



Call for proposals

Comparative analysis: Impacts of community tenure and governance on forest restoration and conservation, livelihoods and food security across African drylands

May 2025

Tree Aid is an international NGO founded in 1987, headquartered in Bristol, UK, and operating across six countries in the drylands of Africa (Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Ethiopia). Our vision is thriving, sustainable communities across the drylands of Africa. We believe that tackling poverty and protecting the environment are inseparable.

We work together with local people to grow trees and restore land, to fight poverty and the effects of the climate crisis. Our work is led by local people with local knowledge and expertise. We equip people with the tools and skills they need to grow trees, protect their land, and start viable businesses. This provides food and an income, tackling poverty today. It also pushes for long-term change, improving the environment for tomorrow. We learn what works and share it – locally, nationally, and internationally. Together with local communities, we influence policy and push for change that protects trees, people, and our planet. Learn more about Tree Aid [here](#).

I. Context

Tree Aid's current five-year strategy invests significantly in the development of its advocacy work, both at the international level and within its countries of intervention.

Tree Aid's advocacy strategy aims to create enabling systems to scale up and accelerate community-led landscape restoration in African drylands. Within this, Tree Aid advocates for more secure access and control rights for local communities over their forests, and for the scale up and localising of climate, carbon, and development finance towards community-led forest restoration.

This strategy relies on evidence-based research to demonstrate the added value of community-led forest governance. Tree Aid's recent report, [*Localising Forest Governance to scale nature-based climate solutions, ensure long-term ecosystem restoration and build community resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts*](#), presents the case study of a programme of work led in close collaboration with both national, local governments and local communities over 17 years (2007-2024) in rural Burkina Faso. It demonstrates how this work supported the creation of an enabling national policy and legal environment that resulted in local, community-led and inclusive forest governance, allowing rural communities to develop a stronger sense of ownership and sustainable management of their forests. This ultimately produced both positive results for ecosystem restoration and improved socioeconomic outcomes for local communities.

Despite numerous African dryland countries endorsing various components of community-managed forest governance, the degree of operationalisation remains inconsistent across the region. While donor funding aimed at facilitating local tenure rights and forest stewardship has seen an [uptick in recent years](#)—primarily driven by the [Forest Tenure Funders Group](#) and predominantly targeting tropical forest nations—there is still a significant gap in understanding the full spectrum of benefits that community

land rights and forest stewardship can provide, especially in the African dryland context.

Although an increasing body of literature examines the implications of community land rights and stewardship, there is limited evidence highlighting the comparative advantages of these approaches over alternative governance frameworks within the African dryland context. This research aims to address this critical gap, contributing to an enhanced evidence base that supports Tree Aid's advocacy initiatives and external engagement strategies related to community forest governance.

By examining the specific benefits of community land rights and forest stewardship over nature, communities, and climate outcomes, this study will provide vital insights that can strengthen advocacy efforts and inform policymaking in the region.

II. Purpose of the research

This consultancy will examine forest governance models in African drylands, with particular attention to community-led approaches (tenure and governance). The research will analyse governance impacts on forest restoration, conservation, livelihoods, and food security outcomes.

III. Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Evaluate and compare forest governance models in African dryland regions, examining their differential impacts on environmental and socioeconomic outcomes.

Key question: How does community-led forest governance in the drylands of Africa impact on forest restoration & conservation, livelihoods and food security in comparison with other governance models (e.g. state-led, private sector-led, co-management)?

2. Identify critical governance features and mechanisms that yield optimal results for forest ecosystems and community wellbeing.

Key question: Which key features of forest governance systems lead to better outcomes for forest restoration, conservation, food security and livelihoods?

3. Assess existing legal, policy, institutional, and customary frameworks across selected African dryland countries in relation to community tenure, governance rights and responsibilities, identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.

Key question: To what extent do current legal, policy, institutional and customary frameworks in African dryland countries support secure land rights and community-led forest governance?

- *What is in place and where are the gaps?*
- *What does progress look like for national policies and laws across these countries to promote community forest governance and secure tenure rights for local communities?*

4. Develop evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening effective forest governance systems.

Key question: What should national policy makers do to better support optimal forest governance models for forest restoration, food security and livelihoods outcomes?

5. Improve the evidence base regarding community land rights and their relationship to sustainable resource management.
6. Produce actionable recommendations tailored for:
 - National policymakers in African dryland countries
 - International climate and development finance providers
 - Project developers and implementers focused on land restoration and forest conservation
7. Create targeted knowledge products to effectively disseminate key findings and recommendations to identified stakeholder groups

Target audiences

- National governments in selected African dryland countries
- International climate and development finance institutions
- Climate and development project implementers in African drylands, particularly those focused on restoration and conservation initiatives

IV. Scope

- Four to six case studies should be selected within African dryland countries, within Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Tchad, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi. As much as possible these case studies should include Tree Aid's countries of operation.
- The policy review should expand beyond the case study countries to cover:
 - All Tree Aid countries (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Ethiopia)
 - Plus any other country represented in the case studies.

V. Methodology

The study will utilise existing data and primary qualitative research methods to assess the effectiveness and benefits of community-managed forest governance in African dryland countries. It will focus on how local tenure rights and forest stewardship contribute to environmental sustainability, community well-being, and climate resilience. The research will also rely on quantitative data and satellite imagery to support findings. This research aims to provide actionable insights that enhance advocacy strategies and policy-making efforts related to community forest governance.

The study will apply a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, engaging regional and national experts, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCS), government representatives, and practitioners to produce analysis and establish pathways for effective community led forest governance in African drylands.

1. Site and stakeholder selection (for each country selected for the case studies)

- Select comparable forest sites across 4-6 countries representing different governance systems in West (prioritizing Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali), Eastern and Southern African dryland regions based on comparable ecosystems, governance structures, and data availability. The comparison can focus on state-managed versus community-managed forests or might also consider comparing models before and after a process of transfer from the State to communities over time in a specific area.
- Identify key actors within each targeted forest site in collaboration with implementing partners and existing stakeholder databases
- Identify available data (desktop research) and gaps that would require primary data collection

3. Data collection and analysis (for each country selected for the case studies)

- Ecological Assessment: Deploy quantitative analysis tools to assess forest health indicators and anthropogenic disturbances (forest cover, biodiversity, land degradation indicators, carbon sequestration, climate resilience) under different governance models, including satellite imagery analysis
- Socioeconomic Assessment: Apply quantitative analysis tools for socio-economic indicators (food security, income, nutrition, gender inclusion, conflict mitigation) to evaluate outcomes under different governance models
- Stakeholder consultation: Conduct semi-structured interviews with representatives from IPLCs, government agencies, forest governance structures, and relevant experts.

4. Policy analysis & recommendations (for all case study countries and all six Tree Aid countries of operation):

- Collect and analyse data on the extent of communities' legally recognized tenure rights through national legal and policy frameworks (surface area and

level of rights). This analysis should follow and build on [Rights & Resources' Depth of Rights Methodology](#) on community-based tenure regime (CBTR).

- Collect and analyse data to produce an estimate of the areas where Indigenous Peoples and local communities have customary or historic claims, but where their rights are not yet recognized. This analysis should follow methodology for estimating these areas developed by Rights and Resources in its 2023 report, [Who owns the world's land](#).
- Identify policy & regulatory mechanisms that could facilitate progress toward optimal forest governance models systems and better tenure right recognition for local communities
- Categorise stakeholders based on their potential for driving systemic change in forest governance models.
- Develop evidence-based recommendations for engaging key actors and leveraging existing frameworks to drive systemic improvements in forest governance.

VI. Expected deliverables

The consultant will provide the following deliverables:

- Inception plan detailing the case study selected, methodology and timeline
- Preliminary findings presentation (PPT)
- Findings report for external use, including the comparative forest governance analysis (case studies), the policy analysis & recommendations, and country profiles
- A policy brief summarising findings and recommendations.

VII. Consultant profile

The consultant or team of consultants should have the following profile:

- Hold a higher education degree in economics, international development, public policy, forestry or a similar field
- Have a portfolio of demonstrable experience and work in similar research relating to development, natural resource management, climate finance for land restoration, forestry, agriculture and nature-based solutions, preferably with a link to Africa
- Have research experience in conducting research with indigenous peoples and local communities
- Be fluent in English and French; with local language as an advantage (this is the best way to ensure that women, and those most vulnerable voices, are considered)
- Proven experience doing research in some of the selected countries and access to relevant network of stakeholders

- Demonstrated experience working, or doing research in some, if not all, selected countries
- Be able to travel in the countries selected for the analysis (so that it is inclusive)

VIII. Budget and timeline

- Budget

A competitive budget, inclusive of taxes and travel considerations will be developed by the consultant in the bid. A modular budget with different options depending on the amount of case studies is welcomed.

- Timeline

Flexibility is applied as timelines will highly depend on methodology and case study selection. Activities will begin as soon as the agreement is executed, ideally by July/August, and conclude at the latest by February 2026, ideally earlier. Preliminary results are expected to be shared before the UNFCCC COP30 (starting 10 November 2025).

If you have any questions about this proposal, please email annie.schultz@treeaid.org.

IX. Proposal submission

Interested consultants should submit proposals to recruitment@treeaid.org with the subject line 'Comparative LC governance study', including:

- Technical proposal outlining methodology, approach and timeline (2 pages).
- Detailed budget proposal with payment breakdown (1 page).
- Consultant/team CVs demonstrating relevant expertise (3 pages).
- Examples of prior work in impact evaluation and corporate sustainability (links in CV).

Submission deadline: **12pm BST, Thursday 31 July 2025**