

Unlocking **Finance** for **Land Degradation Neutrality**



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Table of Contents

Part I — The LDN Finance Gap and the Role of Civil Society

8

1. Land Degradation, Drylands and the Need for Finance
2. The Role of Civil Society Organisations and Networks
3. The Critical Finance Gap for Indigenous Peoples as well as Local Communities

Part II — The LDN Funding Landscape

15

4. Resource Mobilisation Mechanisms
5. Understanding Donor Requirements
6. Donor Types: Comparative Overview

Part III — Barriers to Accessing Funds: Evidence from CSOs

27

7. Survey Scope and Methodology
8. Key Barriers Identified by CSOs
9. Implications for Capacity Building

Part IV — Resource Mobilisation: Practical Guidance for CSOs

33

10. Internal Strength and Readiness
11. External Opportunities and Alignment

Part V — Conclusions and Action Pathways

40

12. Synthesis: Landscape and Barriers
13. Recommendations for CSOs
14. Recommendations for Donors and Financing Partners
15. The Role of CS4LDN and Next Steps

Annexes

ANNEX 1 — Donor Overview Table_____	47
ANNEX 2 — Two-Page Project Brief Template (for Donor Engagement)_____	47
ANNEX 3 — Donor Screening Checklist_____	49
ANNEX 4 — Internal Readiness Checklist for CSOs_____	51

Abbreviations List

LDN - Land Degradation Neutrality

SLM - Sustainable Land Management

IP&LCs - Indigenous Peoples as well as Local Communities

CSO - Civil Society Organisation(s)

Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

Drylands are highly vulnerable to land degradation and climate change. Civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities (IP&LCs) possess critical expertise to combat desertification and restore ecosystems while advancing inclusive and sustainable development, yet they face a severe and persistent finance gap.

Evidence from a global survey highlights recurring obstacles: complex procedures, restrictive eligibility criteria, high co-financing requirements, language barriers, and internal capacity gaps. Indigenous Peoples and local community-led organisations face additional structural constraints, including political marginalisation and lack of formal recognition.

Closing this gap is essential for achieving the objectives of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and advancing Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).

This guide provides practical insights for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and donors on unlocking finance for Land Degradation Neutrality.

Key recommendations for CSOs:

1. Clarify strategic positioning by maintaining a clear land/LDN strategy and aligning projects with intersecting priorities such as climate, biodiversity, and livelihoods.
2. Strengthen core organisational systems, including financial management, procurement, monitoring, and reporting, to build credibility and readiness for funding.
3. Increase visibility and build alliances by engaging actively in networks, regional platforms, and consortia to strengthen positioning within the funding ecosystem.
4. Diversify funding sources to reduce dependence on a single donor and enhance long-term organisational resilience.

Key recommendations for Donors:

1. Simplify application and reporting requirements and ensure they are proportionate to grant size and risk.
2. Create dedicated and direct funding windows for local CSOs, Indigenous Peoples and community-led organisations with adjusted eligibility and co-financing thresholds.
3. Explicitly recognise sustainable land management and LDN as cross-cutting priorities within climate, biodiversity, and development funding frameworks.
4. Improve outreach by disseminating calls widely, including in multiple languages, and providing clear, structured feedback to unsuccessful applicants so that CSOs can learn and improve over time.

Structure of the Guide

The guide is structured in five parts:

Part I — The LDN finance gap and the role of civil society: context and positioning.

Part II — The LDN funding landscape: mapping of mechanisms, donors, and opportunities, including public, philanthropic, blended, and innovative finance.

Part III — Barriers to accessing funds: documentation of barriers identified through a global survey of CSOs.

Part IV — Resource mobilisation - practical guidance for CSOs: tools and considerations to strengthen strategic positioning and engagement.

Part V — Conclusions and action pathways: synthesis and joint recommendations for CSOs, donors, and the CS4LDN platform.

How to use this Guide

If you are a CSO or community-based organisation:

Start with Part II (The LDN Funding Landscape) and Part III (Barriers to Accessing Funds) to understand funding opportunities and common constraints. Then consult Part IV (Resource Mobilisation: Practical Guidance) and the annexes for practical tools.

If you are a donor or financing partner:

Focus on Part III (Barriers to Accessing Funds) to understand how CSOs engage with funding mechanisms and where obstacles arise. Then refer to Part V (Conclusions and Action Pathways) for recommendations and proposed adjustments.

If you are preparing a CSO—donor dialogue or workshop:

Use the barrier clusters in Part III together with the funding landscape overview in Part II to structure discussions, identify bottlenecks, and co-design practical solutions.

Foreword

Drylands cover more than 40% of the Earth's surface¹ and are home to nearly one third of the global population. They are among the most vulnerable regions to climate change, land degradation, and water scarcity. Increasing demographic pressure, food insecurity, and growing competition for natural resources further exacerbate these challenges, often combined with socio-economic and political instability. As a result, communities in drylands face heightened vulnerability, reduced livelihoods, and a persistent risk of poverty.

In this context, civil society organisations (CSOs) play a fundamental role. They bring people together around a shared vision of development, to support the resilience of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities. Over the last decades, CSOs have developed substantial technical and organisational expertise to combat desertification, restore ecosystems, and promote inclusive and sustainable development in drylands and other fragile landscapes.

Yet many CSOs struggle to access predictable, timely, non-discriminatory, and long-term finance. Development aid is becoming more competitive, donor requirements more demanding, and information on funding opportunities more dispersed. At the same time, CSOs are asked to meet higher standards on governance, safeguards, monitoring, and evaluation.

Developed under the CS4LDN (Civil Society for Land Degradation Neutrality)² initiative and in partnership with the PASS-LCD (Structured Actions to Combat Desertification in the Sahel)³ project, this guide aims to support CSOs active in drylands across the globe in navigating the funding landscape, understanding access barriers, and strengthening their resource mobilisation strategies.

¹ UNCCD (2024). *The Global Threat of Drying Lands: Regional and global aridity trends and future projections*. Science-Policy Interface

² The Strengthening Civil Society Role in Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality - GEF 10993 - (CS4LDN) project is a GEF-funded initiative implemented by IUCN in partnership with Drynet and Both ENDS. It seeks to enhance the capacity and recognition of civil society organisations (CSOs) worldwide to influence and implement Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) policies and investments. Through a combination of advocacy, knowledge exchange, training, and access to funding opportunities, the project empowers CSOs to ensure that LDN actions uphold principles of participation, equity, ecosystem management, and gender responsiveness. By connecting local initiatives with national and international processes under the UNCCD, the project aims to create a more inclusive and effective approach to restoring degraded lands and promoting sustainable land use.

³ The PASS-LCD project is an AFD-funded project implemented by NGOs CARI, ENDA Pronat and the Sahel Desertification Network, which aims to improve collaboration between state and non-state actors in international negotiations of the UNCCD and the Great Green Wall initiative. The project promotes the dissemination of knowledge to strengthen civil society capacities. It enables CSOs to build a common advocacy platform to promote agroecology as a response to the challenges of drought and land degradation neutrality. Finally, it equips Sahelian CSOs with the tools they need to improve their access to funding.

Part I

The LDN Finance Gap and the Role of Civil Society



The LDN Finance Gap and the Role of Civil Society

1. Land Degradation, Drylands and the Need for Finance

Land sustains life, provides food and income, and underpins the livelihoods of billions of people worldwide. For many pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, local and dryland communities, land and territory are their main capital and asset. It bridges environmental health, socioeconomic development, food security, sovereignty, and poverty reduction. The way we manage land and territory largely determines our capacity to adapt to climate change, restore ecosystems, and maintain resilience.

However, land degradation and desertification are advancing under growing pressures, affecting more than three billion people globally⁴. Unsustainable land use, climate stress, and systemic inequalities are eroding soil fertility, reducing productivity, and undermining local resilience across continents.

Land degradation is driven by interacting pressures, including:

- **Climate change and increasing aridity**, reflected in changing rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, more frequent droughts, and extreme weather events, intensify water stress, soil erosion, and vegetation loss. These impacts disproportionately affect Indigenous lands and territories.
- **Expansion of agriculture and land-use change**, particularly conversion of natural ecosystems into croplands or pastures.
- **Unsustainable management practices** such as overgrazing, monocultures, inappropriate irrigation, deforestation, nutrient depletion and, excessive agrochemical use.

⁴ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 2025. “Drought, Desertification and Land Degradation Factsheet.” Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-05/DDD%20factsheet%20EN.pdf>

- **Socioeconomic pressures and weak governance**, including population growth, inequitable access to land and water, insecure tenure (especially for women), inadequate investment incentives, market failures, and weak land-use planning
- **Loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functions**, reducing resilience and productivity.
- **Fragmentation** through urban expansion, infrastructure development, and agricultural expansion reduces ecosystem connectivity and increases pressure on already degraded landscapes.
- **Finance, technology, and capacity gaps**, particularly affecting local actors and smallholders.
- **Gender and social inequities**, including limited land rights and decision-making power for women, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalised groups.

These drivers do not act in isolation; they interact and amplify each other. For example, climate change can exacerbate degradation caused by poor land and territorial management, and socioeconomic pressures can limit the ability of communities to adapt or invest in restoration.

Despite the scale of the challenges, civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, and public institutions are already implementing solutions: sustainable land and territorial management, ecosystem restoration, integrated landscape planning, and resilience-building interventions. These efforts contribute to global goals such as Land Degradation Neutrality and ecosystem restoration, but scaling them remains difficult when financial, technical, and institutional support is limited.

To succeed, the global response must align strategies across sectors (agriculture, water, climate, biodiversity), mobilise much greater public and private finance, strengthen governance and land rights, and support capacity building. Only through this integrated, multi-actor approach can we reverse land degradation and maintain healthy, productive landscapes for present and future generations.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) provides the international framework for this response, with the objective of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. Since 2015, it has adopted a Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) goal to reverse degradation trends and strengthen ecosystem and community resilience.

LDN guides action to:

- avoid new degradation of land by maintaining existing healthy land;
- reduce existing degradation by adopting sustainable land and territorial management practices that can slow degradation while increasing biodiversity, soil health, and food production;

- ramp up efforts to restore and return degraded lands to a natural or more productive state.

Reaching LDN requires:

- large-scale investment in sustainable land management and restoration;
- long-term, predictable financing for community-based and landscape initiatives;
- better alignment between global funds, national frameworks, and local actors.

2. The Role of Civil Society Organisations and Networks

Civil society organisations are central actors in efforts to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality and restore degraded landscapes. They work directly with Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, smallholders and pastoralists, combining technical knowledge with social and cultural understanding. They bring grounded evidence into policy processes under the UNCCD, climate and biodiversity conventions, and they often act as watchdogs and innovators, piloting and scaling up community-driven approaches.

International and regional CSO networks strengthen this role by enabling organisations to:

- Increase visibility with donors, governments, and other partners;
- Access timely information on funding opportunities, policy processes, and technical resources;
- Form partnerships and consortia for larger, multi-actor initiatives;
- Strengthen capacity through methodologies, tools, training, and peer learning;
- Project their collective voice into regional and global dialogues on LDN, climate, and biodiversity.

Drynet

Drynet is a worldwide network of civil-society organisations that supports knowledge exchange, capacity building, and advocacy on drylands, linking local groups to national and international processes and strengthening civil-society participation in international forums, including UNCCD.

Sahel Desertification Network (ReSaD)

ReSaD is a network of civil society platforms from Burkina Faso, France, Mali, and Niger that promotes coordinated action against desertification and land degradation in the Sahel. The network is coordinated by the French association CARI and focuses on capacity building, learning exchanges, policy advocacy, and support to implementation of sustainable land and territorial management projects.

DesertNet International (DNI)

DNI links scientists, practitioners, and civil society actors committed to addressing desertification, land degradation, and drought. DNI works to bridge the science-policy interface by integrating local knowledge with scientific research and policy dialogue. The network collaborates closely with the UNCCD's scientific

World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT)

WOCAT is a global network for documenting, sharing, and applying knowledge on Sustainable Land Management (SLM). It maintains the Global SLM Database, recognised by the UNCCD as the main reference for best practices on land and territorial management and restoration. WOCAT provides tools and methodologies that support CSOs, practitioners, and policymakers in project design, monitoring and scaling up SLM practices.

International Land Coalition (ILC)

The ILC is an independent global alliance of over 300 People's Organisations, civil society and intergovernmental organisations working together to put people at the centre of land governance. The initiative documents best practices and amplifies the voices of local communities in national and international policy processes.

GEF CSO Network

The Network fosters active CSO engagement in the design and implementation of Global Environment Facility (GEF) policies and projects. It supports knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and joint advocacy for more inclusive financing. Through regional focal points, it enables CSOs to share field experiences, contribute to GEF Council meetings, and align their work with global environmental conventions such as the UNCCD, CBD, and UNFCCC.

Landscape Partnership Asia (LPA)

LPA is a multi-stakeholder platform co-led by IUCN, FAO, and the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), bringing together CSOs, governments, and private partners. It aims to restore 10 million hectares of degraded land across Asia by 2030. LPA connects local restoration initiatives with national and regional policies, and provides CSOs with opportunities to participate in large-scale restoration programs and access technical support aligned with the goals of LDN.

3. The Critical Finance Gap for Indigenous Peoples as well as Local Communities

While the financial commitments of all stakeholders are vital for advancing the objectives of the UNCCD, Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities require focused consideration. Their livelihoods, cultural identity, and governance systems are directly and daily tied to land, water, and territory. Their food systems, mobility patterns, and land stewardship practices are deeply dependent on healthy ecosystems; thus, they remain among the most exposed to land degradation, desertification, and the intensifying impacts of drought. Despite their central role in sustaining some of the world's most resilient dryland ecosystems, Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities receive only a negligible fraction of global finance directed toward combating land degradation or strengthening drought resilience. While it is often said that Indigenous Peoples receive “around 1% of climate finance,” emerging analyses indicate that even this number is significantly overstated. A recent study by [IIED](#) shows that only 0.7% of all reported climate-related finance even mentions Indigenous Peoples, and much of this consists merely of symbolic references rather than dedicated or accessible funding streams. The proportion of finance that Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities can directly access, govern, or utilize for land restoration, drought preparedness, or sustainable land and territorial management is therefore close to zero.

This gap reflects structural barriers embedded in global financing systems. Existing mechanisms rely heavily on intermediaries, impose accreditation requirements that do not align with Indigenous governance systems, and prioritise formal institutions over customary authorities who are the primary stewards of drylands. Consequently, Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities remain positioned at the end of long delivery chains rather than as rights-holders capable of designing and implementing their own land-restoration and drought-resilience strategies.

The implications are significant for the mandate of the UNCCD. Indigenous Peoples often inhabit the lands and territories most affected by degradation and drought, yet they also maintain knowledge systems, such as rotational grazing, customary watershed management, seed and breed diversity governance, and mobility-based land stewardship, that are among the most effective tools for preventing, mitigating, and reversing desertification. Without predictable, timely, long-term,

non-discriminatory, direct and rights-based financial support, these systems are increasingly threatened, undermining global progress toward LDN, SLM, and drought resilience.

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and Conference of the Parties (COP) processes consistently recognise the importance of community-driven approaches, yet the lack of direct access financing remains a central obstacle. States and financing entities must prioritise:

- **Direct and simplified financial access** for Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities;
- **Long-term and predictable funding** that strengthens their governance systems and customary institutions;
- **Financing approaches aligned with UNCCD principles**, including participation, equity, and recognition of community-based stewardship of drylands;
- **A shift away from intermediary-dominated models** toward financing that reaches Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities as decision-makers and implementers.

Closing this gap is not simply a technical improvement to financial delivery, it is a core requirement for achieving the objectives of the UNCCD, for ensuring the resilience of dryland communities, and for advancing a just and effective global response to land degradation and drought.



Part II

The LDN Funding Landscape



The LDN Funding Landscape

1. Resource Mobilisation Mechanisms

The financing ecosystem for LDN and SLM is diverse, ranging from micro-grants to multi-million-dollar instruments.

Grants from donors

Grants remain the main source of funding for CSOs carrying out development projects. They are awarded by different types of organisations and are generally accessed through calls for proposals.



Calls for proposals are usually governed by fairly specific guidelines that specify the donor's expectations in terms of:

- Intervention themes
- Type of project, mode of intervention
- Geographical area
- Eligibility of organisations

Applications must follow the required format and be submitted within specified deadlines.

Some donors also operate flexible or discretionary funding windows that can be accessed through direct engagement rather than formal calls. In such cases, CSOs must demonstrate a strong track record, credible evidence of impact, and a strategic agenda that closely aligns with the donor's priorities, geographic focus, and thematic objectives. For example, some embassies have financial envelopes to support civil society initiatives, events, or participation in international negotiations such as COPs.

Complementary resource mobilisation strategies

In addition to institutional grants and investment instruments, CSOs may mobilise complementary resources that strengthen organisational capacity, visibility, and resilience. These approaches rarely replace core institutional funding for LDN, but they can diversify income streams, support pilot initiatives, or reinforce operational capacity.

Partnerships — Collaboration with other CSOs, research centres, international NGOs, local authorities, or private actors can enable cost-sharing, pooled expertise, joint proposals, and stronger positioning within consortia.

Sponsorships — Companies may provide financial or in-kind support (e.g. equipment, services, event backing) in exchange for visibility or association with environmental initiatives. Clear alignment of values and transparency are essential.

Competitions and awards — Innovation prizes and thematic awards can provide seed funding, visibility, and credibility, particularly for pilot or community-led initiatives.

Volunteering — Engagement of volunteers can strengthen outreach, implementation, and community mobilisation, provided roles are clearly defined and supervision is adequate.

Internships — Structured engagement of students or early-career professionals can reinforce organisational capacity in areas such as research, communications, or project support.

Crowdfunding and fundraising events — One-off or ongoing calls for donations via online platforms or public events (e.g. galas, hackathons, innovation challenges) can mobilise small contributions from a broad audience. These approaches require communication capacity and public visibility to be effective.

Income-generating activities — Sale of goods or services linked to the organisation's mission (e.g. reselling handicrafts or food products made by project beneficiaries, offering advisory services, renting conference rooms or technical equipment) can generate flexible resources and contribute to long-term sustainability.

These complementary strategies mobilise different combinations of financial, human, technical, and material resources. When strategically combined with institutional funding, they can strengthen autonomy and reduce dependence on a single donor stream.

2. Understanding Donor Requirements

Once resources and potential donors have been identified, the next step is to ensure alignment between the CSO's action plan and the donor's expectations.

The donor's vision and ethics:

CSOs should ensure that the donor's vision and strategic development objectives are compatible with their own mandate and values. Donors typically articulate their priorities, values, and funding approach through formal documents such as charters, strategies, or policy guidelines.

For donors linked to private companies, it is important to verify that the company's activities do not conflict with the CSO's principles (e.g. in terms of environmental standards, human rights, etc.). CSOs should also consider the donor's image in its national context, as donor support is usually acknowledged in communications.

Eligibility criteria:

Most donors have specific criteria governing their funding, available on their website or in documents related to calls for proposals.

Table 1: Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria relating to:	
Supported organisations	Some donors only support local CSOs in developing countries. Others require that projects be carried out in partnership between CSOs from the North and South. Depending on their funding envelopes, donors will seek to support organisations of different sizes and levels of institutional capacity.
Area of intervention	Most donors have priorities in terms of countries of intervention. Some may limit their support to projects operating in specific areas or regions of a country.
Themes of intervention	Donors also determine sectoral themes for intervention that are more or less comprehensive.
Types of actions carried out	Donors increasingly set requirements for the characteristics of the projects they support, for example with regard to gender and youth issues. Some donors seek to finance field-based projects, while others may support advocacy or institutional strengthening.

Eligibility criteria relating to:**Types of costs supported**

While many donors support projects in their entirety, some funding packages may exclude certain costs such as human resources or travel.

Regarding the thematic priorities for funding

Desertification and sustainable land and territorial management are rarely at the forefront of donors' strategic orientations or project guidelines. However, they can be linked to other themes, such as environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, poverty reduction, etc. In presenting a project, the CSO must clearly establish the link between its ambitions and the donor's thematic priorities. Sustainable land and territorial management projects may therefore mobilise funding under broader sectoral priorities.

Thematically, convergence focuses on climate adaptation and mitigation, land and ecosystem restoration, sustainable agriculture, nature-based solutions, and resilient livelihoods. Across the board, most donors require robust strategies for gender equality, youth inclusion, and the involvement of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, combined with results-oriented safeguards and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Modalities and sizes**Funding instruments vary in scale:**

- Small grants: useful for pilot projects, community organisation, and proof of concept.
- Medium grants: suitable for scaling validated models and influencing sectoral policies.
- Larger instruments (concessional loans, guarantees, patient capital): aimed at systemic change, soft/hard infrastructure, and leveraging private capital.

Application processes:

- Structured calls (annual/multi-annual), often involving two-stage processes (concept note and full proposal) and requiring co-financing.
- Continuous or rolling windows (particularly for investment instruments and blended platforms) with case-by-case due diligence.
- Philanthropy and accelerator models which may involve more agile processes and shorter decision times.

The donor landscape includes several donor families, each with specific entry conditions. The following section presents comparative profiles of major donor types, summarising the type of mechanism, accessibility for CSOs, typical funding sizes and practical entry considerations.

3. Donor Types: Comparative Overview

3.1. Multilateral funds

Multilateral funds are official development assistance (ODA) mechanisms established and governed by multiple countries to address global environmental and climate challenges. They pool public resources and operate through accredited implementing entities, which design and deliver projects under formal governance and country programming frameworks.

Examples include the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund (AF) and the Climate Investment Funds (CIF). Their mandates commonly cover climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, land degradation neutrality, forests and resilience-building.

Typical grant size

Funding is generally large-scale. Grants commonly range from USD 1–20+ million, with some regional or flagship programmes exceeding this range. While most financing flows through national or multi-country programmes, some funds offer small grants (typically USD 25,000–500,000) that are more accessible to CSOs.

How CSOs engage

CSOs rarely access multilateral funds directly unless accredited. More commonly, they participate as:

- Implementing or executing partners within projects led by accredited agencies (e.g. UN agencies, development banks, international NGOs).
- Members of consortia providing technical expertise, local presence or community engagement.
- Beneficiaries of dedicated small-grant or community windows, where available.

Early engagement during project design is essential, as project concepts are often defined well before formal approval.

Key features

- High fiduciary standards and detailed due diligence processes
- Strong environmental and social safeguards
- Comprehensive monitoring and reporting frameworks
- Frequent co-financing requirements
- Long preparation and approval timelines (often 12–36 months)

Most suitable for

CSOs that can contribute specialised expertise or strong community access within large-scale, policy-aligned programmes and that have the institutional capacity to meet rigorous compliance requirements.

3.2. Bilateral funds and European Union Cooperation

Bilateral cooperation refers to development assistance provided by individual countries to partner countries in line with national strategic priorities. Funds are managed by cooperation ministries, development agencies or embassies. The European Union also provides significant funding through European Commission instruments.

Examples include agencies such as GIZ (Germany), AFD (France), NORAD (Norway), SIDA (Sweden), ENABEL (Belgium) and JICA (Japan), as well as EU funding facilities.

Typical grant size

The average size of the funds granted varies between several thousand euros to several millions of euros depending on the financing facilities.

How CSOs engage

CSOs typically access funding through:

- Embassy small-grant schemes
- Competitive calls for proposals
- Framework partnership agreements
- Consortia that may combine donor-country and partner-country organisations

Key features

- Clear alignment required with donor-country thematic and geographic priorities.
- Due diligence and financial management requirements that increase with grant size.
- Co-financing requirements are common (often 20% or more).

Most suitable for

Organisations with medium to strong institutional capacity and a demonstrated track record, particularly where project objectives align clearly with donor strategies.

3.3. Philanthropic and Corporate Foundations

Philanthropic foundations and corporate CSR funds provide flexible support for climate, land restoration and sustainable development initiatives. Compared to public donors, they often move more quickly and are open to innovative approaches.

Examples include foundations such as the Bezos Earth Fund, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Arcadia.

Typical grant size

Typically USD 20,000—500,000, depending on the foundation and funding window.

How CSOs engage

Funding is accessed through:

- Open calls for proposals
- Invitation-based rounds or nominations
- Direct outreach supported by concise project briefs
- Introductions through networks or coalitions

Key features

- Generally lighter administrative and reporting requirements

- Greater flexibility on overheads and core costs
- Openness to piloting new or community-led approaches
- Shorter decision timelines compared to large public funds

Most suitable for

Early-stage pilots, innovation, advocacy or community-led initiatives that require flexibility and faster decision-making.

3.4. Regional Platforms and Landscape Initiatives

Regional platforms and landscape initiatives are multi-actor partnerships that mobilise finance, technical expertise and political commitment across large geographies. They align governments, CSOs and development partners around integrated land-use and restoration goals.

Examples include AFR100, TerrAfrica, REDAA, Landscape Partnership Asia, Great Green Wall (GGW) Accelerator, SAWAP, COMIFAC Forest Initiatives, and other regional frameworks and other regional restoration initiatives.

Typical grant size

While overall funding envelopes may be large, CSO-accessible windows often range between USD 50,000 and 500,000. Support may take the form of sub-grants, technical assistance, pilot funding or participation in regional programmes.

How CSOs engage

CSOs participate through:

- Regional or national calls for proposals
- Technical partnerships with governments or lead organisations
- Participation in multi-actor landscape initiatives such as working groups or knowledge platforms that may lead to sub-granting opportunities

Key features

- Strong emphasis on local implementation and community-driven action

- Focus on generating evidence, promoting cross-country learning, and scaling successful models
- Opportunity for networking and visibility within broad multi-stakeholder ecosystems (governments, research institutions, philanthropies, multilaterals, and private investors)
- Alignment with nationally determined contributions (NDCs), land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets, and regional frameworks.

Most suitable for

Regional platforms are particularly relevant for CSOs that:

- Seek to scale validated local approaches in sustainable land management, climate adaptation, restoration or livelihood resilience, either horizontally across landscapes or vertically into policy frameworks
- Seek influence beyond project delivery, such as shaping restoration agendas, informing NDC revisions, or contributing to UNCCD/UNFCCC processes
- Demonstrate strong commitments to cross-cutting priorities, including gender equality, youth empowerment and Indigenous Peoples' leadership, which are central to many platform expectations.
- Test innovative models with potential for replication or integration into larger multilateral or bilateral funding mechanisms.

This makes regional platforms particularly strategic for organisations seeking not only project funding, but also visibility, policy influence and pathways to scale within broader restoration and climate architectures.

3.5. Blended Finance and Innovative Instruments

Blended finance mechanisms combine public, philanthropic and private capital to mobilise investment for land restoration, drought resilience and sustainable land management. These are investment-oriented and outcome-based instruments rather than traditional grant funds. They are designed to attract private investment into sectors where purely commercial returns would otherwise be insufficient, by using concessional or grant funding to reduce risk or improve project viability.

Examples include the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Fund, managed by Mirova in partnership with the UNCCD, as well as other climate- and nature-focused impact investment vehicles. Innovative instruments also include pilots using digital MRV systems, performance-based finance, and traceable or tokenised finance models.

Typical capital flows

Investments typically start at USD 1 million and may reach USD 10—50 million or more. Financing may include equity, debt, quasi-equity or outcome-based instruments, often deployed through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) that ring-fence project risk and define roles among investors and partners.

Many blended finance vehicles also include technical assistance grants (often USD 50,000—500,000) to support project preparation and investment readiness.

How CSOs engage:

CSOs usually do not receive investment capital directly. Instead, they participate as:

- Technical or implementation partners within investment projects
- Providers of environmental and social safeguards, including stakeholder engagement, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), grievance mechanisms, and compliance with environmental and social standards.
- Community intermediaries and facilitators, ensuring meaningful participation and benefit-sharing with local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and smallholders.
- Recipients of preparatory or technical assistance grants, supporting project design, baseline assessments, MRV systems, land tenure diagnostics, and pipeline development aligned with UNCCD and LDN targets.
- Long-term stewardship and monitoring partners, contributing to outcome verification, sustainability of land-use practices, and post-investment impact tracking.

Early engagement during project origination is essential, as roles, risk allocation and governance arrangements are typically defined before capital deployment. In SPV-based structures, CSOs may participate as non-equity partners responsible for community engagement and safeguards without assuming financial risk.

Key features:

- Layered financial structures combining concessional, philanthropic and private capital.
- A strong focus on measurable environmental and socio-economic outcomes.
- Sophisticated governance and risk management frameworks, including contractual arrangements that clearly define roles between investors, CSOs, and implementing partners.

- Higher requirements for data, MRV systems, and financial transparency, compared to traditional grant funding.
- Longer investment horizons aligned with ecological restoration processes.

Most suitable for

Blended finance mechanisms are most appropriate for CSOs that:

- Operate within landscape or value-chain initiatives alongside private investors, development finance institutions or public agencies.
- Provide clear added value in community engagement, land tenure security, social inclusion, gender equity or environmental safeguards.
- Can work within investment-oriented partnerships, even if they are not the capital recipient.
- Focus on long-term land stewardship and systemic impact rather than short-term project delivery.
- Align closely with UNCCD priorities, including Land Degradation Neutrality, drought resilience and integrated landscape management.

These mechanisms are not suitable for small, standalone, or purely advocacy-based CSO projects, but can be transformative for CSOs positioned as trusted partners within blended finance ecosystems.

Detailed profiles of individual donors and their specific entry conditions are available in Annex 1.

Part III

Barriers to Accessing Funds: Evidence from CSOs



Barriers to Accessing Funds: Evidence from CSOs

Civil society organisations working on land degradation and sustainable land and territorial management operate in an increasingly competitive and complex funding environment. While needs on the ground are growing, public development aid is declining, donor priorities are becoming more specific, and administrative requirements are intensifying. As a result, accessing funding requires greater strategic positioning, compliance capacity and diversification of resource mobilisation approaches.

1. Survey Scope and Methodology

Under CS4LDN, a survey was conducted among CSOs working on land degradation, desertification and SLM across different regions. The objectives were to:

- Understand the barriers CSOs face when trying to access donor funding;
- Capture practical experiences and bottlenecks that are not visible in formal guidelines;
- Use this evidence to inform capacity-building activities and structure dialogue with donors.

Responses were compiled from 226 organisations across four regions (Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe) including grassroots CSOs, national NGOs, and networks.

The survey combined closed and open questions on experiences with donors, funding mechanisms and application processes. Open-ended responses were reviewed and grouped into recurring barrier themes. The analysis focuses on these themes and their implications rather than statistical representativeness.

A particularly strong message from respondents was the need for simpler and more proportional procedures — in both application and reporting — so that local CSOs can participate on a fairer footing.

2. Key Barriers Identified by CSOs

Despite regional differences, several cross-cutting barriers emerged.

2.1. Procedural burden

Many CSOs describe funding procedures as too long, technical and resource-intensive:

- Multi-stage applications with complex templates and logframes;
- Requirements for multiple annexes (policies, multi-year audits, detailed risk matrices);
- Reporting templates disproportionate to the size of the grant;
- Different formats and indicators across donors;
- Strict procurement and audit rules requiring specialised staff;
- Short deadlines that do not match CSOs' staff capacity.

Implication: Small and medium-sized CSOs are effectively screened out before they can compete, and staff spend significant time on unsuccessful proposals instead of implementation. Compliance absorbs a disproportionate share of organisational capacity, reducing time for community work and learning.

2.2. Access, eligibility and visibility constraints

Respondents note that donors often favour:

- Large, well-known international NGOs or consortia;
- Organisations already known to the donor.

Local CSOs with strong field experience feel overlooked or pushed into sub-grantee roles only.

Additional constraints include:

- Calls for proposals not widely disseminated, or circulating mainly through established networks;
- Information available in only one language;
- Rejections rarely including meaningful feedback;

- Application and reporting in English or French posing difficulties;
- Technical funding terminology creating barriers.

Implication: Funding and decision-making concentrate among a limited set of actors, with local voices and innovations struggling to reach scale or policy influence. Many CSOs feel excluded from the funding ecosystem and are unable to improve future applications.

2.3. Co-financing and financial risk requirements

Common concerns include:

- Co-financing thresholds (10—30% or more) that small CSOs cannot match;
- Requirements to pre-finance activities and wait for reimbursement;
- Minimum turnover or reserve criteria.

Implication: Many CSOs self-exclude from calls they know they cannot meet financially, even when their project ideas are strong.

2.4. Internal capacity and systems gaps

CSOs also recognise internal challenges:

- Limited proposal-writing experience;
- Weak financial management and M&E systems;
- Difficulty presenting evidence of impact in a way that donors expect.

Implication: Organisational readiness can limit access and performance, even where donors are open to supporting CSOs.

2.5. Specific challenges for Indigenous Peoples and local community organisations

The survey also included at least one respondent identifying as an organisation of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities. These actors often face compounded challenges in accessing funding: political marginalisation and lack of formal recognition, remoteness from decision-making centres, and greater reliance on local languages and customary governance systems. This can make it even harder to meet standard eligibility criteria, co-financing requirements or documentation expectations.

Implication: Without specific attention to Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities-led organisations, funding risks bypassing some of the actors who are both most affected by land degradation and most central to locally grounded solutions. CS4LDN and its partners must treat inclusion as a design criterion for funding windows and capacity-building offers, through dedicated entry points and culturally appropriate engagement models.

2.6. Impacts of International Sanctions and Armed Conflicts

Respondents, including Indigenous Peoples and local community-led organisations, highlighted the impact of international sanctions and armed conflicts on access to environmental funding. In sanctioned countries, compliance regimes and banking restrictions can result in the effective exclusion of all organisations from funding opportunities, regardless of mandate or community role. This disproportionately affects Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, whose access to banking channels, international transfers, accreditation and donor due diligence systems is already constrained.

Similarly, CSOs operating in or near conflict-affected areas report near-total exclusion from land and restoration financing windows, despite heightened ecological fragility and urgent needs for land rehabilitation and drought resilience. This creates a contradiction: areas most affected by degradation and conflict are often least able to access support.

Implication: Unless funding mechanisms explicitly account for the effects of international sanctions and armed conflicts, CSO, especially Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, will continue to face compounded barriers. Funding windows and capacity-building offers must therefore incorporate context-sensitive eligibility pathways, risk-sharing mechanisms, and alternative verification processes that enable CSOs and IP and LC-led organisations in sanctioned and conflict-affected settings to participate meaningfully and safely.

3. Implications for Capacity Building

The barriers point to three main capacity-building pillars:

1. Proposal and project design skills
 - Translating community initiatives into clear, results-based project designs;
 - Aligning proposals with donor priorities on climate, biodiversity, restoration and equity;
 - Framing land and LDN in terms donors recognise (e.g., adaptation, livelihoods, nature-based solutions).

2. Organisational and financial readiness

- Basic but robust financial management, internal controls and procurement;
- Simple and credible M&E and safeguards systems;
- Documentation of governance, policies and previous results.

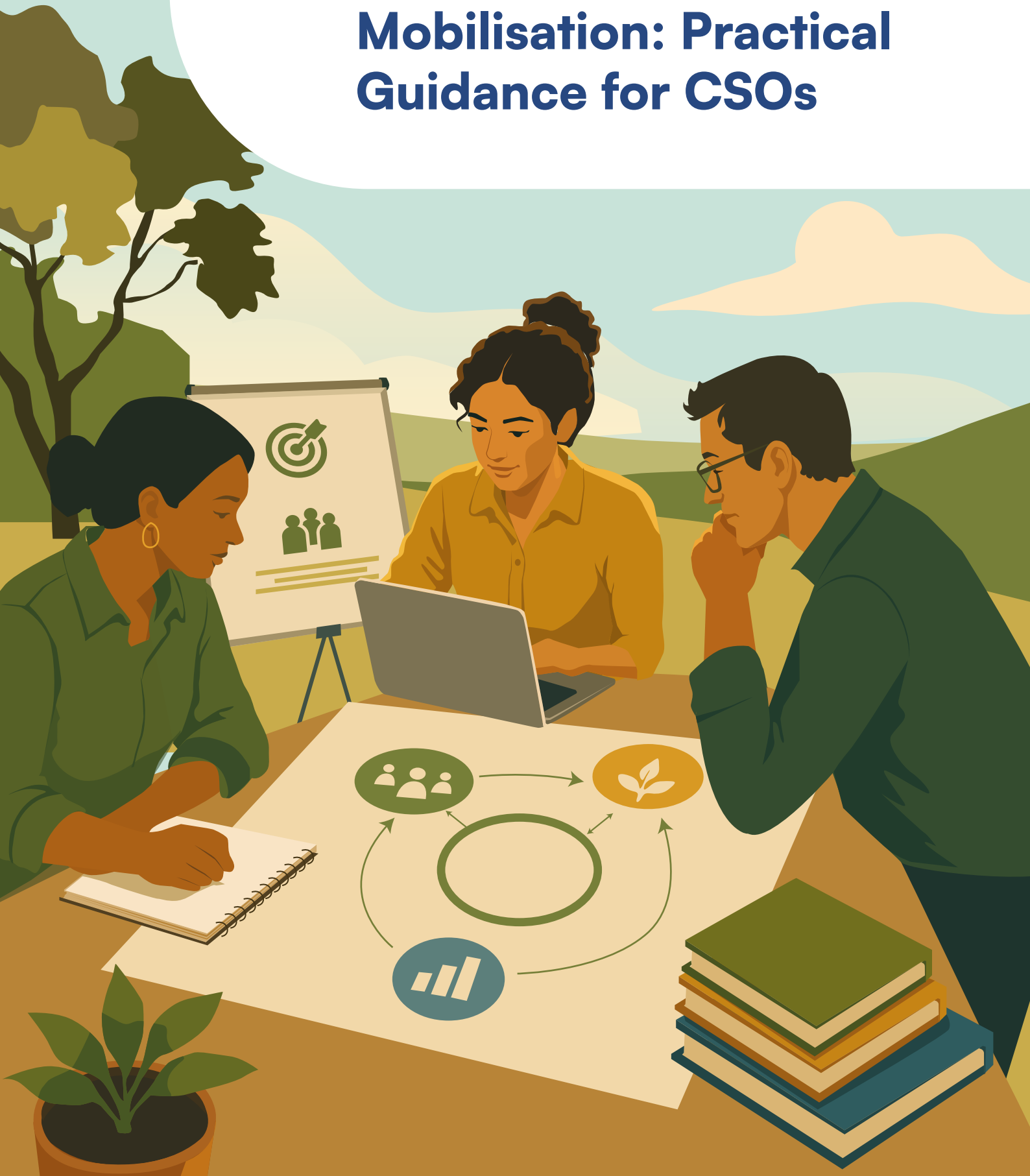
3. Strategic engagement and visibility

- Donor mapping and opportunity tracking;
- Positioning within regional initiatives and networks;
- Communicating impact through stories and data.

Under CS4LDN, these pillars can be translated into training modules, peer exchanges, mentoring and practical tools (templates, checklists, model policies).

Part IV

Resource Mobilisation: Practical Guidance for CSOs



Resource Mobilisation: Practical Guidance for CSOs

Civil society organisations bring people together around a vision of development and defined priorities for action. The vision is typically articulated through an **organisational strategy document** and/or **time-bound action plan**, which clarify the organisation's mandate, thematic focus and long-term objectives.



Strategic vision:

A clear strategic framework serves two key purposes.

Internally, it guides decision-making and prioritisation.

Externally, it provides a credible basis for dialogue with technical and financial partners by demonstrating coherence, direction and expertise.

The implementation of the action plan generally takes place through a portfolio of projects, carried out successively or in parallel. To sustain this portfolio, CSOs must mobilise a variety of financial resources in order to achieve sustainable financial autonomy over time.



Financial autonomy:

Financial autonomy means avoiding dependency on a single donor. An autonomous organisation implements its action plan through several projects funded by different donors. **Diversification** reduces financial vulnerability and strengthens independence.



Sustainability:

Sustainability refers to the organisation's ability to continue pursuing its mission even if a particular donor withdraws support. A sustainable CSO can **adapt, mobilise new funding** and maintain **continuity of action**.

The autonomy, independence and sustainability of an organisation are not only internal goals. They are also factors that strengthen donor confidence. Donors are more likely to trust organisations that demonstrate diversified funding, strategic clarity and long-term viability.

In this context, a structured approach to resource mobilisation becomes essential to ensure long term impact. It requires dedicated time, human resources and forward planning.

1. Internal Strength and Readiness

Effective resource mobilisation begins with a clear internal analysis. Before approaching donors, a CSO should assess its capacities, needs and planned actions. This internal review helps determine eligibility for funding, identify potential gaps and clarify where partnerships may be required.

Organisational profile

The CSO should review its internal structure, governance, financial situation, partners and coordination with other actors.

Framing questions

- What is the size of the organisation? (employees, volunteers, interns)
- What is the average annual budget? (core functioning and operations)
- What is the current financing plan?
- What resources can the organisation mobilise or leverage?
- Who are the current partners? (financial, operational, institutional)

This analysis provides an overall picture of the resources required for the organisation to function and grow. It also helps assess eligibility for specific donors, who may have size, turnover or governance requirements.

Vision and strategy

The CSO should clearly articulate its mandate, global objectives, thematic focus, geographic coverage and target audience.

Framing questions

- What are the organisation's core objectives and thematic priorities?
- What is its area of intervention?
- What operational approaches does it use?
- Who are the beneficiaries and target audiences?
- How does it coordinate with other actors in the field?

Clarifying these elements strengthens coherence and makes it easier to identify donors whose thematic and geographic priorities align with the organisation's mission.

Capacity and expertise

The CSO should assess its past project experience, and its capacity to design and manage projects.

Framing questions

- What specific approaches, tools and methods does the organisation apply in projects?
- What experience does it have in project design and fundraising?
- What experience does it have in project management (implementation, monitoring, coordination, reporting, learning, communication).

This analysis helps identify strengths and gaps, determine potential needs for collaboration with other partners, and position the organisation in relation to donor management criteria.

Action plan, program or project:

The CSO should analyse its current and planned operations to clarify what it intends to implement and what resources will be required.

Framing questions

What?	→ What do we want to achieve? → What are the themes we are seeking resources for?
Who?	→ Who are the targets or beneficiaries? → Who are the partners? → Who will carry out the action? Is there a consortium or partnership planned?
Where?	→ What is the area of intervention?
When?	→ When will the action take place? → What is the expected duration?
How?	→ What is the planned course of action? → What types of activities are envisaged?
How many?	→ What resources (goods, services, work time, etc.) are required?
Why?	→ What are the ultimate objectives of the planned action?

Clarifying these elements enables the CSO to identify and quantify the resources required and to align the proposed action with relevant funding mechanisms and donor priorities.



Different types of resources may be needed:

Human: staff time, volunteers, mobilisation of beneficiaries

Material: equipment, vehicles, technical tools and materials.

Technical: external expertise studies or specialized services.

Financial: funds required to cover costs not met through existing resources, including own funds, grants or endowments, products sold or services invoiced, etc.

Based on the list of needs, the CSO identifies the resources it already has — and can leverage — and the additional resources it needs to mobilise.

**Resources and in-kind valorisation:**

The CSO may contribute existing resources to project, including:

- Human resources: staff time (e.g. communications officer, accountant), volunteers and interns.
- Material resources: use of meeting rooms, vehicles or equipment it owns.
- Financial resources: the CSO's own funds.

In the context of a funded project, these contributions can be highlighted in financial reporting. This is particularly relevant when a donor does not fully finance the project budget, as these resources may count as co-financing.

2. External Opportunities and Alignment

Once the types and quantity of resources needed have been listed, the CSO will need to identify the most suitable resource providers by researching funding mechanisms, donors and their selection criteria.

This includes assessing:

- Mechanisms to mobilise resources: grants, partnerships, sponsorship, competitions, volunteering, crowdfunding, events, sale of goods/services.
- Types of donors: public institutions, foundations, companies, blended-finance vehicles.
- Eligibility criteria: organisation type, intervention area, themes, beneficiary groups, types of costs supported.

Together, the internal and external analysis forms the basis for a resource-mobilisation plan

Practical considerations when engaging with donors

Effective engagement requires careful alignment and preparation.

- **Check alignment between the project and the donor's strategic priorities** (themes, regions, types of costs and beneficiaries). The project proposal should have a clear impact narrative to demonstrate how it responds to the donor's priorities and to relevant global frameworks such as the UNCCD and related climate and biodiversity agendas. **Understand the application processes:** donors can work through calls for projects (often two-stage, with concept note and full proposal), rolling windows, or direct approaches in the case of some foundations or corporate funds.
- **Anticipate co-financing and compliance requirements:** realistic budgets, verifiable co-finance, governance and transparency standards, safeguards and M&E frameworks.
- **Prepare a concise project summary** (see Annex 2) to facilitate initial contact with donors and improve clarity of presentation.

In addition, CSOs may strengthen their positioning by diversifying funding sources and engaging in networks and alliances that increase visibility and partnership opportunities.



Part V

Conclusions and Action Pathways

Conclusions and Action Pathways

1. Synthesis: Landscape and Barriers

Taken together, the funding landscape analysis and the survey findings show:

- The funding ecosystem for LDN is broad and diverse — from micro-grants to multi-million-dollar programmes, from traditional aid to innovative and blended finance — but most CSOs have not yet been able to access the newer instruments in practice;
- Access is uneven: CSOs closest to degraded landscapes are often the least able to navigate formal funding systems;
- Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities-based organisations are among the most affected by land degradation, yet they often face additional barriers linked to political marginalisation, lack of recognition and geographic remoteness;
- Many constraints are structural (rules, procedures, co-financing, language), while others are internal (governance, systems, skills);
- CSO networks and platforms are critical to closing these gaps, acting as bridges for information, capacity and advocacy.

Sustainable land and territorial management and LDN are rarely explicit funding “labels”, but cut across multiple priorities: climate adaptation and mitigation, ecosystem restoration, sustainable agriculture, resilient livelihoods, and inclusive development. CSOs need to position their work in ways that reflect these intersections, while donors should recognise land and LDN more explicitly in their portfolios.

Barrier cluster	Proposed CSO response	What donors can adjust	Relevant annex / tool
Procedural burden (long forms, multi-step applications, short deadlines, heavy reporting and compliance)	• use Annex 3 — Donor Screening Checklist to decide when to apply; • prepare concise concept notes using Annex 2 — Project Brief Template; • plan an internal “application calendar” for key calls. • use Annex 4 — Readiness Checklist to identify gaps in finance/ M&E/procurement; • develop simple internal templates for activity and financial tracking aligned with donor requirements.	• simplify forms for small/medium grants; • introduce single-stage or light concept-note rounds; • provide realistic timelines. • make reporting proportional to grant size and risk; • harmonise templates across programmes; • provide simple guidance and examples.	Annex 2 (Project Brief) Annex 3 (Screening Checklist) Annex 1 (Donor Overview Table) Annex 4 (Readiness Checklist)
Eligibility and visibility constraints (preference for large/ known actors)	• strengthen profile and track record using Annex 4 — Internal Readiness Checklist; • engage in key networks/ platforms (see Networks Section); • systematically track opportunities using donor websites in the Donor Fact Sheet; • subscribe to network mailing lists; • record outcomes of applications and lessons learned; • develop and use an Outreach Email Template to approach potential partners, donors and to request feedback following applications • prepare standard building blocks (organisation profile, problem statement, results) in donor languages; • practice concise, non-technical writing using Annex 2.	• create dedicated windows for local/ grassroots CSOs; • relax minimum turnover thresholds; • encourage consortia that include local CSOs as full partners. • disseminate calls widely (including via CSO networks); • publish clear selection criteria; • provide short, constructive feedback on unsuccessful applications. • provide calls and key guidance in additional languages where feasible; • accept simple language and focus on clarity over jargon.	Annex 4 (Readiness Checklist) Annex 1 (Donor Overview Table) Annex 2 (Project Brief)

Barrier cluster	Proposed CSO response	What donors can adjust	Relevant annex / tool
Co-financing and financial risk requirements	- map potential co-finance (cash and in-kind); - design realistic budgets in Annex 2 — Project Brief; - discuss co-financing options early with partners.	- lower or differentiate co-financing thresholds for CSO-led projects; - recognise in-kind and community contributions; - provide limited pre-financing where possible.	Annex 2 (Project Brief) Annex 3 (Screening Checklist) Annex 1 (Donor Overview Table)
Internal systems gaps (finance, M&E, safeguards, governance)	- use Annex 4 — Readiness Checklist to prioritise improvements; - start with “minimum viable” systems and document them.	- include budget lines for CSO capacity strengthening in projects; - recognise that system-building is part of achieving sustainable results, not an overhead.	Annex 4 (Readiness Checklist)
Limited partnerships and visibility in the funding ecosystem	- join and actively participate in key networks (Networks Section); - use Annex 1 and develop an Outreach Email Template to present projects and the organisation to potential partners; - co-create proposals	- encourage and value consortia that include local CSOs as equal partners; - use CSO networks as intermediaries for outreach and design.	Networks & Platforms Section

2. Recommendations for CSOs

- Clarify strategy and impact
 - Maintain a clear written strategy or action plan on land/LDN and articulate its links to climate, biodiversity, livelihoods and equity.
- Strengthen core systems
 - Invest gradually in financial management, procurement, M&E and safeguards; even simple, well-documented systems build donor confidence.
- Use the funding map strategically
 - Prioritise donors and funding mechanisms that match your size, geography and thematic focus; avoid chasing every call.

4. Sharpen proposal development and reporting abilities
 - Build internal or shared capacity (within alliances) for concept notes, budgets, logframes and narrative reporting.
5. Increase visibility and alliances
 - Engage actively in networks and regional platforms; form consortia for larger funding opportunities.
6. Diversify resources
 - Combine grants with partnerships, sponsorship, crowdfunding and income-generating services, to reduce dependence on a single donor.

3. Recommendations for Donors and Financing Partners

1. Simplify and adapt procedures for CSOs
 - Use shorter application forms and proportional documentation for small and medium grants; consider single-stage processes for micro-grants.
2. Create dedicated entry points for local CSOs
 - Establish specific funding windows or quotas for local and grassroots organisations, including Indigenous and community-based organisations, with adjusted eligibility and co-financing thresholds. Wherever possible, design these windows to enable direct funding relationships with local CSOs, rather than relying exclusively on intermediary-led models.
3. Recognise land and LDN as cross-cutting priorities
 - Make explicit the links between land, climate, biodiversity and livelihoods in funding calls, and signal openness to SLM/LDN projects.
4. Align reporting and oversight with grant size
 - Adjust reporting frequency/detail to the scale and risk of the grant; harmonise templates where feasible.
5. Improve outreach and feedback
 - Disseminate calls widely, in multiple languages where possible; commit to providing clear, structured feedback — even if brief — on unsuccessful applications, so that CSOs can learn and improve over time.
6. Invest in CSO capacity as part of LDN portfolios
 - Integrate training, mentoring and organisational development into LDN projects and programmes, not as optional extras.

7. Advance trust-based and flexible funding, and support indirect and core organisational costs
 - Increase the use of trust-based approaches, including unrestricted and multi-year funding, to support long-term partnerships and enable CSOs to adapt to changing contexts and priorities.
 - Ensure grants adequately cover indirect and administrative costs, enabling CSOs to strengthen due diligence, internal policies, governance, and operational sustainability.

4. The Role of CS4LDN and Next Steps

The CS4LDN initiative can help operationalise these recommendations by:

- Maintaining and updating a practical funding landscape map and related guidance;
- Designing and delivering capacity-building packages aligned with the barriers identified in the survey;
- Convening a CSO—donor dialogue, where survey evidence and donor feedback are jointly reviewed;
- Documenting and sharing good practices where funding mechanisms and CSO capacities are well aligned and scaling these lessons across regions.

Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality requires more than technical solutions; it requires fair and effective financial relationships between global funds, national institutions and the community-based actors who work every day to restore land. By combining a clearer understanding of the funding ecosystem with honest evidence on access barriers, this guide aims to support CSOs, donors and partners in building more sustainable and equitable relationships.

Annexes



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 — Donor Overview Table

[Link to table](#)

ANNEX 2 — Two-Page Project Brief Template (for Donor Engagement)

A concise project summary CSOs can send to donors before a full proposal is requested.

PAGE 1 — PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Project Title

2. Location

Country: _____

Region/District: _____

3. Lead Organisation

Name: _____

Website: _____

Type: Grassroots CSO / National NGO / Network / Cooperative / Other

Contact person: _____ (email / phone)

4. Problem Statement (max. 5 sentences)

Describe the land degradation challenge, who is affected, and why it requires action.

5. Project Objective (1 sentence)

What the project will achieve as a change.

6. Target Groups / Beneficiaries (list)

7. Expected Results (max. 4)

8. Key Activities (main clusters only)

PAGE 2 — OPERATIONAL DETAILS

9. Implementation Approach

How the project will be carried out (participatory, co-design, community-based, gender/youth inclusion).

10. Budget Overview

Cost Category	Amount (Currency)	Remarks
Personnel		
Field Activities		
Equipment/supplies		
M&E		
Overheads		
Total Budget		

11. Co-Financing (if any)

Type (cash / in-kind):

Source(s): _____

Estimated value: _____

12. Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
1.	

Risk	Mitigation
2.	

13. Organisational Track Record

(2—3 short bullet points) - For Example:

- Years of work on SLM/LDN/restoration
- Relevant donor projects implemented
- Experience in community-based land work

14. Why This Project Fits the Donor

State 2—3 clear links with donor priorities (LDN, NBS, climate adaptation, equity, livelihoods).

ANNEX 3 — Donor Screening Checklist

A quick decision tool to help CSOs determine whether a donor opportunity is worth pursuing.

DONOR SCREENING CHECKLIST

Donor/Funding Window:

Deadline:

1. Eligibility Fit

Question	Yes	No
Our organisation type is eligible	●	●
Our country/region is eligible	●	●
Our thematic focus matches donor priorities	●	●
Beneficiary groups match donor target groups	●	●
Grant size fits our operational capacity	●	●

2. Application Practicality

Question	Yes	No
Timeline fits our capacity to prepare	☒	☒
Required documents can be produced	☒	☒
Reporting requirements appear manageable	☒	☒

3. Financial Requirements

Question	Yes	No
Co-financing requirements are realistic	☒	☒
Pre-financing expectations are manageable	☒	☒
Procurement/audit rules fit our systems	☒	☒

4. Strategic Fit

Question	Yes	No
Co-financing requirements are realistic	☒	☒
Pre-financing expectations are manageable	☒	☒
Procurement/audit rules fit our systems	☒	☒

5. Go/No-Go Summary

Number of “Yes”: _____

Number of “No”: _____

Decision: GO / NO-GO / NEED MORE INFORMATION

ANNEX 4 — Internal Readiness Checklist for CSOs

A practical self-assessment tool for organisations preparing to approach donors.

INTERNAL READINESS CHECKLIST

1. Governance & Strategy

- We have a clear mandate and multi-year strategy.
- Organisational roles/responsibilities are defined.
- We maintain updated organisational profiles (short + full version).

2. Financial Management

- We can produce basic financial statements.
- We have procurement rules (even simple ones).
- We can track expenses by project.
- We have had an external audit in the last 1—3 years.
- We can mobilise small cash or in-kind co-financing.

3. Monitoring, Evaluation & Safeguards

- We have a basic M&E system.
- We can document outputs and outcomes.
- We have basic policies: gender, youth, community protection, environment.

4. Project Development Capacity

- Staff/partners can prepare proposals.
- We can draft a concept note in 2—4 weeks.
- We understand donor tools (logframe, budget formats, risk matrices).

5. Communications & Visibility

- Our website/social media is active.
- We have short success stories/case studies.
- We are part of at least one relevant network/platform.

Readiness Score: ____ / 15

Overall Readiness: Low / Medium / High

Donor mapping:

Donor / Mechanism	Type	Geography	Instrument & Size	CSO Access & Eligibility	Co-financing	Entry & Link
"GEF — Global Environment Facility (Small Grants Programme)"	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD 25—150k)	Direct (national CSOs via UNDP country calls)	Case-by-case	Open call — sgp.undp.org
"GEF — Global Environment Facility (Medium & Full-Sized Projects)"	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD 1M—20M+)	Via agency only (UNDP, FAO, IUCN, etc.)	Required	Agency route — thegef.org
Green Climate Fund (GCF)	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant / Loan / Blended (USD 10M+)	Accredited entities only	Required	Agency route — greenclimate.fund
Adaptation Fund (AF)	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD 0.5M—10M)	Via agency only; enhanced direct access modalities	Case-by-case	Agency route — adaptation-fund.org
Climate Investment Funds (CIF)	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant / Loan / Blended (USD 10M+)	Via agency or through national accredited entities & community windows	Required	Agency route — climateinvestmentfunds.org
IKI — International Climate Initiative	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD 500k—20M)	Consortium required (intl/ national NGOs)	Yes (~defined per call)	Open call — international-climate-initiative.com
AfDB — African Development Bank	Multilateral fund	Africa	Grant / Loan / Blended (USD 1M+)	Via agency only; Govt-led	Required	Agency route — afdb.org
Amazon Fund (BNDES)	Multilateral fund	Country-specific (Brazil/Amazon)	Grant (varies)	Direct (CSOs eligible via open calls)	No	Open call — amazonfund.gov.br
Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	Multilateral fund	Country-specific (OIC members)	Loan / Grant (varies)	Govt-led	Required	Agency route — isdb.org

Donor / Mechanism	Type	Geography	Instrument & Size	CSO Access & Eligibility	Co-financing	Entry & Link
FSD Africa	Multilateral fund	Africa	Grant / Investment (varies)	Via competitive calls	Case-by-case	Open call — fsdafrica.org
Regenerative Communities Fund (UNCCD)	Multilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Via UNCCD Secretariat / CSO panel	Case-by-case	Agency route — unccd.int
AFD — Agence Française de Développement	Bilateral fund	Global	Grant (EUR 300k–3M)	Direct (orgs in eligible countries); consortium for some windows	Required (≥20%)	Rolling — afd.fr
FFEM — French Global Environment Facility	Bilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD 500k–3M)	Thematic calls; consortia; innovation focus	Required	Open call — ffem.fr
EU — NDICI/Global Europe, INTPA, LIFE	Bilateral fund	EU / Global	Grant (EUR varies — thousands to millions)	Consortium required; strict management standards	Required (% per call)	Open call — europa.eu
ENABEL — Belgian Development Agency	Bilateral fund	Country-specific (Africa focus)	Grant (EUR varies)	Via agency or competitive calls	Case-by-case	Rolling — enabel.be
"GIZ — Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit"	Bilateral fund	Global	Grant (EUR varies)	Via agency; competitive calls; framework partnerships	Case-by-case	Rolling — giz.de
"JICA — Japan International Cooperation Agency"	Bilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Via agency; competitive calls	Case-by-case	Rolling — jica.go.jp
"NORAD — Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation"	Bilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Direct; competitive calls; framework partnerships	Case-by-case	Open call / Rolling — norad.no

Donor / Mechanism	Type	Geography	Instrument & Size	CSO Access & Eligibility	Co-financing	Entry & Link
"SIDA — Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency"	Bilateral fund	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Direct; framework partnerships with selected CSOs	Case-by-case	Rolling — sida.se
Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)	Bilateral fund	Country-specific (developing countries)	Loan / Grant (USD varies)	Govt-led	Required	Agency route — sfd.gov.sa
Australia — DFAT / Australian Aid	Bilateral fund	Country-specific (Indo-Pacific/ Africa)	Grant (AUD varies)	Via agency or competitive calls	Case-by-case	Open call — dfat.gov.au
Bezos Earth Fund	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD multi-million, strategic)	Direct (NGOs, research institutions, multi-stakeholder)	No	Direct approach — bezosearthfund.org
Purpose Earth Grant	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 5–25k)	Direct (local/youth-led grassroots CSOs)	No	Open call — purposeearth.org
WILDLABS — Boring Fund	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 5–50k)	Direct (CSOs, research labs, tech innovators)	No	Open call — wildlabs.net
Ford Foundation	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 100k–500k+)	Direct; invitation or concept note	No	Direct approach — fordfoundation.org
Rockefeller Foundation	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Via networks; coalition membership (low admin)	No	Direct approach — rockefellerfoundation.org

Donor / Mechanism	Type	Geography	Instrument & Size	CSO Access & Eligibility	Co-financing	Entry & Link
"MacArthur Foundation (John D. and Catherine T.)"	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 100k—5M)	Consortium required; prefers large consortia	No	Direct approach — macfound.org
Oak Foundation	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Direct; via networks/coalitions	No	Direct approach — oakfnd.org
Fondation de France	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Country-specific (France / Francophone)	Grant (EUR 50k—500k)	Direct; innovation & replication focus	No	Open call — fondationdefrance.org
"Cultural Survival / Keepers of the Earth Fund (KOE)"	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD small, community-scale)	Direct (Indigenous communities / local CSOs)	No	Open call — culturalsurvival.org
Global Greengrants Fund	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 500—10k)	Direct (grassroots/local CSOs)	No	Direct approach — greengrants.org
Rainforest Foundation	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global (tropical forests)	Grant (USD varies)	Direct (Indigenous peoples / local communities)	No	Direct approach — rainforestfoundation.org
"Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme"	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 100k—1M+)	Open call; consortia preferred	No	Open call — endangeredlandscapes.org
DOB Ecology	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Direct; via networks/coalitions	No	Direct approach — dobecology.nl
Arcadia Fund	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD varies)	Direct; invitation-based	No	Direct approach — arcadiafund.org.uk

Donor / Mechanism	Type	Geography	Instrument & Size	CSO Access & Eligibility	Co-financing	Entry & Link
"Klarna AI for Climate Program (Klarna Foundation)"	Philanthropic and Corporate funds	Global	Grant (USD 10–100k)	Direct (social enterprises/ NGOs using AI/tech for climate)	No	Open call — klarnafoundation.org
LDN Fund (Mirova / UNCCD)	Blended finance	Global	Investment (USD 1M–50M+)	Via agency only (technical/ implementing partners; NOT direct investees)	Required	Direct approach — mirova.com unccd.int/our-work/impact-investment-fund
"Climate Asset Management / Global EverGreening Alliance (GEA)"	Blended finance	Global	Investment (USD multi-million)	Via alliances with international consortia	Required	Direct approach — climateassetmanagement.com
Legacy Landscapes Fund (LLF)	Blended finance	Global (critical landscapes)	Grant (USD 1M+/ year, multi-year)	Via partnerships with protected areas/NGOs; co-management	No	Direct approach — legacylandscapes.org
Mirova Sustainable Land Fund	Blended finance	Global	Investment (USD multi-million)	Accredited entities only (UNEP/STAR-aligned)	Required	Agency route — mirova.com
"RISCO — Restoration Insurance Service Company"	Blended finance	Country-specific (Latin America pilot)	Blended finance (pilot stage)	Via alliances	Required	Direct approach — restoration-insurance.com
Open Forest Protocol (OFP)	Blended finance	Global	Blockchain-based MRV (varies)	Direct (CSOs can upload/ monitor verified metrics)	No	Direct approach — openforestprotocol.org
Impact Tokens for Nature	Blended finance	Global (pilot)	Digital credits / biodiversity outcomes (varies)	Investment-ready only	Required	Direct approach — impacttokens.org
"Outcome-Based Payment Mechanisms (RBF)"	Blended finance	Global	Results-based payments (scalable to national)	Direct (implement and report verifiable outcomes)	No	Agency route — oecd.org/dac

Donor / Mechanism	Type	Geography	Instrument & Size	CSO Access & Eligibility	Co-financing	Entry & Link
"AFR100 — African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative"	Regional platform	Africa	Grant / Technical assistance (USD 50k—500k)	Via regional partners/ ministries	Case-by-case	Agency route — afr100.org
TerrAfrica Partnership	Regional platform	Africa (Sub-Saharan)	Grant / Technical assistance (varies)	Coordination via NEPAD / AUDA	Case-by-case	Agency route — nepad.org
"REDAA — Restoration of Ecosystems in Drylands and Arid Areas"	Regional platform	Africa / Global	Grant (USD 50k—500k)	Direct (open calls for CSOs and IPLCs)	No	Open call — redaa.org
Great Green Wall (GGW) Accelerator	Regional platform	Sahel / Africa	Grant / Technical assistance (varies)	Via national/regional partners; Govt-led	Case-by-case	Agency route — greatgreenwall.org
"COMIFAC — Commission of Central African Forests"	Regional platform	Africa (Central)	Grant / Technical assistance (varies)	Via government/regional bodies	Case-by-case	Agency route — comifac.org
African Natural Capital Alliance (ANCA)	Regional platform	Africa	Technical assistance / Grant (varies)	Via network membership	Case-by-case	Direct approach — africannaturalcapital.org
Landscape Partnership Asia	Regional platform	Country-specific (Asia)	Grant / Technical assistance (varies)	Via partnerships with govts/ research institutes	Case-by-case	Agency route — landscapepartnershipasia.org



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