land portal

Funding Equitable Digital Development: A Call to Action

GEO4IMPACT Conference

Paris, France

27-28 May 2025

Run of Presentation

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   - Digital Public Goods

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5. Other Use and Application (Corruption)

6. Conclusion

This presentation includes results and work from the following colleagues:

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Jonathan Ochom (TI)
Luis Baquero (LP)
Lilian Lee (LP)

Our mission

Our vision

Nurturing a growing information ecosystem on land governance to inform and improve decision-making, policy and practice at all levels.

A world with improved land governance that supports people with insecure land rights, protects those vulnerable to landlessness, and ensures open access to information for all.
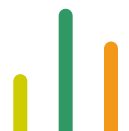
Land Portal Foundation

Core Objectives

1. Improve the documentation, mapping and monitoring of land governance issues.
2. Democratize the information ecosystem and strengthen flows of land governance data, from all perspectives and all levels.
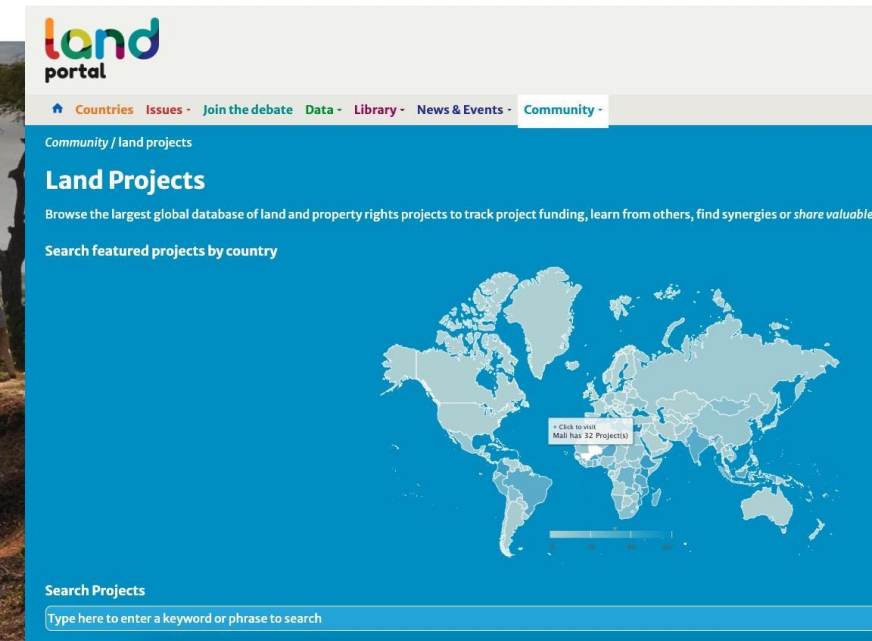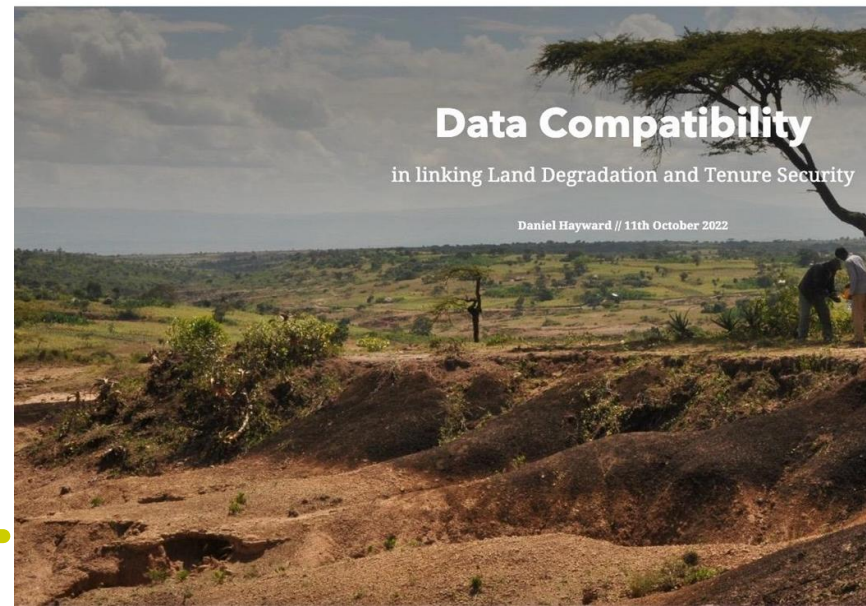3. Promote, inform and enrich the global debate on land issues.
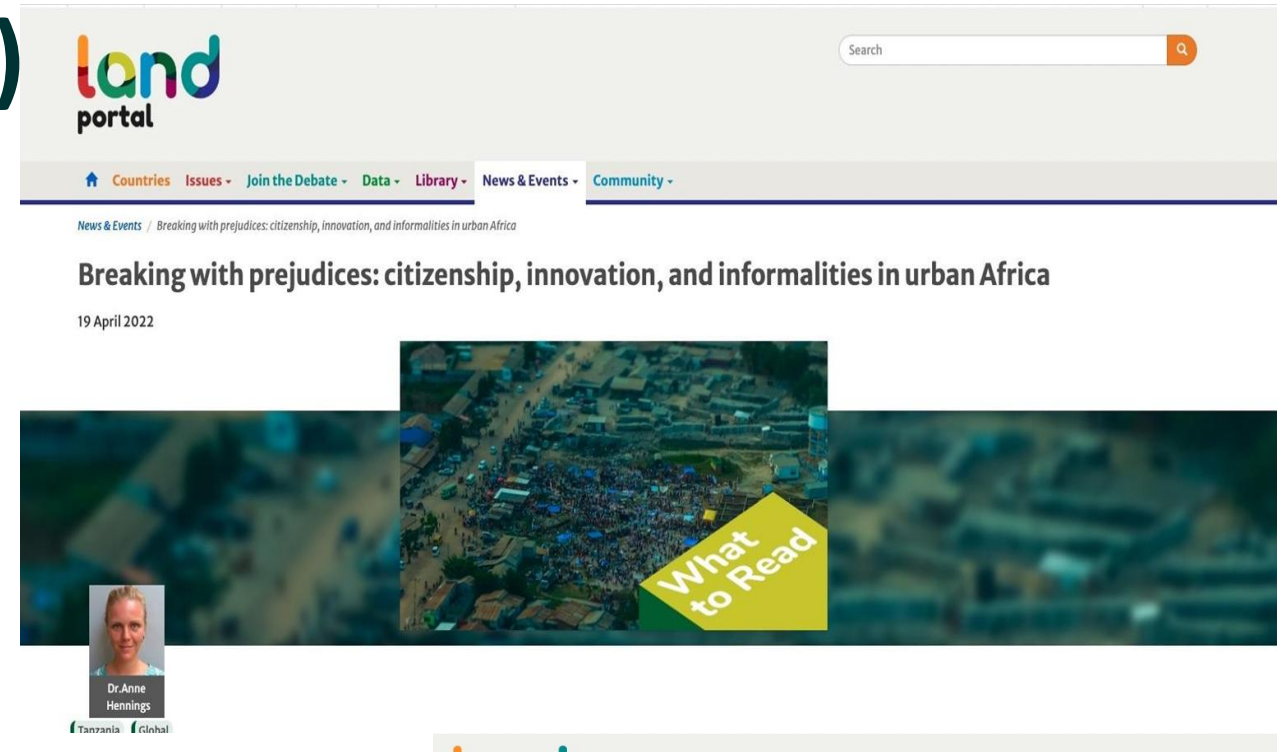
Pillar 1: Inform (Knowledge)

Country & thematic insights

Translating complex data

Land Portal Digital Platform

- 87 peer-reviewed country portfolios
- What to Read digests
- Data stories
- Land Project Database

Pillar 3: Debate (Communication)

Corporate Communications

Media Partnerships
- LANDac Int'l Conference
- GIZ Knowledge Exchange
- CIGOFA3

Voices from the Land: Facilitating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Webinars
- Land Dialogues Series
- Whose Land Webinar Series
- ALIGN Webinar Series

An average of 647 people registered
An average of 186 people joined.

Knowledge Exchange
IPLC Pledge Page
- Official page of the Forest Tenure Funders Group
- Tracking the $1.7 billion pledge
- Featuring donors' annual report

LAND-at-Scale
- Monthly blogs
- Knowledge management videos
- Internal & external events

Inclusive Land Governance and Fit-for-Purpose Land Administration: Whose Purpose?

19 September 2024

Pillar 2: Open (Data and Information)

National Assessments (SOLI)

Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, Zambia, Sudan, Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique

Open Up Guide Initiative

Madagascar
Senegal

Global Review

State of Open Data - Land Tenure (FAO)
SDG Land Tracker

GDB/LP Land Data Index

Open land data assessed in 42 +
Countries
Land Tenure
Land Use
Land Development
Land Value

Tracking the State of Land Information

Key Partnerships

Data 4 Development
Open Data Charter
Global Data Barometer
Global Donor Working Group
EC Data Partnership
Global Land Agenda

Global Land Projects Database

Partnership to migrate and revamp global database of land governance projects

Countries
15 = SOLI Reports
42 = SOLIndex Profiles

Why Land Data Transparency Matters

The Right To Information is a fundamental human right, but is is also an important enable of other human rights.

- **Governance:** Transparent land data is crucial for good governance and combating corruption.

- **Public Trust:** Openness fosters trust between citizens and governments.

- **Development Goals:** Access to land information supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- **Energy Transition:** Reliable land data is crucial for planning and implementing renewable energy projects (site selection, existing rights, environmental rights, community and indigenous rights, local agriculture and resources beneficiation).

- **Diagnostic Tool:** The SOLIndex provides
  - baseline and serve as a diagnostic tool to
  - identify opportunities to improve public access to all forms of land information
  - framing conversations about land and data.

Protecting the Right to Access Information

Access to data and information held by public bodies or authorities is a fundamental human right. Initiatives to operationalise this right are reflected in legal instruments across continents.

Article 19
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 9
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

Model Inter-American Law
2020

Model Law in Africa
2013

European Convention
2009

Digital Public Goods

- **Transformative Impact:** Digital technologies are reshaping society at an unprecedented pace.

- **Increasing Complexity:** Decision making and progress can be hindered/helped by technology while introducing complex new challenges.

- **Equity Risks:** Benefits are not automatically going to be equally distributed

- **SDG's:** Can support the achievement of sustainable and equitable development.

- **Digital Public Goods:** To ensure that benefits are equitably distributed, the UN High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation concluded that there is a need to develop broad multi stakeholder alliances to create platforms for sharing digital public goods and develop mechanisms for digital cooperation.

Digital Public Goods Alliance

Unlocking the potential of open-source technologies for a more equitable world.
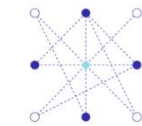
Open AI Systems   Open-Source Software   Open Data   Open Content Collections
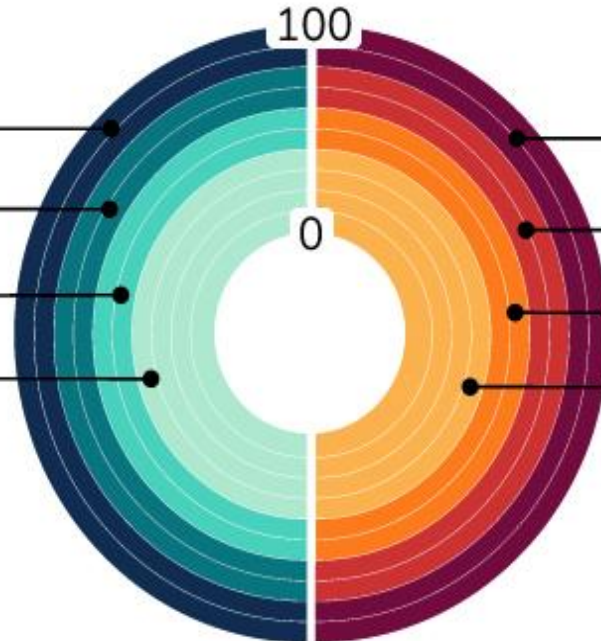
State of Land Information Index (SOLIndex)

SOLIndex: a global index to assess the state of land information at country level

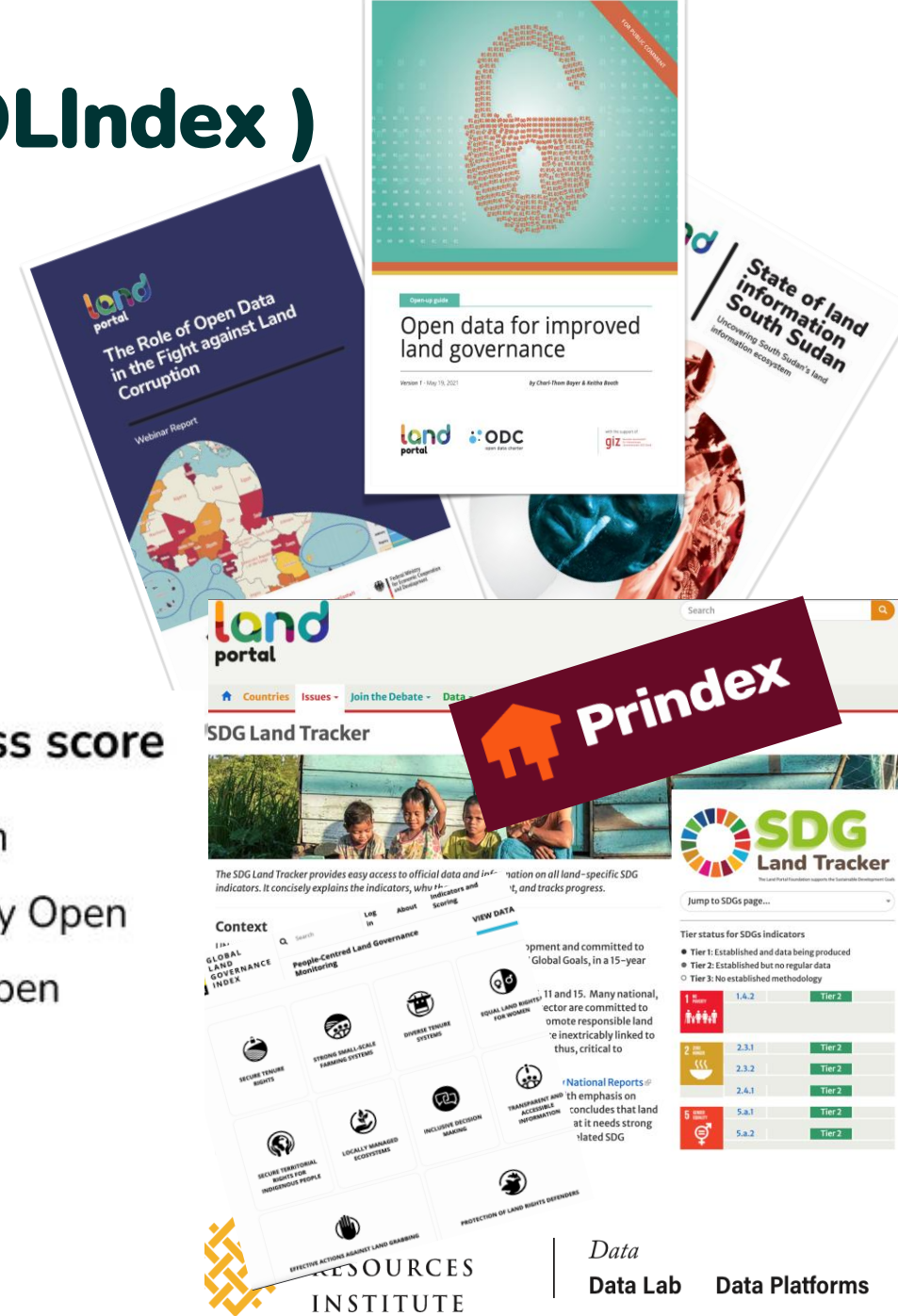**SOLIndex:** *measure the* **COMPLETENESS** *and* **OPENNESS** *of land data*

Understanding the State of Land Information (SOLI) Index

The SOLI Index evaluates the completeness and openness of land-related data in countries across Africa and Latin America. (Currently 42 countries)

- **Purpose:** It serves as a diagnostic tool to identify transparency gaps in land governance data and information.

- **Key Components:**

  ○ **Completeness:** Assesses whether governments collect essential land data (tenure, use, development, value).

  ○ **Openness:** Evaluates if the data is available online, free of charge, interoperable, machine readable, timely, downloadable and legally re-usable.

https://solindex.landportal.org/#/

SOLI Score World Average
(currently based on 42/195 World Countries)

COMPLETENESS
31.2

14.6
SOLI SCORE

OPENNESS
46.6

Completeness
100   0

Score

Openness
0   100

Key Findings from the SOLIndex

In many countries, essential land data is either missing or unpublished.

- Many countries still do not publish sufficient open data on land tenure, use, development and value.

- Legal and Policy data is the most open with a score of almost 50.

- Approximately 70% of 42 assessed countries - corruption and low land data transparency.

- This lack of transparency creates opportunities for corruption and hinders accountability.

- Lowest Score (6) for **Land Value** data. This information is critical to understanding how land as a resource is used and this is often an area where opportunities for corruption are most prevalent.

Implications for Energy Transition: Without transparent land data, renewable energy initiatives risk exacerbating existing inequalities and may face resistance from affected communities.

The State of Land Data

A map showing the country scores in the SOLIndex.

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

SOLIndex 2024

Map showing the availability - product of - completeness and openness of land data and information in 42 countries.
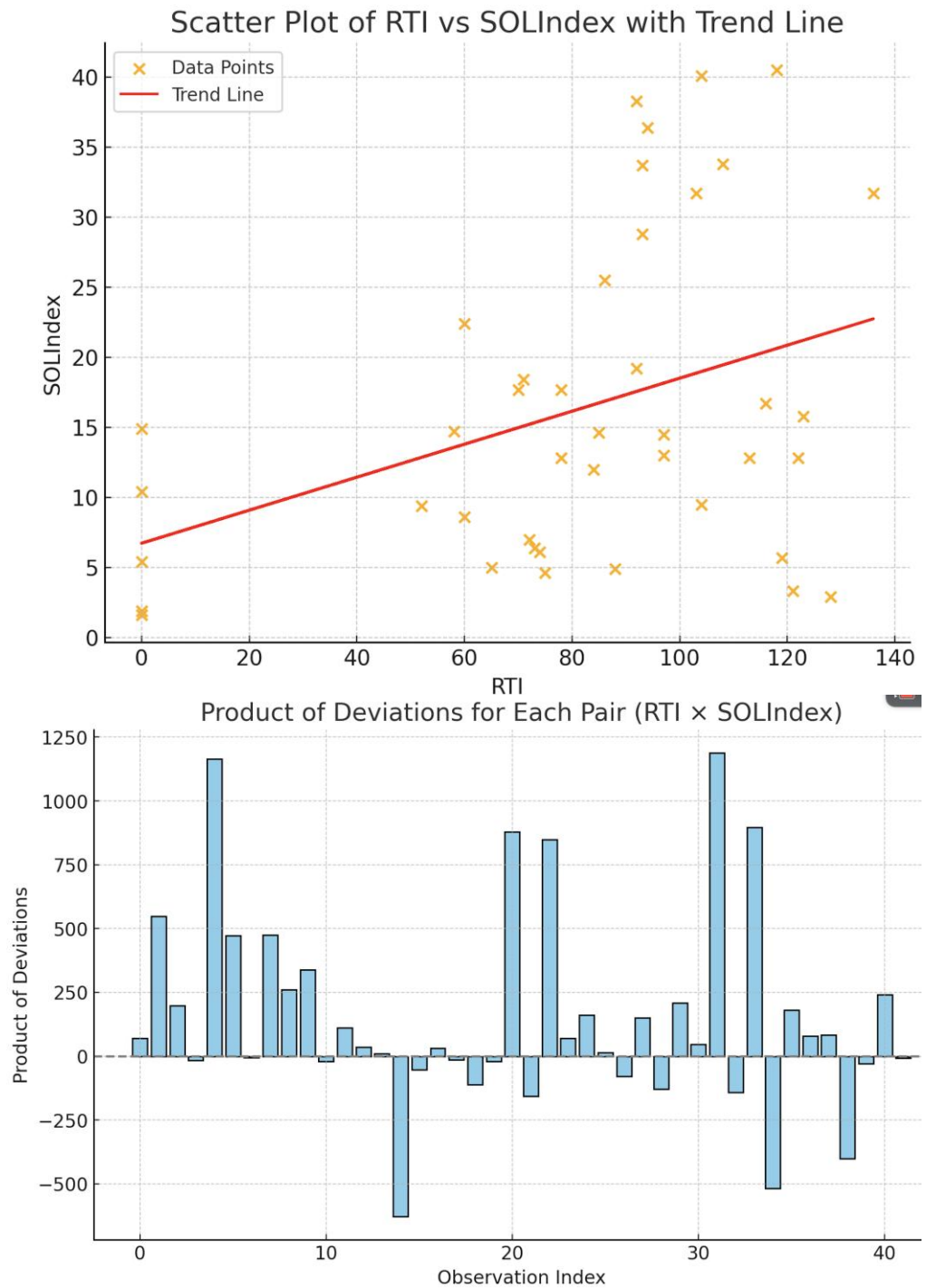
Map: C-T H Bayer • Source: The Land Portal Foundation • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

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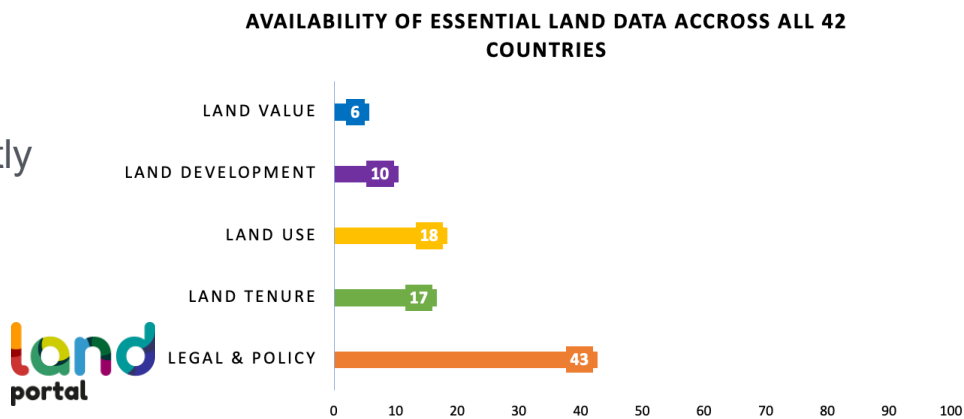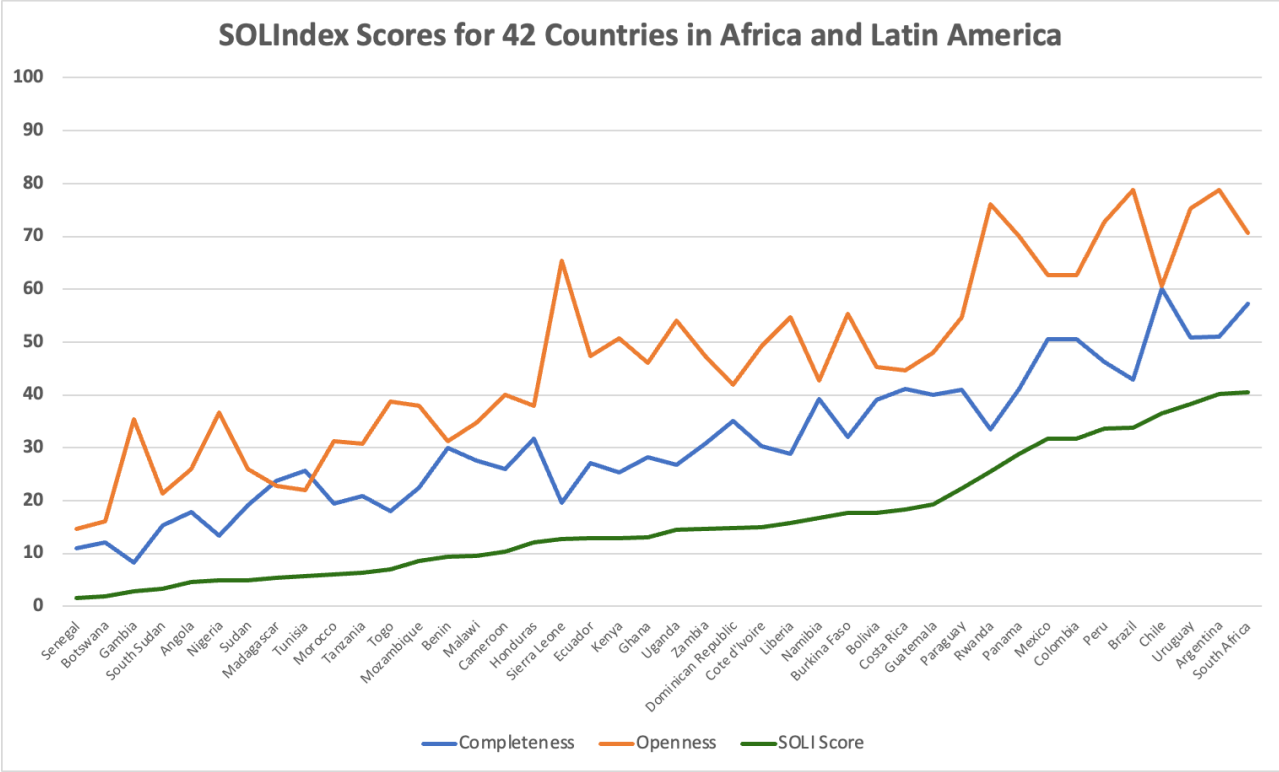

Scatter Plot of RTI vs SOLIndex with Trend Line

Product of Deviations for Each Pair (RTI × SOLIndex)

How to Use the SOLIndex for Advocacy and Reform

In many countries, essential land data is either missing or unpublished.

Advocate for Change: Engage with policymakers to promote the publication and accessibility of land records.
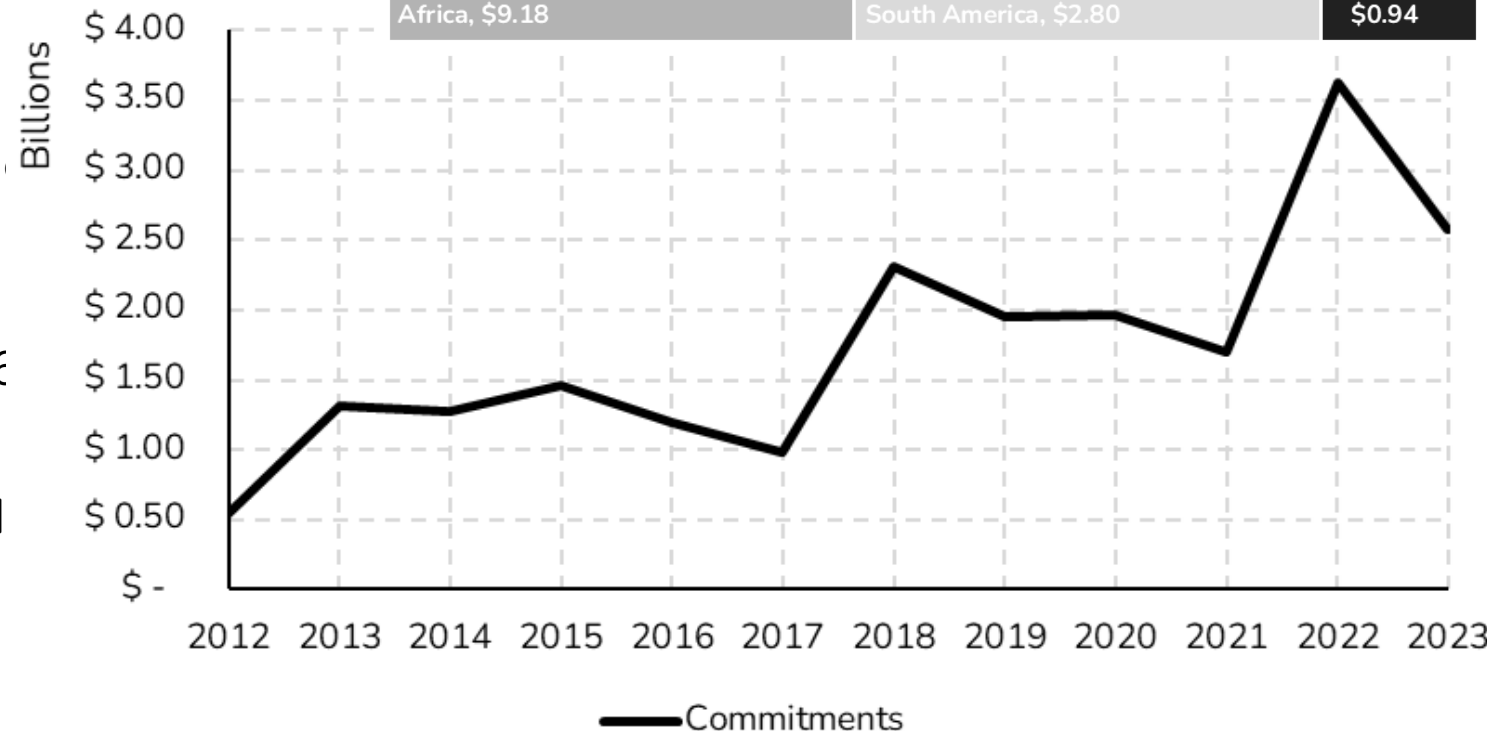
   a. Global and National Levels (Which countries need to improve, who can they learn from)

● **Identify Gaps:** Use the SOLI Index to pinpoint where land data is lacking or inaccessible. Where can countries Improve!

● **Public Engagement:** How can we engage in land development decision if we do not know what is happening? Encourage citizens to ask, **WHO** is doing **WHAT** and **WHERE** are they doing it?

Support Energy Transition: How can we leverage SOLI data to ensure that renewable energy projects are developed transparently and equitably.

SOLIndex Scores for 42 Countries in Africa and Latin America

— Completeness   — Openness   — SOLI Score

AVAILABILITY OF ESSENTIAL LAND DATA ACCROSS ALL 42 COUNTRIES

LAND VALUE — 6
LAND DEVELOPMENT — 10
LAND USE — 18
LAND TENURE — 17
LEGAL & POLICY — 43

Land Projects Data Base

- **[Land Projects Database](#) is a tool that tracks development funding to projects that aim to improve land governance around the world.**

- Between 2012 and 2023, a total of US$ 21.8 billion has been committed to support Land Governance projects

- Africa received the highest level of funding with $9.18 billion allocated to 1,615 projects across 53 countries,.

- Asia followed with $4.93 billion across 86 projects in 38 countries

- South America saw $2.80 billion invested 484 projects spanning 12 countries.

Africa, $9.18 | Asia, $4.93 | Global/Unassigned, $3.60 | South America, $2.80 | North America, Europe & Oceania, $0.94

Billions

$ 4.00
$ 3.50
$ 3.00
$ 2.50
$ 2.00
$ 1.50
$ 1.00
$ 0.50
$ -

2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023
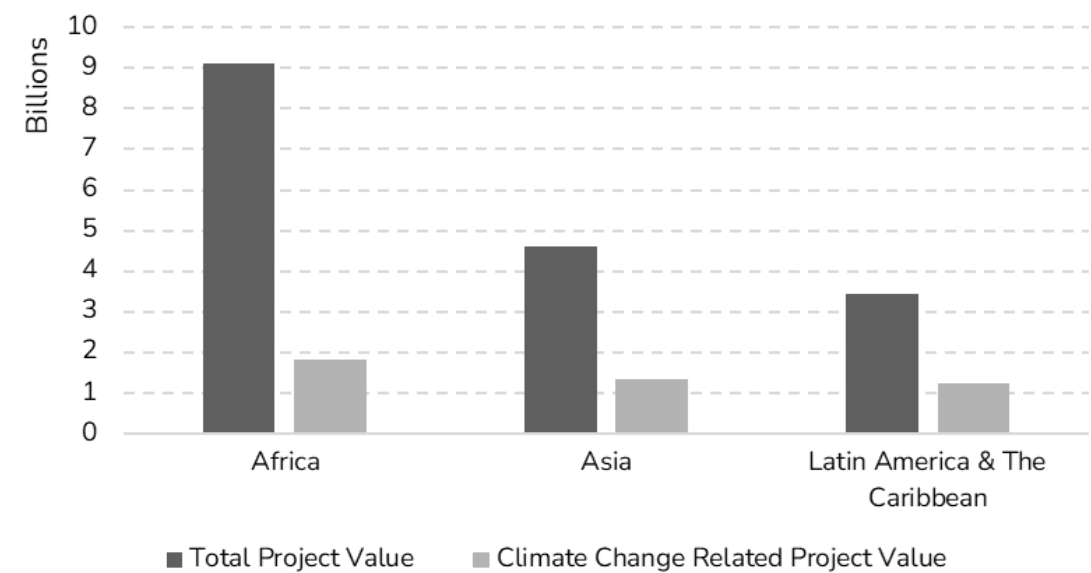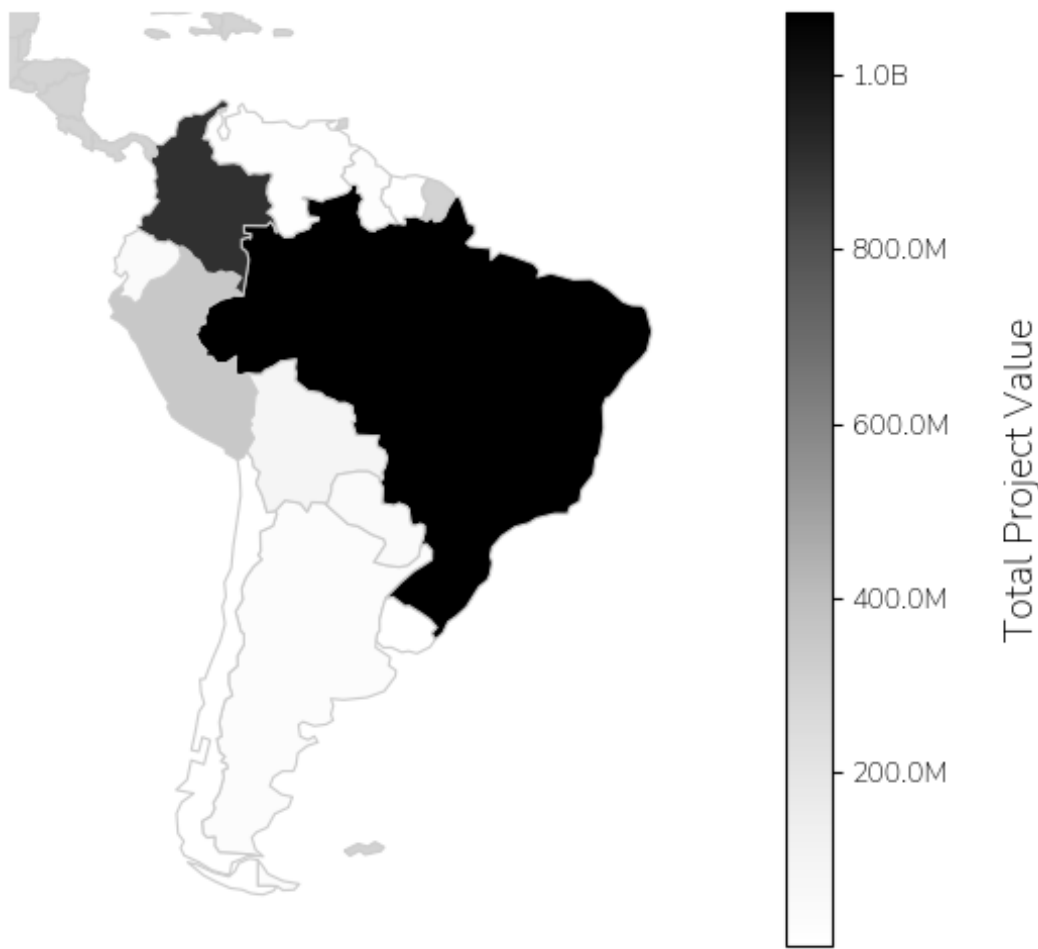
— Commitments

Land Projects Data Base

- **East Africa:** Highest Project Count and and 2nd highest by value.

- **West Africa:** Lower Project count, but highest by value.(Niger and Nigeria leading)

- **Southern Africa:** Fewer and and lower value investements

Total Project Value

800.0M

600.0M

400.0M

200.0M
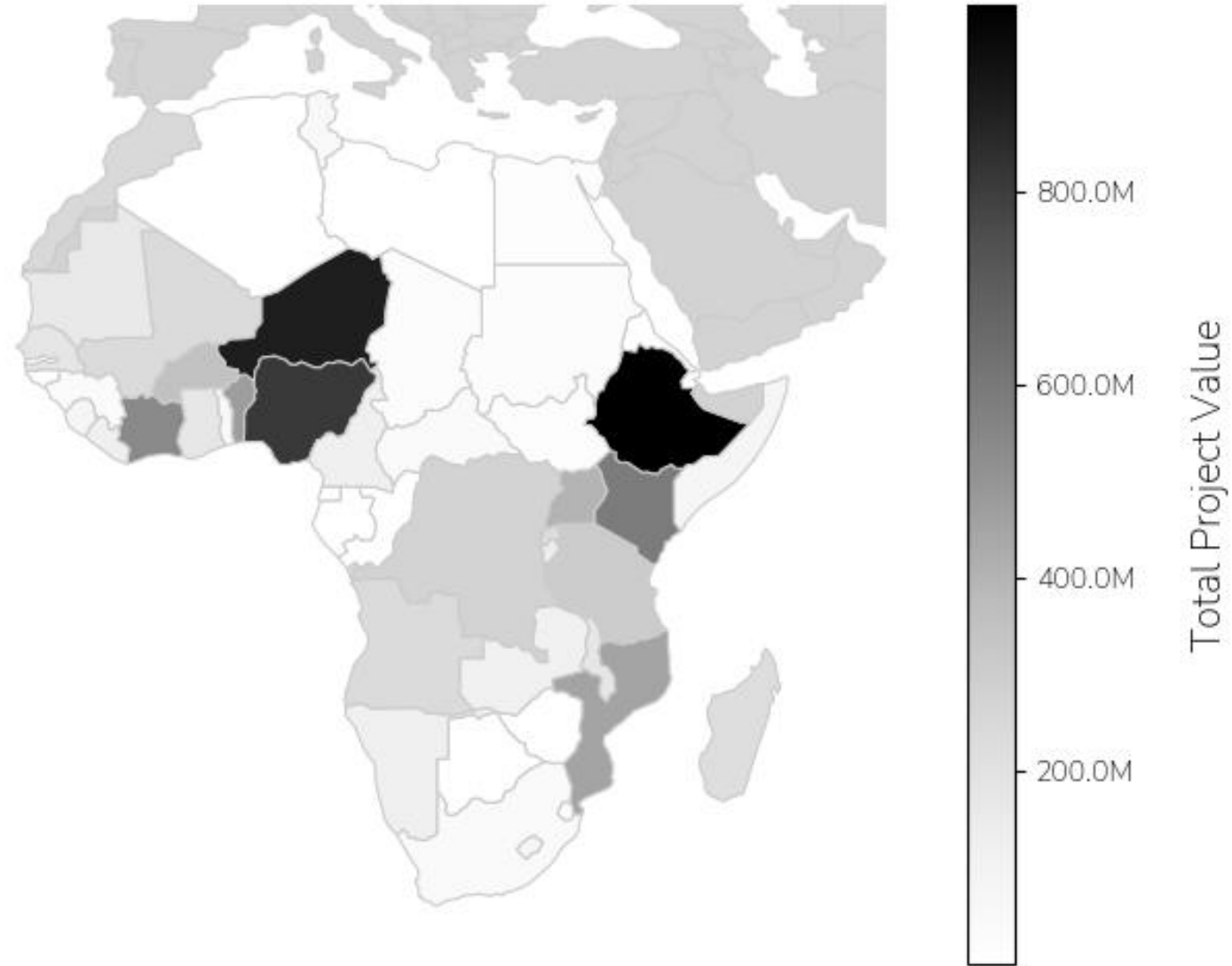
Land Projects Data Base

Drivers of corruption in land governance

The land sector is highly vulnerable to corruption due to the high value of land and the complexity of its governance systems. **Some key risk areas include:**

Key Corruption Risks	
Legal Framework	Outdated or contradictory land laws allowing elite capture
	Complex legal procedures exploitable for bribery
	Overlapping formal and customary land systems creating legal uncertainty
Institutional Capacity	Weak enforcement due to underfunded land agencies
	High discretion for officials in land decisions
	Overlapping mandates enabling policy manipulation
Availability of Information	Poor documentation of land rights, enabling fraudulent claims
	Lack of transparency in ownership records
	Missing transaction data, facilitating secretive deals

These risks are widely recognized in land governance literature and are critical to address for promoting **accountability, tenure security, and inclusive development**.

State of transparency in land governance
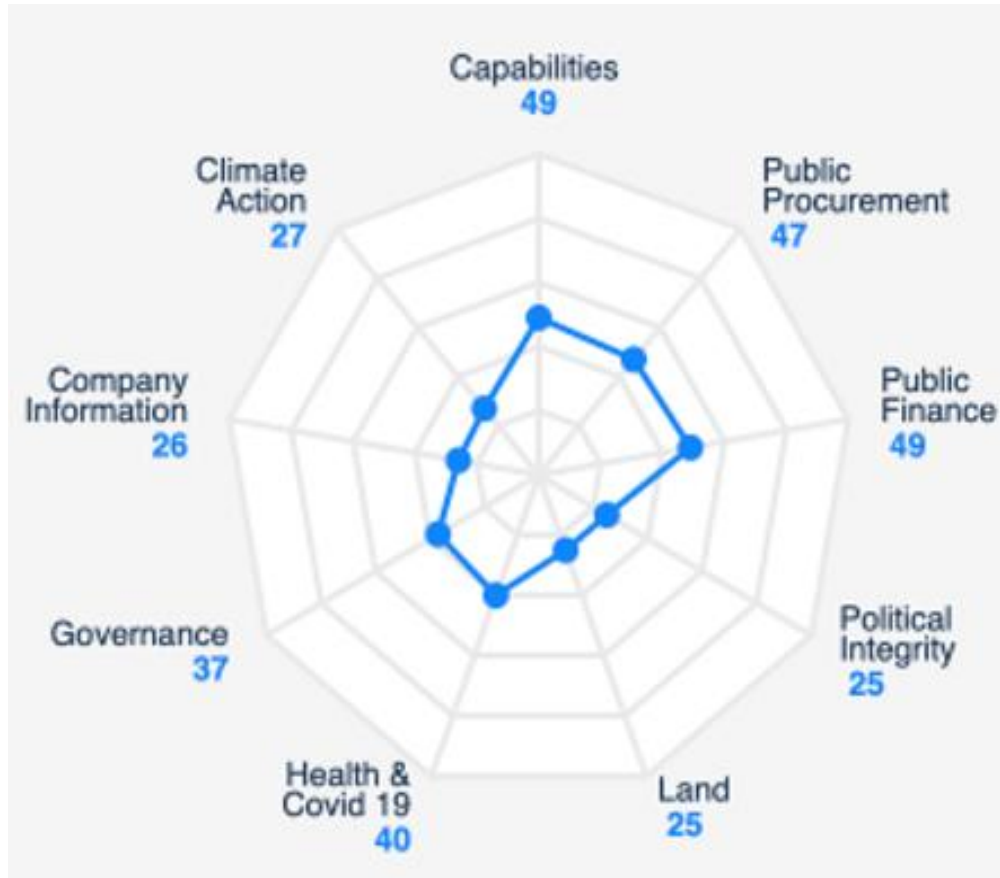
Source: Global Data Barometer

Land data scores just 25/100 – among the lowest across all sectors as per the assessment from the Global Data Barometer, which reflects poor availability, accessibility, and openness of land-related information.

Land data lags behind other areas like public finance (49) and procurement (47), which highlights urgent need for **investment in open, inclusive, and reliable land data systems**.

This is concerning because lack of data can foster corruption, and **corruption can thrive in the absence of data**

CPI & SOLI Index

We analysed two dimensions of governance:

- **perceived levels of corruption** as captured by the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International.

- CPI assesses how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be, with higher scores indicating cleaner governance.

- **the openness of land-related data**, measured by the State of Land Information (SOLI) Index from the Land Portal Foundation.

- The SOLI Index evaluates the availability, accessibility, and transparency of land data, which is essential for informed decision-making, secure land tenure, and accountability.

Insights from the CPI and SOLI Index

The scatter plot is divided into four quadrants:
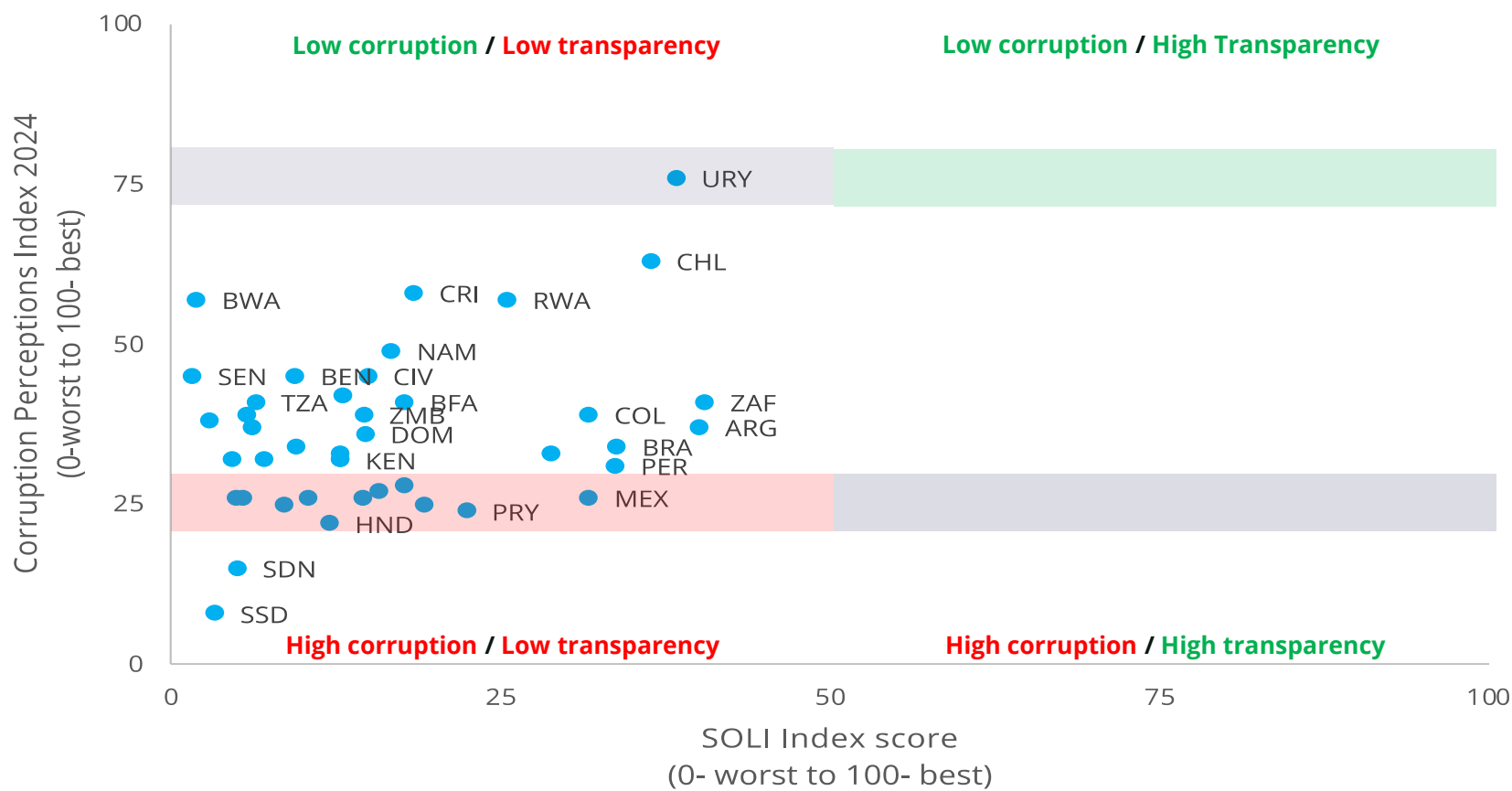
Any correlations?
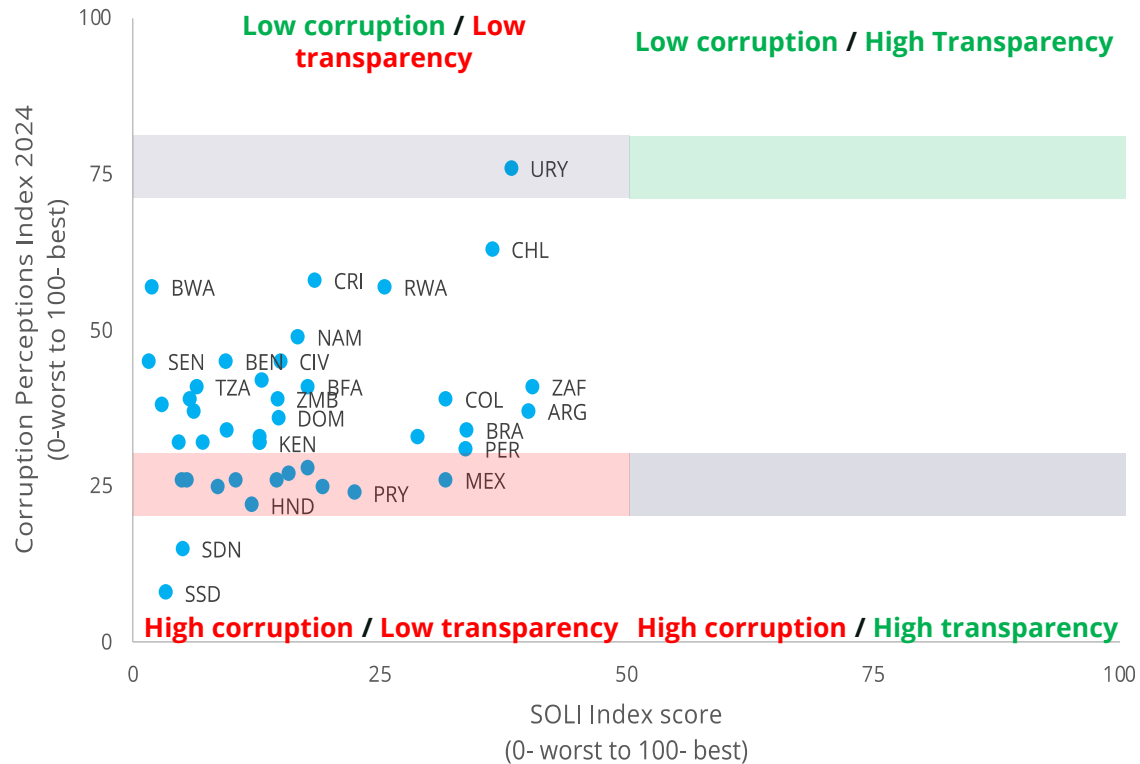
The **top right quadrant**, representing countries with **both low corruption and high transparency**, i.e. the ideal scenario, is notably empty. This absence highlights a global gap in achieving strong anti-corruption performance alongside robust, transparent land data systems.

The top left quadrant includes **countries with relatively low corruption but limited land data transparency**, such as Botswana, Rwanda, and Costa Rica. These nations have made progress on corruption control but could further benefit from more open land information systems that can help support long-term governance and equitable land access.

Any correlations?
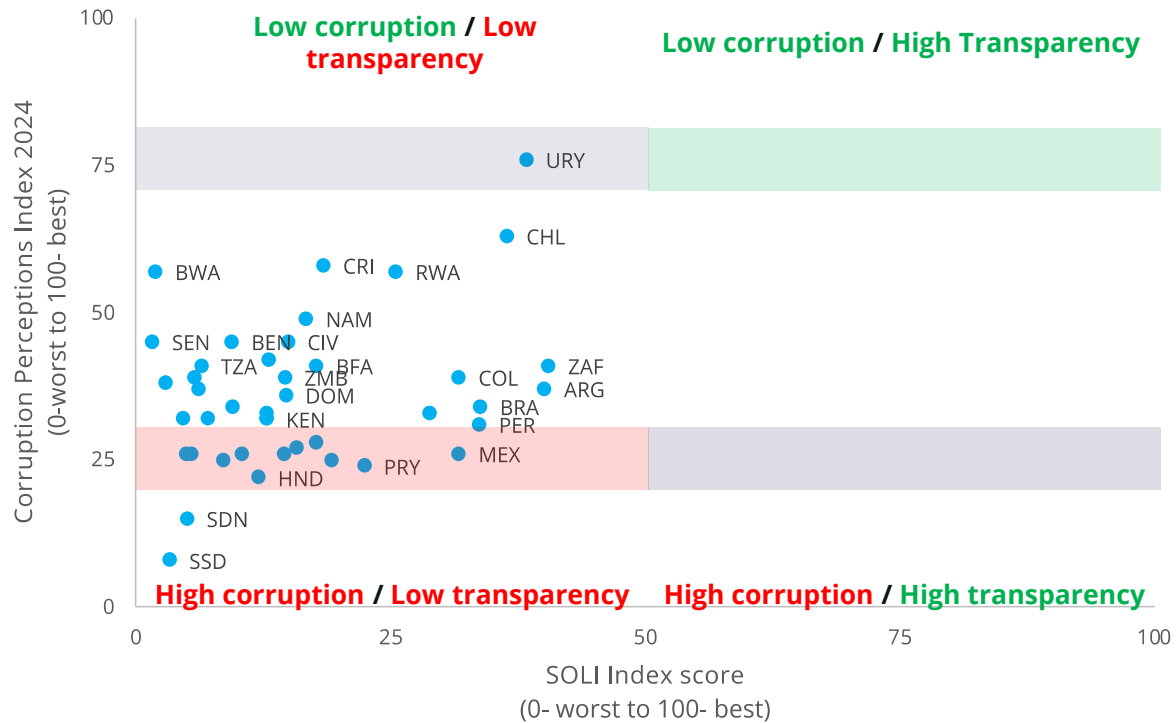
The **lower right quadrant**, which would include countries with **transparent land systems but high corruption**, is also **empty**. This suggests that land data openness rarely exists in environments where corruption is entrenched.

The **lower left quadrant**, in contrast, is **heavily populated**. It includes most countries in the sample, where **high corruption coexists with poor land information transparency**. This combination reflects a serious governance challenge. In these settings, opaque land systems both enable and are protected by corruption, leaving citizens vulnerable to land grabs, disputes, and weak legal protections.

Final reflections

- The dominance of countries in the bottom-left quadrant points to a critical need for integrated reforms.

- Addressing corruption must be coupled with building open, accessible, and reliable land information systems.

- Without both, development efforts incl. a just energy transition will struggle to achieve lasting impact, and land rights, particularly for vulnerable groups, will remain insecure

Future Directions and a Call to Action

How can we improve the use and impact of data indicators and benchmarks to improve transparency?

- **Monitoring Progress**

- **Expansion:** The Land Portal Foundation aims to expand SOLI assessments to over 100 countries?

- **Partnerships and Collaborations**
  - **International:** the Global Land Agenda (FAO), Transparency International, Global Data Barometer
  - **Private:** Meridia, ESRI and other
  - **Community:** International Land Coalition
  - **National Governments:** Senegal, Madagascar, Western Balkans?

- **Donors:** Increase the use of data to design interventions, from conception, including data transparency as a starting point.

Verify field data to assess EUDR compliance in real time.

Reduce commercial and reputational risk with evidence-based decision-making for strategic sourcing, procurement and trade.

« Open Data pour les acteurs du secteur Foncier »

Antananarivo 20 Janvier 2023

Hotel Carlton Antananarivo

esri South Africa

How to ensure transparency in land governance to counter grand corruption: A practical guide

22 April 2025

Use Cases

MERIDIA VERIFY®

Verify field data to assess EUDR compliance in real time.

Reduce commercial and reputational risk with evidence-based decision-making for strategic sourcing, procurement and trade.

Book a demo

MERIDIA
Verify

CRITICAL RISK

12% (600)

esri South Africa

Conclusions

1. There is more digital data than is being published.
2. Universal recognition of access to information as a fundamental right.
3. More effort to improve data collection, less so on publication
4. Partnership between government and civil society very successful in publishing legal information.
5. Practical tools and frameworks for sharing and exchange, a missing link?
6. Increasing publication on Governmental Open Data Portals

Recommendations

Custodians can concentrate their efforts around these three aspects to significantly improve the data published.

1. Operationalise legal frameworks for data sharing
2. Publication of data that already exists in the public domain
3. Improve the existing national data portals
4. Focus on use and services of data

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Thank you