.



IIED applies original thinking to sustainable development issues, linking local priorities to global challenges. We work with marginalised people around the world to amplify their influence.



CCSI's mission is to develop and advance policies and practices that shape investment to contribute to, rather than undermine, sustainable development.



Namati advances social and environmental justice by building a movement of people who know, use, and shape the law.



ALIGN is funded by UK aid from the UK government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies, nor the views of all project partners.