



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



G20 GLOBAL
LAND INITIATIVE

G20 Global Land Initiative Annual Report 2025



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ACRONYMS

ASSEK	Association of Startup and SMEs Enablers of Kenya
B4L	Business for Land
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAMRE	Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC23	23rd session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
COP17	17th Session of the Conference of the Parties
COP30	30th Session of the Conference of the Parties
DLDD	Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought
ECSWG	G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group
ERBA	Ecological Restoration Business Association
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
Faith4Land	Faith for Land
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FERM	Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring
FFD4	Fourth Financing for Development Conference
FOLU	Food and Land Use Coalition
G-CAP	Global Changemaker Academy for Parliamentarians
G20	Group of 20 Member States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GeoGLI	G20 GLI Geospatial Data Platform for Land Restoration
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GLI	Global Land Initiative
ICAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture

ICO	Initiative Coordination Office
IFIW2025	Istanbul Forest Innovation Week 2025
ITC	International Trade Center
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KCIC	Kenya Climate Innovation Center
LaRSSA	Land Rehabilitation Society of Southern Africa
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LSE	London School of Economics
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
NCVC	National Centre for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification
NEON	Nordeste ON
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OIOS	United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services
RAIZ	Resilient Agriculture Investment for net-Zero land degradation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SER	Society for Ecological Restoration
SESRIC	Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
SNV	<i>Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers</i>
UNDER	United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration
UNEA-7	Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
UNEP-GRID	United Nations Environment Programme - Global Resource Information Database
UNU-FLORES	United Nations University Institute for Integrated Management and Material Fluxes and of Resources
USD	United States Dollars
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature
YECO	Youth Ecopreneur Programme



Yasmine Fouad
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
and UNCCD Executive Secretary

FOREWORD

Restoring land is foundational to peace, to prosperity and to resilience.

Over the past five years, we have witnessed the devastating impacts of floods, wildfires, heatwaves and droughts on our cities, our farmlands and our natural ecosystems. No country is immune. In a world of accelerating climate extremes, there are no winners – only mounting human, economic and ecological costs borne first by the most vulnerable.

Yet we have also seen what is possible when political will meets collective action. In quick succession, the world in 2020 agreed on three landmark commitments: the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; the G20 Global Land Initiative, with its pledge to cut degraded land by half by 2040; and the Kunming–Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, committing to restore 30 per cent of degraded terrestrial ecosystems by 2030. Together, they send a clear message: land is finally being recognised for what it truly is – the foundation of our future.

Land is more than soil. It is dignity. It is memory. It is security. It is opportunity. Healthy land sustains our food and water, anchors our cultures and supports our livelihoods. Where land thrives, people thrive. And where people thrive, peace grows.

The G20 Global Land Initiative is helping to turn this global ambition into real-world action on the ground. In 2025, it expanded access to country-level land data and decision-making tools, showcased practical solutions from every region, supported youth and civil society innovators, engaged businesses in the restoration economy and strengthened dialogue among policymakers and parliamentarians. These are not abstract achievements – they are the building blocks of delivery.

The next five years are decisive. Climate shocks will arrive faster and hit harder. To meet this moment, three shifts are essential: stronger coherence across climate, biodiversity and land agendas; deeper private-sector engagement to unlock investment, innovation and livelihoods; and bold national leadership that mobilises communities, local authorities and businesses to protect healthy land and restore what has been lost.

This year's global conferences under the three Rio Conventions offer a rare opportunity to align ambition with action – and move from promise to practice. Because the future will not be shaped by the promises we make, but by the choices we make and actions we take. And when we choose to restore land, we choose resilience, dignity and peace.

Dr Yasmine Fouad

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)



INTRODUCTION

This report presents the 2025 activities and achievements of the Initiative Coordination Office (ICO) of the Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats (Global Land Initiative) established in 2020 by the leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) Member States under the Saudi Arabia Presidency.

G20 GLI's ambition is the reduction of degraded land by 50 per cent by 2040. Its three objectives are:

1. Conserving land and halting habitat loss, fragmentation and land degradation, including, but not limited to forests, rangelands, croplands, mangroves, peatlands and wetlands
2. Promoting integrated, sustainable and resilient land and landscape management and
3. Restoring degraded land.

The Initiative's three mandated activities are: engagement of the private sector and civil society; sharing knowledge and building capacity;

showcasing land conservation, sustainable management and restoration commitments through a dedicated website. These activities are presented under the Initiative's four pillars of action.

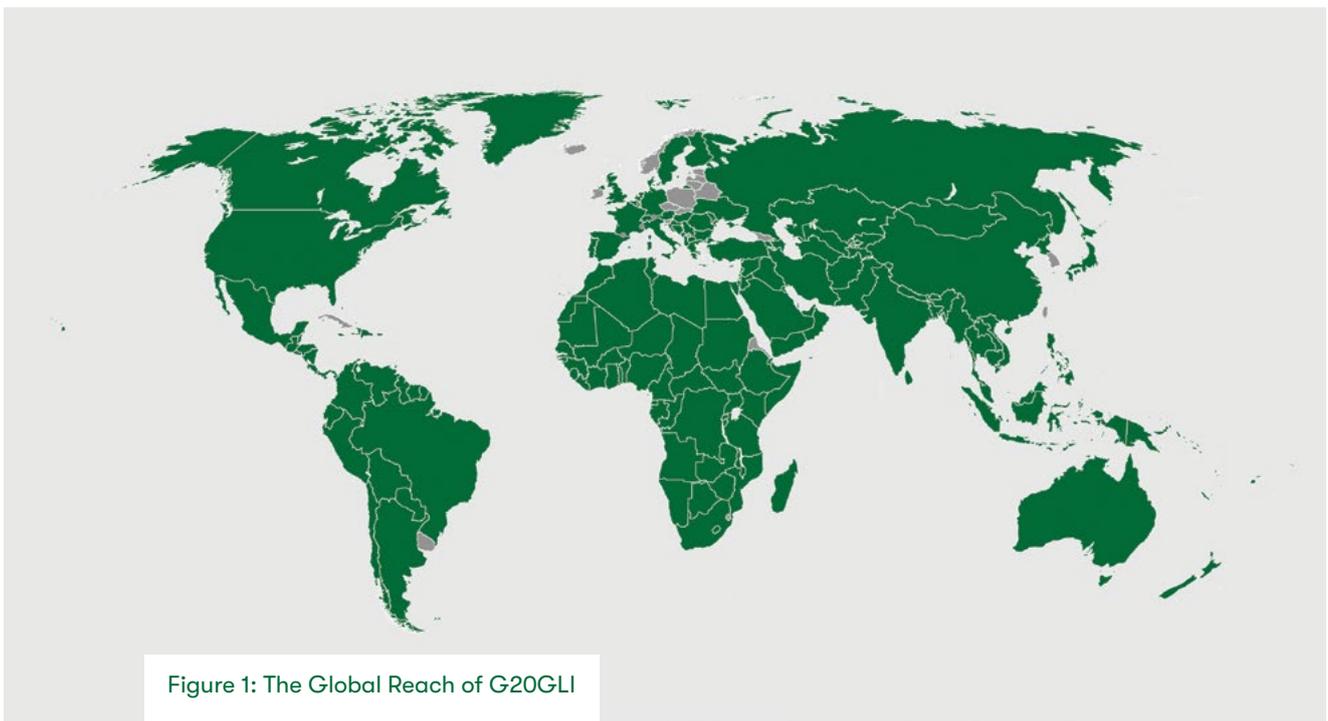
A top achievement of the ICO in 2025 is its global reach. ICO reached 152 countries through its substantive activities (Figure 1) and, at least, 155 countries through its partners. This global visibility is vital, and a first step in both socializing the Initiative, its ambition, mandate and work, enabling countries, businesses and stakeholders to participate in, benefit from or partner with the Initiative.

152

Countries reached directly by G20 GLI

155

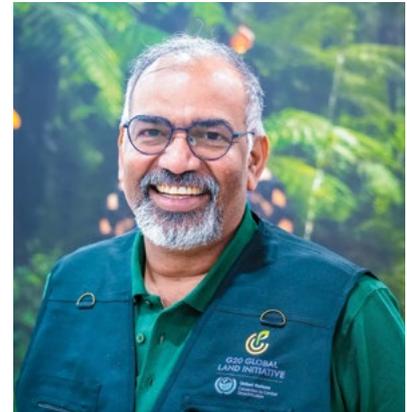
Countries reached through partners



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2025 was a year of intensive activity and quiet reflection for the Initiative Coordination Office (ICO) of the G20 Global Land Initiative.

It marked the third year of ICO operations, with activities across all pillars accelerating significantly. At the same time, 2025 marked five years since the leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) established the Initiative. The ICO used this opportunity to reflect on the changing landscape of land restoration since the Initiative's inception in 2020.



Dr Muralee Thummarukudy
Director, G20 Global Land Initiative
Coordination Office

Culture as a vehicle to promote awareness on land

In December 2024, a major exhibition titled, *Save Land United for Land*, opened at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Germany. The exhibition, the first of its kind on degradation and restoration worldwide, covered over 6,000 square feet of exhibition space and explored land from both a cultural and scientific point of view. By the time it closed in June 2025, close to 40,000 people had visited in person, close to 1 million people reached online and nearly 28 million reached through mainstream and other media.

The work linking art and land continued with our participation in the innovative "Reforest Festival" in South Africa, where communities, particularly young people, gathered to enjoy a mix of food, music, art, learning and land restoration activities. The ICO will support the promotion of the concept, developed by Greenpop, a non-governmental organization (NGO) from South Africa, to scale it globally in the coming years.



Visitors enjoy the interactive *Save Land United for Land* exhibition in Bonn

©S. L. Heuser, 2024.
Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn

40K

In-person visitors to
UNCCD-G20 GLI *Save Land United for Land* exhibition

Promoting Community Action for Land Restoration

To advance community-led land restoration at scale, the ICO combined targeted financial support with global recognition to both enable on-the-ground action and celebrate leadership across the sector. The first cohort of 39 NGOs received grants ranging from US\$5,000 to US\$15,000 to implement land restoration activities. Projects commenced in 2025 and will continue through 2026, strengthening resilience by turning small, community-led actions into lasting environmental and social benefits. Also, working with *Restor*, which hosts one of the largest databases of land restoration non-state actors, we established an award to recognize the significant contributions of NGOs and the private sector to land restoration.

Our Faith4Land campaign highlighted the role of faith communities in land restoration through a masterclass offering practical tools and case studies, building on a stocktake conducted by over 100 faith-led organisations and a Multifaith Rio Conventions Call to Action that mobilised coordinated faith engagement across climate, biodiversity and land agendas.



Harnessing Youth Aspirations for Land Restoration

Our work with the young ecopreneurs setting up businesses that contribute to land restoration reached significant scale and momentum in 2025. The second cohort of the Youth Ecopreneur Programme (YECO) welcomed 225 ecopreneurs to the bootcamp. By the end of the year, the top 25 started the accelerator phase and received a significant boost in investments, building on the training and recognition they received from the ICO and the International

Trade Center (ITC), another UN agency based in Geneva. Alongside YECO, the G20 GLI deepened and diversified its ecopreneurship portfolio by expanding targeted actions in Brazil and Kenya. These efforts reached an additional 700 ecopreneurs and strengthened local ecosystems in these two strategically important countries.



Catharina Vale (left) and Paula Padrino Vilela (right), UNCCD/G20 GLI, visiting the Krenak indigenous territory agroforestry system (SAF)

700

**Ecopreneurs reached in
Brazil and Kenya**

Information as an Enabler for Sustainable Land Management

In July 2025, ICO launched GeoGLI, a major geospatial platform that brings together data related to land management from dozens of trusted international sources. Parties to the UNCCD can now generate comprehensive country profile information on land management with a single click, while experts can conduct significant deep-divide analyses of land degradation matters using the platform.



GeoGLI data platform launched in July

Legislating for Land Restoration



Dr Muralee Thummarukudy speaking at the 2025 G-CAP in Bonn

August remains an important milestone in the ICO calendar, marking the convening of members of parliament from around the world for the Global Changemaker Academy for Parliamentarians. This collaborative work with the United Nations System Staff College successfully completed the third cohort, achieving the highest satisfaction ratings yet. The academy's alumni now exceed 80 parliamentarians from nearly 50 countries. Some of the alumni have moved to higher positions of authority. The impact of the training will become visible in the years to come.

Regional and Global Partnerships

Our engagement with organizations such as the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) is starting to mature. In 2025, the Executive Secretary attended the CAMRE meeting, where decisions requesting members to consider joining the Initiative as Associate Members were adopted.



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G20 Leadership Engagement

As South Africa held the G20 Presidency in 2025, the ICO was active throughout the G20 process. ICO led the preparation of a technical paper on large-scale land restoration and held a side event during the second G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG) meeting. The *Leaders' Declaration*, reiterates the commitment of the G20 members to the ambition of a 50 per cent reduction of degraded land by 2040.



Scaling Up Training Efforts

600

Training institutes reached worldwide

Our training efforts reached a new scale in 2025, with the university training curriculum reaching over 1,000 faculty members from more than 600 training institutes around the world. A new training program for universities, focused on teaching urban land restoration, was launched in 2025 and has already reached over 100 universities. Our overall target of deploying the university courses to 1,000 training institutions by 2030 is now likely to be met by 2026.

Internal Review

In 2025, the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a detailed audit of the functioning of the ICO. It covered all aspects of our work, including strategy, G20 member involvement, partnerships, contracting, information management and capacity building. The final audit report will be available in 2026 and will inform the revision of our work plan and implementation strategy.

Riyadh + 5: Steering Committee and Enhanced Engagement from the G20 Members

In 2025, marking five years since its launch in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Initiative undertook a “Riyadh + 5 Reflection” to assess progress since

inception and to inform its strategic direction for the next phase. During this period, the Initiative's Steering Committee was active, and held three meetings. In the context of the Riyadh + 5 Reflection, the ICO also completed an analysis of new initiatives launched by G20 Members post-2020. It noted and commended the range of new land restoration initiatives that had taken place in almost all countries. At the same time, the reflection was complemented by bilateral consultations with Steering Committee members, which encouraged stronger G20 ownership, deeper strategic alignment with the UNCCD, and sustained visibility within G20 processes, while reaffirming the Initiative's role as the G20 vehicle on land issues.



POLICY



In 2025, ICO strengthened its engagement on land degradation, drought and restoration on the regional level, more specifically with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), comprising 57 member states, and with CAMRE, representing the Arab League’s 22 member countries.

This engagement represents a strategic expansion of the Initiative’s intergovernmental footprint and visibility and strengthens regional political ownership. It also lays the foundation for longer-term policy uptake, and, where relevant, national legislative advancement, on land restoration across the member States of the League of Arab States and the OIC, a significant step towards reaching the 2040 target of setting up national legislation to support land restoration. On the invitation of the G20 South African Presidency, ICO also played a substantive role in the preparations for the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG).



Regional engagement deepened to advance policy uptake and legislative pathways on land restoration

Advancing Land Priorities under the 2025 G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG)



100

million hectares of land is degraded every year. ECSWG policy dialogue center on building resilience through effective land and water management

The G20 South African Presidency in 2025 prioritized Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD), including water sustainability in the work of the ECSWG. ECSWG exchanges dealt with the growing impacts of land degradation, drought and unsustainable water management on ecosystems, food security, livelihoods and development resilience, among other policy issues.

ICO played a substantive role in supporting the Presidency in the preparations for and in advancing sustained technical and political dialogue in the land-related priorities on land restoration and resilience.

On the technical level, GLI supported the South African Presidency in preparing Technical Paper 8, titled, *Best Practice and Lessons Learned from Large-Scale Restoration Projects*, which was published as Chapter 8 in the official ECSWG Technical Papers Compendium. The paper synthesizes global evidence of governance, financing, community engagement, monitoring and integrated landscape approaches. ICO also contributed to the Presidency’s outreach efforts by co-organizing a technical side event and hosting a booth during the second ECSWG meeting.

ECSWG discussions are reflected in the Chair's Summary, which highlights:

- ✔ the annual degradation of more than 100 million hectares of productive land globally
- ✔ the importance of integrated land–water approaches
- ✔ the need to strengthen drought resilience through early warning systems
- ✔ enhancing scientific cooperation and
- ✔ sustainable land and water management practices.

The Summary also refers to the implementation of the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018–2030 and

voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality targets, as well as cooperation on drought risk management and knowledge exchange.

Importantly, the Chair's Summary references the G20 Global Land Initiative, noting Members' recognition of its objective to prevent, halt and reverse land degradation and to reduce degraded land globally by 50 per cent by 2040. It also reflects the Members' perspectives on the need for sustained political leadership and collective action as well as observations of the positive outcomes from GLI activities to date. The inclusion of GLI in the Chair's Summary confirms the Initiative's continued visibility and positioning as the main vehicle for land-related cooperation for the G20.



Strengthening Regional Cooperation with the Arab Region

ICO deepened its structured engagement with CAMRE. Responding directly to CAMRE's request, the engagement was informed by consultations with the Initiative's Steering Committee and aligned with the G20 GLI's Associate Membership framework that aims to facilitate broader participation by non-members in the work of the Initiative.

The Initiative Coordination Office (ICO) provided targeted technical support to CAMRE throughout the year, including the preparation of background notes on the outcomes of UNCCD COP16 and on the GLI Associate Membership framework. These inputs were used to inform ministerial deliberations during CAMRE's 36th Session. The ICO also participated virtually in the session to brief Member States directly on the framework and its implications for structured cooperation between the Arab region and the G20 process.

“

CAMRE endorsed structured cooperation with the G20 Global Land Initiative on land restoration and drought resilience

The CAMRE session resulted in the adoption of several substantive decisions under the UNCCD agenda item, reinforcing regional commitment to land and drought issues. These included recognition of key COP16 outcomes such as the Global Drought Resilience Partnership and Business for Land (B4L), support for the *Tafa'ul* process initiated by Saudi Arabia, encouragement for Arab States to join the Global Drought Resilience Partnership, and alignment with Mongolia's UNCCD 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties Presidency focus on rangelands. CAMRE also requested stronger articulation of linkages between sustainable land management and food security, and emphasized the importance of strengthening land–water partnerships across the region.

Of particular significance, CAMRE adopted a formal decision encouraging enhanced cooperation between Arab States, the League of Arab States and the G20 Global Land Initiative. This includes invitations for the League of Arab States to join GLI as an Associate Member, encouragement for individual Arab States to join, and a mandate for the Initiative to facilitate knowledge and technology exchange through joint workshops and partnership-building. These outcomes provide a clear political mandate and structured foundation for scaled regional engagement in 2026.

Engagement with Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The ICO's intergovernmental outreach to strengthen cooperation between G20 members and various regional groupings included the first structured engagement with members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Under Türkiye's Chairmanship of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, the Initiative co-organized a dedicated webinar for OIC Member States in December 2025, in partnership with the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and Türkiye's Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. The session introduced the Initiative's Associate Membership framework, providing practical entry points for engagement and collaboration with OIC countries.

The webinar also showcased Türkiye's national experience with Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), shared good practices and highlighted concrete opportunities for OIC Member States to engage with GLI activities. Importantly, the session marked the launch of a broader series of land-focused activities for OIC countries under Türkiye's Chairmanship, aimed at facilitating technical exchange, raising awareness of land degradation challenges and strengthening cooperation on restoration and drought resilience.

OIC engagement with the Initiative broadened the countries' political awareness of land degradation, restoration and drought resilience across a large intergovernmental constituency. By introducing pathways for cooperation under the newly established Associate Membership framework, the Initiative also strengthened the enabling environment for future national commitments, policy alignment and legislative action among both G20 and non-G20 countries.



Engagement advanced policy cooperation on land restoration and drought resilience

A large audience is seen from behind, looking towards a stage. On the stage, the word "START" is written in large, white, 3D block letters. The stage is lit with blue spotlights from above and purple light strips on the sides. In the background, there are purple light patterns resembling sound waves or data lines. The overall atmosphere is high-tech and professional.

START

SHOWCASE AND SHARE



G20 mandated ICO to establish a website to showcase best practice and disseminate publicly available data and information on land degradation, conservation and restoration. This section highlights the progress made in 2025 to share knowledge and best practice at country level and to build the Geospatial Data Platform for Land Restoration (GeoGLI), a new data-rich platform to support decisions on land degradation and restoration.

The report showcases its relevance in supporting decision-making for other global environmental challenges, such as climate change, and its use innovatively by young people to tease out and find solutions to complex and challenging land restoration issues.



A smart data platform turning geospatial data into clear insights to fight land degradation and support global restoration

Launch of Geospatial Applications for Land Restoration (GeoGLI)

The launch of the GeoGLI data platform in July 2025 marks a turning point in how land degradation and restoration data are accessed, interpreted and used for decision-making. Instead of introducing another standalone database, the G20 Global Land Initiative – working in partnership with United Nations Environment Programme - Global Resource Information Database (UNEP-GRID) Geneva – unveiled a digital platform designed to change how evidence informs restoration action at national and global scales.

163

Standardized global geospatial data layers integrated

GeoGLI responds to a long-standing challenge faced by governments, researchers and practitioners. Whereas critical land data exists, it is often fragmented, unevenly updated and difficult to translate into policy-ready insights. The platform brings together 163 standardized global geospatial layers that are continuously auto-updated from their source databases and organized into an integrated analytical environment. With a single click, users can generate comprehensive country profiles that synthesize threats, trends and restoration efforts. This reduces the analytical burden while increasing confidence in data relevance and timeliness.

The platform's structure reflects the complexity of land systems. Data are organized across four interconnected dimensions:

- ✓ *Threats monitoring*, including drought risk, desertification trends and near-real-time wildfire data;
- ✓ *Biophysical layers* capturing land cover, degradation status, vegetation dynamics and restoration progress;

- ✓ *Climate variables* tracking shifts in temperature and precipitation; and
- ✓ *Socioeconomic indicators* linking population, livelihoods and economic activity to land outcomes.

Together, these layers allow users to move beyond isolated indicators and understand land degradation as a coupled environmental and human challenge.



GeoGLI's distinct contribution lies in its collaborative design philosophy. As mandated by G20 Leaders, the platform builds on existing authoritative datasets rather than competing with them, which strengthens data ecosystems while encouraging higher standards of accuracy and transparency. Covering 197 UNCCD member countries, it provides a shared reference point for dialogue, planning and investment.

As a digital public good aligned with the G20 GLI ambition to reduce degraded land by 50 per cent by 2040, the platform strengthens the evidence base that informs land restoration policies, laws and programmes and is a critical building block to enable countries to establish legislation and restoration targets while establishing a foundation for future case studies, national collaboration and co-creation.

Best Practice: Geospatial Applications for Land Restoration Resilient Agriculture Investment for net-Zero land degradation (RAIZ) Mapping Tool



Land degradation continues to undermine food security, livelihoods and ecosystem resilience, with cropland and pastureland among the most affected systems. In response, the Resilient Agriculture Investment for net-Zero land degradation (RAIZ) Mapping Tool represents a strategic shift toward data-driven restoration planning, placing geospatial intelligence at the center of decision-making for agriculture and land recovery.

Developed by G20 GLI, with technical contributions from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU), Alliance of Bioversity International, International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the RAIZ Mapping Tool offers a global perspective on where restoration can deliver the greatest combined economic, environmental and social returns. Rather than treating land degradation as a diffuse challenge, the tool consolidates available datasets to reveal spatial patterns and concentrations of degraded agricultural land.



The RAIZ Mapping Tool places geospatial intelligence at the center of decision-making for agriculture and land recovery

In the first phase, the platform mapped degraded cropland globally and used grassland and shrubland as proxies for degraded pastureland, producing a global heatmap that highlights priority hotspots. This exploratory analysis, developed through a consultative process with technical partners, already supports more informed dialogue among governments, investors, NGOs and project developers seeking to align restoration ambition with practical implementation.

The RAIZ Mapping Tool is a core analytical pillar of the RAIZ Accelerator launched in the lead-up to COP30 in Belém, Brazil. Aligned with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), RAIZ supports the global objective of restoring 250 million hectares of farmland by 2030, while laying foundations for long-term food-system transformation.

Following COP30, development will focus on integrating socioeconomic and biophysical indicators, enabling the ranking of restoration priorities and strengthening the investment case for action.

RAIZ aims to leverage various regional efforts to work directly with countries and national institutions to co-create Maps of Degraded Agricultural Land by combining local data, national commitments and global methodologies. This forward-looking evolution will support clearer policy choices, more targeted programmes, and smarter investment flows—reinforcing progress toward the 2040 goal of enabling countries to set up legislation to support land restoration.

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RAIZ supports the global objective of restoring

250

million hectares of farmland by 2030

Geospatial Applications for Land Restoration Hackathon



©UNCCD/G20 GLI/Claire Cantor

Participants to the START Hack 2025, in St Gallen, Switzerland.

The START Hack, held in March 2025 in St. Gallen, Switzerland, positioned land restoration at the center of one of Europe’s largest student-led Hackathons, demonstrating how advanced geospatial technologies and data science can be mobilized to address real-world environmental challenges. GLI introduced land restoration as a complex, human-centered systems challenge — one that demands interdisciplinary and technologically sophisticated responses.

80

**Hackers in 29 teams
Data richness and
relevance to local
community made G20 GLI
challenge the most popular**

The GLI case, “*Innovating for Sustainable Land Management and Restoration in the Sahel*,” focused on a region facing acute pressure from climate change, land degradation, population growth and resource-related conflict. The challenge was presented to the over 600 hackers working with the nine hackathon partner organizations. The GLI case emerged as the most popular, attracting 29 teams, and approximately 80 participants. Interest was driven by both the technical richness of the datasets and the case’s direct relevance to communities navigating livelihood insecurity, drought and environmental stress.

Participants used a wide range of global datasets, such as long-term land-cover records, rainfall estimates, population data and infrastructure layers, using Global Information Systems platforms and multiple programming environments. The solutions developed visualized 20-year trends in land and forest cover change, identified degradation and recovery patterns and translated analytical findings into country-level insights and restoration-relevant recommendations. Outputs ranged from interactive dashboards to spatial narratives that support clearer interpretation of environmental change.

The hackathon illustrated the potential of digital innovation to strengthen analytical capacity and inform decision-making in land restoration contexts. By connecting emerging technologists with applied restoration challenges, the initiative expanded the pipeline of practical case studies and tools that can inform policies, programmes and planning processes to support progress in national legislation and setting of restoration targets.

Istanbul Forest Innovation Week 2025



Georgina Bwango,
UNCCD, at IFIW2025

©Türkiye General Directorate of Forestry

“

**A direct response to Türkiye’s
request for engagement and
an opportunity to deepen
collaboration**

Participating in Istanbul Forest Innovation Week 2025 (IFIW2025) was a strategic opportunity for ICO to advance its communication and partnership objectives while reinforcing its role as a convener of knowledge on land and ecosystem restoration. Engagement went beyond maintaining institutional

visibility through an exhibition booth. It was a direct response to Türkiye’s request for engagement and an opportunity to deepen collaboration with a partner that holds influence across multiple geopolitical and policy arenas.

Türkiye's dual role within the G20 and the OIC positioned IFIW2025 as a gateway to a broader international audience, particularly from regions facing acute land degradation and fire-related risks. The Initiative's presence lays the groundwork for upcoming joint activities under Türkiye's OIC Presidency, including capacity-building programmes and regional policy dialogues. It also strengthens trust and reinforces GLI's credibility as a long-term partner.

The conference agenda aligned closely with G20 GLI and G20 country priorities: from integrated fire management, forest ecosystem resilience,

innovative technologies and community-based approaches to fire risk awareness. At the event, the Initiative shared best practices, exchanged operational insights and connected with restoration actors working at the intersection of land degradation, climate risk and ecosystem recovery. GLI expanded its practitioner reach and contributed to the growing global network working toward scalable restoration solutions.

By positioning land restoration and fire resilience within broader policy and cooperation discussions, the Initiative supported the translation of technical knowledge into policy-relevant dialogue.



“ Data, innovation and partnerships are reshaping the future of land restoration. ”

©Elements Envato



Planting locally sourced seedlings can accelerate habitat restoration

©Foundation Amaran Pakcha

EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY



Through grants for NGOs and partnerships with NGOs, youth and faith actors, ICO increased the visibility and impact of G20 GLI in land restoration

In line with the G20 leaders' mandate to encourage engagement of civil society and mobilize the public in support of land restoration, ICO activities in 2025 focused on strengthening locally-led action and engagement with youth, NGOs and faith actors. The grant programme and engagement with faith actors and practitioner networks expanded community and NGO participation in the UNCCD processes, increased visibility of G20 GLI and reinforced the link between implementation on the ground and the broader learning and policy processes.



Sustainably managed lands yield healthy and abundant food

Restoration Returns Grants



Healthy soils increase produce and improve livelihoods

The Grants programme is a key implementation pillar of the G20 GLI, designed to advance land restoration by supporting locally led solutions and amplifying the voices of frontline communities to ensure restoration policies and frameworks are informed by ground realities. The significant amount of G20 GLI website traffic and UNCCD accreditations resulting from the “Restoration Returns” programme in 2024 and 2025 underscores the value of the programme in drawing civil society interest in the Initiative’s implementation activities and of G20 having a direct impact on improving the conditions of the affected populations.

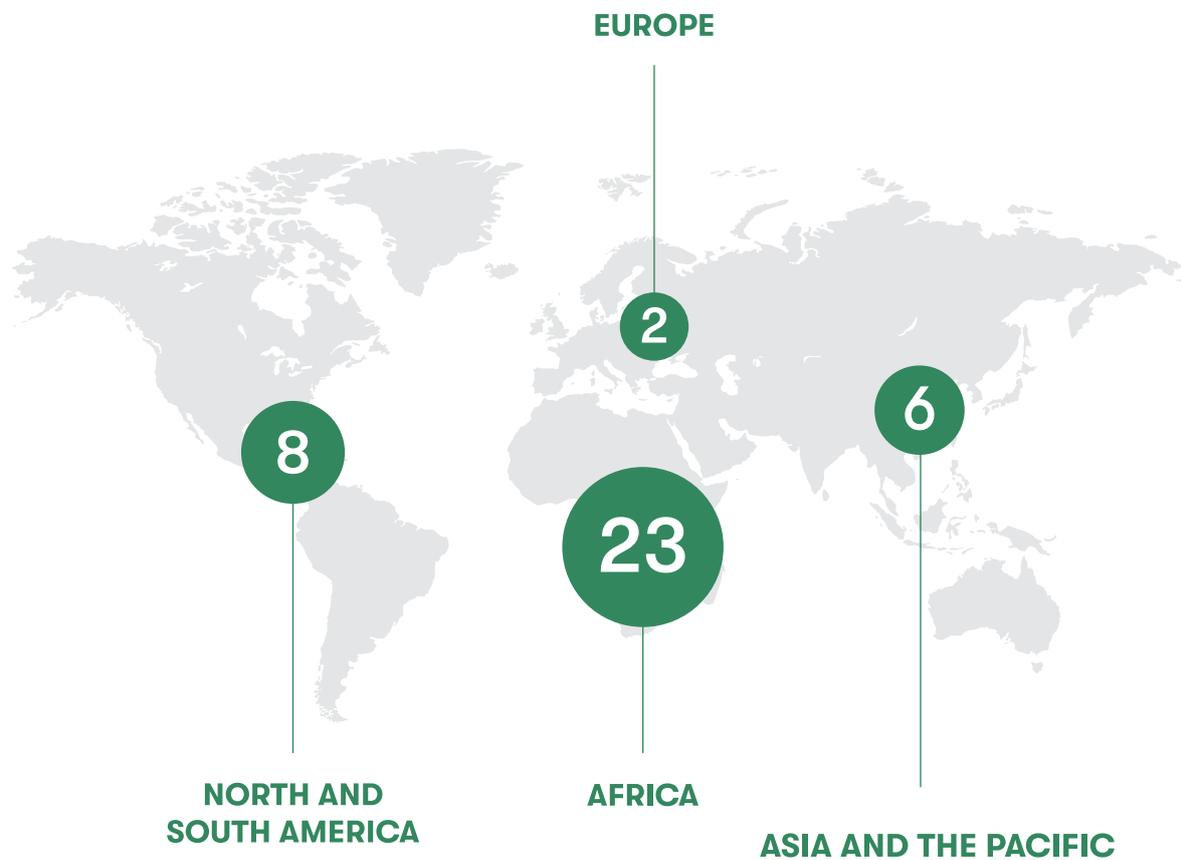
The first funding round in 2024 resulted in the selection of 39 organizations to receive grants of USD5,000, 10,000 or 15,000. The ICO focused on the disbursement of the grants in 2025, to enable these projects to apply a range of proven approaches, including reforestation and afforestation, agroforestry, sustainable agriculture, water management and soil restoration. The projects undertaken by the NGOs also aimed to deliver benefits for women, youth, elders, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities. The majority of selected projects were from Africa (64 per cent), followed by Asia and the Pacific (21 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (15 per cent). Grant recipients were formally recognized in July 2025 during a global webinar, fostering peer exchange and visibility. Implementation of the grant projects commenced in 2025 and will continue through 2026.

In 2025, the “Restoration Returns” small grants programme expanded substantially, reflecting the strong global interest in inclusive restoration finance (see Annex 1). Building on the momentum of the first round, the call for applications for the second funding round was launched in July 2025 and closed in September, receiving over 800 applications from 103 countries. The evaluation of grant applications continued through late 2025. The formal selection of NGOs that will receive grants is expected to take place in 2026.

The Restoration Returns Grants are designed to strengthen a global network of one million practitioners. It positions and elevates locally-led solutions to support national legislation and to create pathways mobilise US\$1 trillion in restoration finance by 2040.



The Restoration Returns Grants Programme strengthens locally-led land restoration while amplifying frontline community voices to shape global policy and finance



39 Total Number of selected projects

22 Number of countries covered by selected applications

Figure 2: Distribution of Restoration Returns Grants funded in 2024

Engaging Faith Communities for Restoration

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Faith leaders, who collectively steward

8%

of habitable land and nearly half of the world’s educational institutions, are now active contributors to restoration policies and programmes

The Faith4Land campaign strengthened civil society engagement by mobilizing faith actors as partners in global land restoration and environmental governance. In 2025, the ICO continued to coordinate faith groups through an informal Working Group comprising representatives from diverse faith traditions and organizations. The Working Group provided strategic guidance and technical input for the planning and implementation of a High-Level Faith Leaders Meeting and Faith4LandMasterclass, delivered through online formats. Members supported the design of the agenda, identification of speakers, a review of the stocktake findings and shaped the advocacy messages.

In November, ICO convened an online High-Level Faith Leaders Meeting on Land Restoration, to mark the official launch of the “Engaging Faith Groups on Land Restoration” Stocktake Report and bring together senior religious leaders, civil society organizations and global policy actors to strengthen the role of faith communities in land restoration governance.

The 90-minute session highlighted the unique reach and responsibility of faith communities, who collectively steward an estimated eight (8) per cent of global habitable land and operate nearly half of the world’s educational institutions. Discussions focused on closing the gap between faith-based commitments to care for land and the practical capacity needed to implement restoration at scale. The stocktake findings provided a shared evidence base to support stronger alignment between faith action, national restoration policies and international frameworks.

Faith leaders from diverse traditions shared grounded experiences linking spiritual values with restoration practice. The dialogue was complemented by perspectives from global organizations working at the intersection of faith, environment and policy, helping connect faith-based action with pathways toward UNCCD COP17 and ongoing ICO processes.

The session strengthened networks among faith leaders and positioned them as active contributors to policies, laws and programmes related to land restoration.



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ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR



A representative of UNCCD G20 GLI visits Chemlex, a Kenyan Startup that is ridding Kenya's rivers of plastic waste and providing biodegradable packaging.



The G20 mandates ICO to engage the private sector and encourage investment in land restoration and sustainable land management. During 2025, ICO engaged with both private and public sector actors on the huge potential of the restoration economy to, at once, create jobs, restore land and mobilize the US\$1 trillion needed for restoration. ICO ramped up its efforts to support 10,000 start-ups in the land restoration sector to realize this vision and provided technical guidance on the restoration of degraded artisanal mines.

Restoration Industry Technical Paper and Side Event

The ICO launched a technical paper titled, *Global Land Restoration Economy: State of Play and Recommendations for Scale-Up*, to support countries in strengthening policies, laws and programmes by offering a practical framework to define, measure and scale restoration efforts.

A central focus is the growing demand for a restoration economy, more specifically, a rapidly expanding sector that delivers ecological recovery alongside economic opportunity.

Drawing on lessons from the United States where restoration already supports more than 225,000 jobs annually, the paper identifies enabling conditions, such as clear standards, strong enforcement, skilled workforces and stable public and private finance.

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Restoration is not only ecological but economic. In the United States it already supports

225,000

jobs annually, showing the sector's growth potential globally

These insights help governments adapt proven approaches to their national and regional contexts, enabling them to unlock the sector's potential economic value of up to US\$2 trillion. By showcasing best practices and aligning with global commitments, the initiative strengthens knowledge-sharing and capacity-building across G20 members, non-member countries, private sector actors and other stakeholders.

The ICO also convened a side event titled, *From Degradation to Opportunity: Industry, Innovation and Investment in the Restoration Economy*, during the UNCCD's 23rd session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC23) held in Panama. The event marked a key step toward establishing a restoration industry forum - a platform to mobilize industry leadership, innovation and investment at scale.

The discussion underscored the rapid emergence of the restoration economy as a major driver of green growth. With nature underpinning more than half of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and countries committed to restoring over one billion hectares of degraded land, restoration presents a significant opportunity to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. Estimates suggest the sector could generate US\$1.5 trillion to US\$2 trillion in economic value, while supporting livelihoods and ecosystem resilience.



ICO's side event highlighted how innovation, investment and industry leadership can turn land degradation into economic and ecological opportunity

The first panel, featuring restoration companies, explored the challenges of scaling from pilot projects to investable enterprises. Speakers highlighted the need for supportive legislation, clear regulatory frameworks, skilled workforces, market transparency, and blended finance to reduce risk and attract private capital. Panelists emphasized that successful restoration must remain community-centered, locally grounded and context-specific.

The second panel focused on enabling conditions for large-scale investment. Contributions showcased data and monitoring tools, such as Global Forest Watch, to improve transparency and de-risk investments, alongside innovative financing instruments led by the UNCCD Global Mechanism. The event concluded with a forward-looking dialogue on expanding collaboration through initiatives such as Business4Land, the International Symposium on the Emerging Restoration Economy and the Young Youth Ecopreneur Programme.



Joann Lee (far right) moderating the G20 GLI Restoration Industry side event held at CRIC23 in Panama

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Participation in Ecological Restoration Business Association



Joann Lee, G20 GLI,
speaking at the ERBA conference

©Yuejiao Wan

In October 2025, ICO participated in the 2025 Ecological Restoration Business Association (ERBA) Policy Conference in Washington, DC. The Initiative leveraged ERBA’s strong industry network and market-based expertise, while strengthening partnerships with restoration companies, investors and policymakers ahead of the G20 GLI’s planned International Symposium on the Emerging Restoration Industry in 2026.

Through an exhibition booth, the Initiative showcased key activities, including the *Global Land Restoration Economy* report, promoting knowledge exchange and dialogue on scaling restoration as a viable economic sector.

These engagements helped connect private sector actors with policy frameworks, investment opportunities and innovation pathways needed to accelerate restoration at scale.

As part of the official conference programme, ICO delivered a presentation on the global restoration economy, highlighting emerging market trends and sharing lessons from established restoration industries in the United States and Brazil. The presentation emphasized how supportive policies, clear standards and blended public–private finance can help professionalize restoration services and attract long-term investment.

Ecopreneurship

The Youth Ecopreneur Programme (YECO), a flagship global initiative of ICO that is implemented jointly with the International Trade Centre (ITC), is designed to empower young ecopreneurs to drive land restoration and green business solutions through skills development, investment readiness and global visibility. The goal is to support 10,000 ecopreneurs and strengthen a global pipeline of youth-led restoration enterprises by 2040. This would contribute directly to increased global financing for restoration and advance the G20 GLI’s objectives of mobilizing US\$1 trillion in new restoration finance, and of positioning young ecopreneurs as key drivers of inclusive, scalable restoration solutions worldwide.

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YECO strengthens youth leadership in the restoration economy, combining skills development, investment readiness and global exposure to scale impact

In 2025, YECO significantly expanded its reach and impact. The programme registered 1,533 applications for support, an increase of 91 per cent from 2024. Of these, 225 ecopreneurs were in the Land Restoration (200) and Green Business (25) categories. The applications came from 120 countries, marking a 20 per cent increase in global reach. This growth reflects rising global demand for youth-led solutions in the restoration economy (see Annex 2).



Youth Ecopreneur Alumni at the ChangeNOW Summit in Paris, France

©UNCCD/G20 GLI

Building on the lessons of the previous years, the 2025 programme introduced an upgraded curriculum with masterclasses on Artificial Intelligence, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting and stress management to strengthen both the technical and leadership capacities of the ecopreneurs. EY, the multinational professional service company formerly known as Ernst & Young, joined as a new strategic partner. It provided one-on-one coaching for the accelerator programme’s participants, enhancing the ongoing collaboration on intellectual property, digital innovation and legal mentorship, delivered, respectively, by the World Intellectual Property Organization, Google for Startups and Sidley Austin LLP. Participants completed

a 10-week Global Bootcamp, followed by a tailored Accelerator Phase programme for top ventures. The YECO 2025 Programme will conclude in early 2026 with the announcement of the winning ecopreneur at the Youth Ecopreneurs Awards organized at ChangeNOW in Paris, France.

YECO also strengthened alumni engagement and global visibility by facilitating the ecopreneurs to showcase their solutions at major platforms, including START Summit (Switzerland), ChangeNOW (France), Ramsar COP15 (Zimbabwe), World AgriTech Summit (Brazil), NEON Summit (Brazil), COP30 (Brazil), CRIC23 (Panama), Association of Startup and SMEs Enablers of Kenya (ASSEK) Annual Summit (Kenya) and the Africa Climate Investment Summit (Kenya).

Sparking Land Restoration Ecopreneurs in Brazil and Kenya

ICO started scaling its ecopreneurship agenda through national engagements in Brazil and Kenya to support start-up and land restoration ecopreneurs in a bid to step up progress towards both reaching the targeted 10,000 ecopreneurs and helping to mobilize US\$1 trillion in new restoration finance by 2040.



©UNCCD/G20 GLI

Fabiola Nava (2nd left) with Martina Sikawa (3rd left) at the Chemolex site in Nairobi, Kenya, during the G20 GLI scoping mission

Brazil's potential for restoration is exceptional: up to 60 million hectares of degraded agricultural land are suitable for recovery; an estimated US\$141 billion in annual economic value; a strong start-up ecosystem; and the need to create 350,000 jobs by 2050. G20 GLI's engagement in Brazil positioned restoration as a viable business and innovation opportunity within the country's strong policy and startup ecosystem.

G20 GLI successfully engaged with 650 participants and entrepreneurs across six events. Activities began in June 2025 with a high-level webinar titled, *A Land of Opportunities: The Restoration Economy in Brazil*, attended by over 80 participants from government, business support institutions, accelerators and restoration ecopreneurs. This was followed by two national missions between July and September to strengthen partnerships with accelerators, public institutions, universities and investors.

As part of the in-country engagement, ICO organised a lecture held at BIOTIC in Brasília, for 40 entrepreneurs. ICO also organized an event at Impact Hub São Paulo featuring two panel discussions with experts, practitioners and finance representatives from the restoration industry, reaching 150 participants both in person and online. ICO also showcased restoration-linked innovations at major platforms, including Nordeste ON (NEON 2025), the major start up conference in Brazil's semiarid region that boasts over 20,000 attendees. ICO gave a TED-style talk and organized a side event that featured a panel. ICO impact reached BRICS, the intergovernmental organization bringing together ten countries, including Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. ICO was invited to host a side event on the restoration economy at the BRICS Young Entrepreneurs' Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

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ICO's national engagements in Brazil and Kenya are scaling youth-led restoration entrepreneurship, building pathways to reach 10,000 ecopreneurs and USD 1 trillion in restoration finance by 2040



Paula Padrino Vilela, UNCCD/G20 GLI, speaking at the Nordeste ON Conference (NEON) in Teresina, Piauí, Brazil.

In September, G20 GLI and Instituto Terra, Brazil, co-hosted a training program for 28 ecopreneurs from Brazil selected from the 110 applicants (see page 43 for details of the training). The program's video manifesto on restoration, co-produced with some of the participants, received over 18,000 views online.

The ICO also expanded its national engagement efforts in Kenya, a country facing acute land degradation challenges but is well-positioned to pilot youth-led land restoration entrepreneurship, given its youthful population, growing startup ecosystem and a strong green policy framework. ICO national engagement in Kenya focused on strengthening youth-led restoration ecopreneurship and supporting ecosystem cohesion with a view to support the growing start-up ecosystem. The first visit to Nairobi and Kajiado resulted in

the creation of a national network from the 13 engagements with incubators, universities and restoration practitioners. They include:

- ✓ the Association of Startup and SMEs Enablers of Kenya (ASSEK), a national umbrella organization connecting business support organizations (BSOs) and innovation enablers
- ✓ E4Impact Entrepreneurship Centre Kenya, a university-linked accelerator supporting high-impact entrepreneurs
- ✓ the Kenya Climate Innovation Center (KCIC), a leading climate and green innovation hub
- ✓ Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (SNV) an international development organization with a strong focus on rural livelihoods and inclusive business models and
- ✓ Rira University, a higher-education institution actively engaging students in innovation, technology and entrepreneurship.

More than 150 youth ecopreneurs and students participated in G20 GLI led lectures, workshops, field visits and virtual sessions. Another G20 GLI milestone was the launch of Kenya's first Land Restoration Enabler Award launched in partnership with ASSEK. The award recognizes the organizations dedicated to empowering the ecopreneurs actively restoring Kenya's landscapes. Momentum accelerated through a land degradation hackathon organised by Power Learn Project, which mobilized 730 registrations and 538 submissions, generating a strong pipeline for continued engagement in 2026.

Over

150

participants at events held in Kenya



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Through strategic national engagements, ICO is turning land restoration into an innovation-driven, youth-led business opportunity across Brazil and Kenya.

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Paula Padrino Vilela, G20 GLI, (front row, 4th right) and Catharina Vale, G20GLI, (3rd row, 5th right) with Brazil's ecopreneurs attending the capacity-building training co-hosted by G20 GLI GLO and Instituto Terra in Aimorés, Brazil

Mauritania Scoping Mission Report for Restoration of Degraded Mines

In February 2025, at the invitation of the Government of Mauritania and working closely with subnational and local stakeholders, ICO conducted a scoping mission on the restoration of degraded mining sites in Mauritania to support evidence-based land rehabilitation and long-term restoration planning. The mission focused on the areas affected by artisanal and semi-industrial gold mining across the *wilayas* of Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Brakna, Inchiri, Trarza and Tiris Zemmour.

Through field visits, consultative meetings and technical assessments, the mission sought to understand the environmental and social impacts of mining activities, identify key drivers of land degradation and assess their effects on local ecosystems and communities. The team engaged with local authorities, community representatives and national institutions to ensure that the solutions proposed reflect local priorities and realities. Collaborating with the private company Maaden Mauritania was essential in strengthening the partnerships to promote responsible mining practices and sustainable land restoration.

The key outputs include:

- ✓ a comprehensive scoping report with practical recommendations
- ✓ a multi-stakeholder synthesis workshop to define concrete actions and
- ✓ international exchange visits to a G20 member country to share best practices in sustainable mining and land management.

This activity is part of G20 GLI's effort to network 1 million practitioners, strengthen local capacity and inform policy and programme design with the long-term goal of enabling 100 countries to legislate restoration targets.



Dr. Mohamed Abd Salam El Vilaly, G20 GLI (3rd right) in Mauritania for the scoping mission

The findings from the visit contributed to the development of a five-year action plan focused on long-term rehabilitation and restoration solutions tailored to the specific characteristics of each region. The plan emphasizes targeted technical assistance, capacity building for local stakeholders and the integration of innovative, environmentally sound approaches, including the use of Earth observation data and advanced geospatial tools to map degraded areas, monitor site evolution and optimize restoration interventions.

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In Mauritania, ICO's scoping mission laid the groundwork for a five-year action plan to restore degraded mining sites, combining local engagement, technical expertise and innovative tools to deliver sustainable, evidence-based land rehabilitation



Dr Muralee Thummarukudy speaking at the opening session of G-CAP 2025 in Bonn, Germany

CAPACITY BUILDING



ICO builds capacity to support informed decision-making and lasting restoration impact

©FZN

A field trip for participants at the South African training on post-mining land restoration co-hosted by LaRRSA, UNU-FLORES and G20 GLI



Strengthening knowledge and capacity across countries and stakeholders is a core element of the G20 mandate. In 2025, ICO delivered targeted programmes for parliamentarians, universities, public officials, practitioners and communicators, reinforcing technical skills, institutional capability and leadership. As reported below, these efforts supported more informed decision-making and strengthened the longer-term foundations for implementation of restoration commitments.

Global Changemaker Academy for Parliamentarians (G-CAP)

The Global Changemaker Academy for Parliamentarians (G-CAP) is a flagship capacity-building programme of G20 GLI. It is held every year and organized in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC). Its objective is to strengthen political leadership and legislative action that advances land and ecosystem restoration globally. As of 2025, the programme has reached 82 parliamentarians from 49 countries, marking significant progress toward the 2025–2026 target of engagement across 50 countries.

82

parliamentarians from 49 countries to date equipped to advance global land and ecosystem restoration

Building a committed cohort of legislators equipped to drive national policy change is expected to create ample capacity for 100 countries to legislate restoration targets by 2040. This growing network could evolve into a political constituency for restoration legislation that helps to strengthen land restoration policies, laws and programmes worldwide.

The third G-CAP cohort met in Bonn in August 2025, with 29 parliamentarians from 29 countries engaged in intensive learning, dialogue and peer exchange. Participants interacted with senior UN leadership, a former head of state, legal scholars and global practitioners, to strengthen their technical understanding of restoration governance and legislative pathways.

G-CAP alumni also attended global policy processes held in 2025, including Ramsar COP15 in Zimbabwe and SER2025 in the United States of America, demonstrating the programme's

influence beyond the training environment. Six parliamentarians requested direct technical support on national legislative processes during the year, indicating early translation of learning into concrete political action.

In parallel, GLI supported the development of a model legislative toolkit for restoration, co-created with international legal experts and refined through political feedback from G-CAP participants. This package is now under external review and was circulated to alumni for national adaptation. G-CAP 2025 generated 2.58 million in social-media reach, amplifying awareness and engagement around restoration leadership.

The gains made by 2025 – expansion of a global network of legislators, strengthening legislative tools and supporting early policy action – positions G-CAP as a strategic accelerator towards the G20 GLI's 2040 legislative targets.



2025 G-CAP participants with UNCCD Executive Secretary, Dr. Yasmine Fouad (center, front row, 8th right)

University Curriculum Development Programme

The University Curriculum Development Programme is a core pillar of the G20 GLI's capacity building strategy. It is designed to embed high-quality, transdisciplinary land restoration education within higher-learning institutions worldwide. The envisioned long-term outcome is enhanced technical capacity for land restoration by developing at least one million new restoration professionals globally.



Sample manual of the *Trigger Change!* Courses

Young people under 25 constitute up to 60 per cent of the population in many developing countries, yet remain increasingly disconnected from land-based careers. At the same time, global assessments by the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNDECR) highlight a critical shortage of transdisciplinary restoration courses. The programme addresses this gap by equipping universities with ready-to-teach curricula that prepare graduates for careers as extension agents, land managers, urban planners, public servants, finance experts and restoration entrepreneurs, while nurturing future policymakers and leaders.

ICO has developed and launched two full university course packages. “*Trigger Change! Innovative Sustainable Agriculture Solutions for Land Restoration*” was developed in 2024 and *Trigger Change! Innovations in Sustainable Urban*

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The programme is a critical accelerator toward G20 GLI's long-term capacity and impact targets. It is successfully scaling institutional adoption, building a global network of partner universities and laying the foundation for large-scale workforce development

Land Restoration was developed in 2025. Each course includes comprehensive teaching kits comprising lecture materials, case studies and detailed course manuals. In addition, concept notes, outlines and a production plan for a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) have been completed.

The strategy is to reach one million graduates over ten years through a global network of universities (see Annex 4 for details). As of November 2025, strong progress has been achieved toward this pathway:

- ✓ The Sustainable Agriculture course is now taught in 618 universities and training institutions, edging close to the 2040 target of reaching 1000 institutions. Approximately 18,500 students have been reached to date.
- ✓ The Urban Land Restoration course is currently taught in 185 institutions, approaching the biennial target of 200, and has reached 5,500 students.
- ✓ A global Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) designed to scale learning to over 100,000 learners is under development, with the blueprint completed and delivery targeted for the second quarter in 2026.

Building Resilient Landscapes Training Programme (Africa)

The training titled, *Building Resilient Landscapes: Sustainable Land Management and Restoration for Africa's Agricultural Future*, was delivered in St. Louis, Senegal. It was jointly organized with AfricaRice as part of their annual capacity building collaboration.

This regional training programme contributes to the long-term outcome of enhancing technical capacity by developing one million new restoration professionals globally over ten years.

In 2025, the programme achieved significant scale and reach. Delivered in both French and English through expert lectures, practical exercises, case studies, field visits and laboratory sessions, participants strengthened their understanding of the drivers and impacts of agricultural landscape degradation and developed practical competencies in restoration planning.

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Over

5,000

applicants

Participants demonstrated applied skills in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, participatory mapping and landscape diagnostics, producing draft inclusive landscape management plans and resilient cropping system designs. They applied cropping systems modelling to interpret climate, soil and yield interactions and proposed risk management options for diverse farming systems. Outputs also included context-specific restoration proposals covering land and water management practices, agroforestry, climate-resilient crop varieties, digital tools, sustainable livestock integration and Climate-Smart Village approaches.



Participants at training co-hosted with Africa Rice training in Saint Louis, Senegal

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2,000 engagements

Hands-on training delivered to build Africa's next generation of land restoration professionals

Cross-cutting themes included gender- and socially-inclusive strategies, adoption and impact indicators and policy-relevant recommendations documented through group presentations and written assignments.

With a strong focus on Africa and additional global participation, the programme attracted over 5,000 applicants and generated engagement with approximately 20,000 applicants. This expanding pipeline of trained and engaged practitioners contributes meaningfully toward the long-term objective of building a large, skilled global workforce for land restoration.

The programme is building a strong community of practice across Africa, in particular, while strengthening technical, analytical and collaborative capacity, and contributing strategically to the GLI's long-term ambition of scaling skilled professionals and accelerating restoration impact globally.

Saudi Arabia National Training on Geospatial Tools for Land Restoration

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17

The first capacity-building training of its kind took place in July 2025. It benefitted 17 national actors from key ministries and agencies across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was organized in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office. While modest in numbers, all participants were high-impact institutional actors responsible for policy, planning and implementation, making the training strategic for systemic capacity development aligned with the long-term professional workforce target.

Senior government officials trained in a bid to strengthen national land restoration planning

The three-day training was hosted by the National Centre for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) in Riyadh. The training covered the use of geospatial data and remote sensing technologies for monitoring vegetation dynamics and restoring degraded lands.

Through hands-on technical sessions, participants developed applied proficiency in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools, including the use of multispectral and radar data to monitor vegetation, soils, water and land dynamics. They applied land suitability assessment methods and used operational platforms such as Saudi ATLAS, FAO geospatial tools and the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM). Participants also strengthened their understanding of land degradation processes, restoration frameworks and governance mechanisms relevant to Saudi Arabia, G20 GLI and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The training resulted in concrete outputs, including the development of data-driven restoration strategies for priority landscapes, assessment of existing policy tools and governance gaps, localization of global, best practices for national application and strengthened cross-institutional coordination among participating agencies.

The programme demonstrates strong contribution to institutional and technical capacity at national level, reinforcing collaboration across agencies and strengthening the practical foundations for effective restoration planning and implementation that is aligned with national, regional and global targets.

This training programme also contributes to enhancing technical capacity by developing one million new restoration professionals globally over ten years. The approach is to strengthen institutional skills and coordination at national level as well as support scalable and sustainable implementation of restoration policies and practices.

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The programme contributes to developing

1M

new restoration professionals globally over ten years

Training for the Mining Industry

In March, ICO, in collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for Integrated Management and Material Fluxes and of Resources (UNU-FLORES) and the Land Rehabilitation Society of Southern Africa (LaRSSA), co-led a post-mining landscape restoration training workshop in Pretoria, South Africa, advancing engagement with the private sector through targeted capacity-building for the mining and restoration sectors.

The workshop focused on strengthening responsible post-mining transitions across Africa and beyond.

It brought together nearly

60

participants from 20 countries, including policymakers from across Africa, government officials, industry professionals, early-career specialists, researchers, civil society organizations and community leaders

The diversity of participants ensured equal representation of scientific knowledge, practical experience and the lived realities.

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Structured engagement with the private sector could strengthen the policy, skills and investment conditions needed to scale inclusive, durable restoration solutions worldwide

The programme combined expert lectures, collaborative group work and extensive field visits, covering a broad range of post-mining restoration topics, such as the core principles of land rehabilitation, waste and secondary resource management, food and water systems, geospatial monitoring tools and coal-transition challenges as well as the central role of communities and human capacity in long-term restoration success. Participants examined real case studies to strengthen their ability to translate technical knowledge into policy and practice. They also toured the Mpumalanga coalfield sites to see the rehabilitation work on revegetation, soil stabilization and water management.

The practical tools and understanding of integrated restoration approaches shared aimed at bridging science, practice and governance, to enable participants to shape regulatory frameworks, guide responsible mining closures and influence national strategies that prioritize sustainable land management and community well-being.



Visit to one of the mining restoration sites in Mpumalanga, South Africa

©FZN

Land Restoration as an Opportunity for Startups and Entrepreneurs Training

In September 2025, G20 GLI partnered with Instituto Terra to deliver a five-day capacity-building training in Aimorés, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The training focused on land restoration as an economic and entrepreneurial opportunity. Hosted at Instituto Terra’s internationally recognized restoration site, the training brought together 28 entrepreneurs from 14 Brazilian states, representing six biomes and a wide range of business models linked to restoration, regeneration and sustainable land use.

The program combined classroom sessions, workshops, mentorship, and technical field visits, offering participants a rare opportunity to connect theory with hands-on practice in the Atlantic Forest. Modules covered restoration science, impact-driven business modeling, financing and investment, legal foundations, communication, leadership and impact measurement.

Practical components included field visits to restored areas, demonstrations of native-species-seedling-techniques and hands-on learning in plant nurseries, exposing the trainees to the entire land restoration value chain; from seed to landscape recovery. Throughout the week, participants engaged directly with experts and practitioners and learned from each other’s diverse regional and ecological contexts.

Beyond skills development, the training fostered the emergence of a collaborative network of land entrepreneurs. The non-competitive, immersive format encouraged trust, peer exchange and the formation of new and enduring partnerships. The collaboration with Instituto Terra reaffirmed the value of experiential learning and local partnerships in advancing the restoration economy.

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28

**entrepreneurs from 14
Brazilian states trained to
turn land restoration into
a scalable business and
economic opportunity**



Hands-on training in land restoration for youth ecopreneurs at Instituto Terra, Brazil

©UNCCD/G20 GLI

Faith4Land Stocktake Report and Masterclass

ICO released its landmark Faith stocktake report in 2025, the first comprehensive analysis of faith-based contributions to land restoration, drawing on engagement with over 100 faith-led organisations across 24 countries. The survey showed strong commitment; 92 per cent of organisations support restoration and 74 per cent are already active. It also revealed major capacity gaps, including limited policies, funding, technical skills and monitoring, despite the surveyed faith groups influencing up to 650 million people. The stocktake highlighted faith institutions as uniquely positioned restoration leaders due to their land ownership, moral authority, long-term vision and community networks. It identified three main modes of engagement: direct restoration on religious lands; integration of traditional and scientific knowledge; and policy and advocacy leadership. The key recommendations included dedicated financing, technical assistance and leadership development to scale impact.

Building on these findings, ICO launched practical tools for faith groups interested in land restoration, including good practices and tailored resources on the Initiative's Global Restoration Information Hub (GRIH). ICO also held the Faith4Land Masterclass webinar in November 2025. The Initiative's Faith4Land pages complement the broader Faith & Nature Hub maintained by the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) Beliefs & Values Programme. Together, these platforms act as an integrated ecosystem of resources that supports faith-based environmental action aligned with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The two-hour webinar was delivered through the collaboration of the G20 Global Land Initiative, Trillion Trees and WWF's Beliefs & Values Programme. The Masterclass focused on the Faith Tree Growing Guide, a practical 6-step framework developed by WWF for faith-based actors that are restoring land. The webinar structure included best practice overviews for each of the six steps (Agree Your Purpose, Build Your Partnership, Develop Your Plan, Implement Your Plan, Monitor and Maintain, Share and Connect) accompanied by real case studies from faith leaders in Kenya, Nepal, Argentina, Tanzania and Indonesia.

The session connected the stocktake findings with practical action, highlighting both the faith organizations already active in restoration and the critical gaps identified by surveyed organizations (only 28% with formal policies, less than 20% with robust monitoring) that the Tree Growing Guide framework addresses. Resources shared included access to the Faith & Nature Hub, the Faith Tree Growing Guide in multiple languages, the GRIH page and a Faith4Land planning template developed by ICO.

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Faith organizations surveyed influence up to over

650

million people

“

92%

**of organizations surveyed support land restoration
74% are already active**

Strategic Communication of Land Restoration Masterclass

Effective communication remains central to how land degradation and restoration are understood, debated and acted upon within society. To expand this capacity, the Initiative partnered with the London School of Economics to curate a worldclass *Strategic Communication of Land Restoration Masterclass* to establish and grow a new cohort of communicators equipped to carry land restoration narratives into public and policy-relevant spaces.



Strategic Communication of Land Restoration Masterclass in progress at LSE

The training held in June at LSE in the United Kingdom brought together 17 early-career journalists, communicators and digital influencers, a majority of them female, drawn from 12 countries. They were selected from nearly 540 applicants from 76 countries.

The programme combined strategic and practical perspectives: systems thinking, media strategy, storytelling, artificial intelligence, the attention economy and crisis communication. Learning was anchored in applied project labs, peer exchange and a field visit, allowing participants to adapt narratives to different audiences, platforms and regional contexts.

Early signals of impact are already visible. Content produced and shared by participants in 2025 reached more than 246,000 online accounts. Participant feedback emphasized the relevance of the curriculum, the immediacy of its application and the value of cross-regional dialogue in refining messages that resonate beyond specialist audiences.

Momentum will continue through a 2026 mentorship programme to support the best Fellows based on demonstrable sustained engagement in land conservation, restoration and sustainable land management, and scale engagement on these issues across Africa, Asia or Latin America. The nine-month programme is expected to scale the global reach of messaging in land restoration through improved products, enhanced visibility and authoritativeness of the influencers, including through collaboration with UNCCD and G20 GLI experts to produce and share trustworthy content about and from the UNCCD and related global processes.

The purpose is to expand the communication ecosystem around land restoration by extending its presence from expert communities to public debate and from mainstream media to policy makers. It also aims to deliver factual and clear narratives through distributed and trusted sources to increase public understanding and the salience of restoring degraded lands. These conditions are essential for establishing the national policies, laws and programmes required to deliver a 50 per cent reduction of degraded land by 2040.



Land restoration, the dirt and fun family affair at Reforest Fest 2025

COMMUNICATION



Policies and funding not only follow public pressure, but new policies also motivate action among both the winners and losers. This makes awareness-raising and public engagement on land restoration not just critical, but an integral part of ICO activities. ICO ramped up its communications and outreach activities through digital communication, campaigns, building the communications capacity of its staff and collaborators, and organizing mutually supportive events with its partners.

G20 GLI received heightened visibility in 2025 through its outreach and leveraging its partners. ICO's reach of over 35 million in 2025 alone is an important milestone towards the target of reaching 100 million by the end of 2026 and 1 billion people by 2040. Public engagement at country and global levels is essential for mobilizing both the resources and political will needed locally and globally to slow, reduce and reverse land degradation.

Over

35M

reached in 2025

Digital Outreach

In addition to the website and social media used in previous years, the initiative added the YouTube channel, weekly podcasts and monthly youth webinars to its communication and outreach tools. Overall, ICO reached 1.82 million users through its various communication channels – trebling the reach in 2024. A majority of those reached are from G20 countries.

Website

The g20land.org platform continued its strong growth trajectory in 2025, strengthening its role as a source of global knowledge and space for engagement on land conservation and restoration and ICO priorities. While performance trends point to both expanding reach and deepening user engagement on substantive issues, the website also contributed to the Initiative's broader objectives of awareness raising, knowledge dissemination and capacity building at scale.

Engagement remained globally distributed and strategically aligned with G20 priorities. The top ten countries accounted for 49 per cent of all users, among them five G20 members. The highest user numbers recorded were from China, Germany, India, South Africa and United States, confirming the platform's relevance especially among G20 constituencies.

The platform recorded over 173,000 page views in 2025, representing a 37 per cent increase compared to the previous year. Active users grew from 44,000 to 63,000 (48 per cent increase), while returning users increased from 9,500 to 13,000, demonstrating rising loyalty and sustained interest in GLI content. These trends point to stronger audience retention and growing relevance among practitioners, policymakers and partners.



**Most visitors are from G20 Countries
China, Germany, India, South Africa, United States**

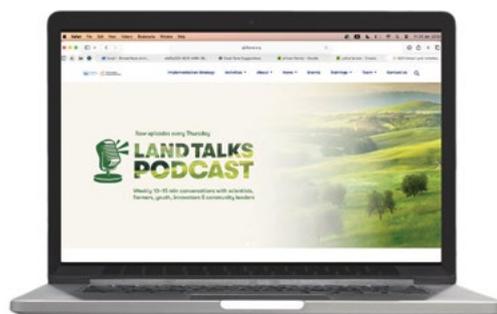
Pages related to funding opportunities and restoration action generated the highest engagement. The Call for Restoration Grants Return page attracted 22,666 views, followed closely by pages on the 2025 Grants Programme and Restoration Return Grants. Capacity-building resources, including the Trigger Change! university courses and the Faith4Land Masterclass, also drew substantial traffic, highlighting increasing demand for practical learning and implementation-oriented content.



In 2025, our website recorded

173K

page views, reflecting strong and growing audience engagement



User acquisition remained diversified and stable, but user patterns underscore the importance of strong search visibility, partner referrals and direct stakeholder engagement. Direct visits accounted for approximately 48,000 users, search traffic for 29,000 and referrals for 21,000, with email contributing an additional 1,600 visits.

Growth in 2025 was driven by improved content structuring and the expansion of high-value thematic sections. These improvements enhanced both the visibility and meaningful engagement, reinforcing g20land.org as a key digital asset supporting G20 GLI's mission.

The current g20land.org website was created in the early phase of the Initiative to signal ICO existence, legitimacy and continuity. An internal review of the website in December 2025 revealed the need for a redesigned, modern, high-performance digital platform that can strengthen political engagement of G20 countries, improve public usability of data, enable long-term audience building (especially youth) and enhance impact, credibility and institutional value.

Social Media

ICO strengthened its social media presence, both as the primary means of communication and as part of its wider communications and outreach strategy to support the Initiative’s objectives of visibility, public engagement and agenda-setting in land restoration. ICO added two new outreach tools; the YouTube channel and a weekly podcast, *Land Talks*, hosted on YouTube.

All platforms recorded substantial follower growth in 2025, indicating expanding visibility and a steadily growing audience base. Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn achieved a combined reach of 1,025,536 users and 47,065 engagements during the year. LinkedIn followers increased by 64 per cent. Instagram followers grew by 79 per cent while Facebook grew by 62 per cent.

	Followers (Start)	Followers (End)	Growth	Total Reach	Total Engagement
 Instagram	2,892	5,173	+79%	386,995	19,806
 Facebook	2,465	3,983	+62%	139,693	12,982
 LinkedIn	9,100	15,160	+64%	498,848	14,277

“

Higher percentage of follower growth than in the past two years
79% on Instagram
64% on LinkedIn
62% on Facebook

LinkedIn remains the Initiative’s most influential platform for professional and institutional audiences. While still smaller in absolute scale, Instagram is increasingly important for youth-facing engagement and long-term audience development.



Most engaged Instagram post of 2025 – The GLF Social Media Ambassadors Call

Youtube

In 2025, the first full year of its operation, the ICO YouTube channel published more than 100 shorts (usually 60 seconds long), 50 videos and 10 livestreams. The channel attracted more than 62,500 views, 982.7 hours of watch time and 369 new channel subscribers. In the last quarter of the year, ICO added the 15-minute weekly guest podcast titled, “*Land Talks Podcast*.”

A majority of the channel’s audience was male (80 per cent) and the largest demography was the 25-34 year-old’s, who made up 36 per cent of the viewers. Most of the channel’s viewers (85 per cent) were new to the channel. Spain (13.8 per cent), United States (10.5 percent) and India (4.8 per cent) were the leading sources of this viewership. This is a significant shift: while India led this viewership in early 2024, the source of traffic had shifted to the United States at the start of 2025, and shifted to Spain by the end of 2025.

The channel’s page was shown to potential viewers 338,200 times, known as impressions. Half (50.7 per cent) of this was YouTube’s recommendation of the content. However, most of our viewers found the channel through our shorts feed (54.8 per cent), whereas a majority of the channel’s subscribers came by way of watching the films (44.9 per cent) with only 14.9 per cent subscribing after watching the Shorts. The most popular features were the shorts, attracting 66.4 per cent of the views. Videos made up 18.5 per cent with livestreams accounting for 3.9 per cent.

Overall, the 2025 performance indicates strengthening digital visibility for G20 GLI. Continued progress will depend on maintaining consistency, aligning content with key institutional moments and refining platform-specific strategies.

There is significant scope to grow this channel, which ICO will build on in 2026 with a view to:

- ✓ Share knowledge and new innovations and
- ✓ Engage with viewers from other G20- and non-G20 member countries.



A Poster of the *Land Talks Podcast* launched in 2025

Campaigns

Save Land United for Land Exhibition

The *Save Land United for Land* exhibition placed land degradation at the center of public attention, demonstrating the power of art and science to shape understanding of one of the most complex and pressing global challenges. Developed jointly by the Bundeskunsthalle (Art and Science Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany) and ICO to, *inter alia*, mark the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD, the exhibition ran from December 2024 to June 2025 in Bonn, Germany, offering a sustained platform for reflection, learning and engagement on land conservation and restoration issues.

Visitors encountered land not as an abstract policy issue, but as a shared foundation of climate stability, food systems and biodiversity. Across six thematic rooms, more than 100 artworks and scientific objects, immersive installations, films and interactive digital tools, the exhibition's visitors explored the causes and consequences of land degradation alongside pathways toward sustainable land management and restoration. All digital components were developed as modular and portable exhibits, allowing the exhibition to extend beyond a single venue and enabling future hosts to adopt the format with limited logistical requirements.

Public engagement was broad and multi-layered. The exhibition attracted 34,926 participants through in-person visits, workshops and public events. This was complemented by 256 guided tours and educational activities involving schools, universities and community groups. Its reach extended well beyond Bonn, with 17,687 website visits, over 644,000 social-media impressions and an estimated 27.4 million people reached through mainstream media and public-facing campaigns. More than 100 German-speaking media outlets, including leading national newspapers, covered the exhibition, amplifying its message nationwide.

“

Save Land United for Land exhibition engaged millions through art and science to illustrate land degradation and actions to restore it



Visitors to the *Save Land United for Land* exhibition in Bonn, Germany



Panelists at the opening of the *Save Land United for Land* exhibition (l-r) Moderator Georgina Bwango (UNCCD), Eva Kraus, Director, (Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn), Ibrahim Thiaw, UNCCD Executive Secretary and Muralee Thummarukudy, Director, UNCCD-G20 GLI

The exhibition's legacy continues through a published catalogue, an accompanying documentary film and confirmed plans for Kenya to host the exhibition in 2026, with further venues under consideration. As a traveling, adaptable format, *Save Land United for Land* offers a compelling tool to engage domestic audiences, raise awareness and strengthen advocacy to support restoration to the conditions needed for establishing sound policies, laws and programmes and legislation for land restoration.

Reforest Fest - A festival of action

ICO participated in Reforest Fest 2025 held in April in South Africa, an event that uses arts, culture and music as entry points to promote land restoration and community-led action. The festival is an innovative model that can be scaled to translate global restoration goals into inclusive, locally-rooted fun experiences, demonstrating how cultural celebration can accelerate learning, participation and ownership of restoration efforts.

Reforest Fest mobilized more than 1,100 in-person participants, planted 5,021 indigenous trees, and achieved significant visibility, reaching 7.26 million people through a combination of mainstream media (5.3 million) and social media (1.8 million).

“

3-Day festival
5,021 trees planted
Over 100 in person participants
11 UNCCD delegates
1 day planting trees

“

7.26M

digital reach

G20 GLI sponsored 11 participants from the five UNCCD regions, ensuring strong global representation and facilitating South-South exchange. The delegation engaged in the festival’s newly established Restoration Tent, where discussions, experiences and knowledge was shared both about the land degradation challenge and how creative formats can raise awareness of land degradation, food insecurity, wildfire risk and drought.

The experience demonstrates how culture-driven approaches can complement formal capacity-building and policy processes in driving public support and community momentum for restoration. Building on these insights, G20 GLI, in collaboration with participating delegates, plans to develop a *Festivals of Action Playbook* for adaptation and replication in celebratory community events globally.



UNCCD participants at Reforest Fest 2025 in South Africa

©UNCCD/G20 GLI

Global Competitions

The Initiative organized a competition to showcase beautiful wetlands to inspire the conservation and restoration of wetlands. It also launched two awards to celebrate excellence across civil society and the private sector, highlighting how restoration can simultaneously regenerate ecosystems and strengthen livelihoods. These campaigns elicited engagements in 155 countries and facilitated ICO's outreach to over 3.4 million users.

155 countries

3.4M

reached

Photography

The 16th Greenstorm Global Photography Festival, supported by the G20 GLI, demonstrated how large-scale public engagement can strengthen the social foundations for land restoration policy and investment. It ran from February to June 2025, and used visual storytelling to connect communities, civil society and decision-makers around the urgency of protecting and restoring wetlands specifically. The photographs highlighted the role of wetlands in climate stability, food security and biodiversity to reinforce the case for urgent conservation, sustainable management and restoration.



©Aref Tahmasebi/Beautiful Wetlands

Finalist of the 2025 UNCCD/Greenstorm Photo Competition themed, Beautiful Wetlands



©Sohel Rana/Beautiful Wetlands

Photo submitted for the 2025 UNCCD/Greenstorm Photo Competition themed, Beautiful Wetlands

Themed *Beautiful Wetlands*, the competition attracted 11,835 photographs from 155 countries, more countries than in 2024, reflecting the competition's expanding global footprint. Through a coordinated social-media campaign supported by mainstream media outreach, partners and art schools, the festival reached over 1.14 million users in 2025, and nearly 850,000 social media accounts.

A regionally representative, two-tier international jury selected the finalists and winners, announced on World Environment Day. The shortlisted images captured both the beauty and vulnerability of wetlands, translating complex environmental challenges into compelling narratives that resonate beyond technical audiences. The databank of photos is used widely beyond UNCCD, specifically by other UN agencies and collaborators.

Looking ahead, a new global photography campaign aligned with the UNCCD COP17 themes and targeting regional winners, will be launched in 2026, with expanded engagement of schools and youth.

Global Land Restoration Awards

Launched at UNCCD COP16, the *RestorLife Awards* – a partnership between the NGO Restor and G20 GLI – were established to elevate global recognition of organizations delivering tangible land restoration outcomes at scale. At a time when land degradation increasingly worsens climate stability, food security and biodiversity, the awards position restoration leadership as both a policy priority and an investable, community-driven solution.



RestorLife Awards campaign assets

The 2025 cycle attracted 1,127 applications from 124 countries, reflecting strong global momentum and a growing pipeline of bottom-up restoration initiatives. The awardees were Ecoporé, recipient of the NGO Award, and Terraformation, recipient of the Responsible Business Award. Their work demonstrates scalable, locally rooted models that connect ecological recovery with long-term economic and social resilience. The NGO award included a USD 25,000 grant, while the private-sector award provided a high-visibility, non-monetary recognition.

Beyond recognition, the Awards function as a global communication and engagement mechanism. During the 2025 cycle, more than 20,000 people engaged in person, with an additional 35,210 people reached directly. The accompanying organic social-media campaign generated over 2.3 million impressions, significantly amplifying awareness across regions and contributing early progress toward the 2025–2026 target of 100 million global reach.

The *RestorLife Awards* place credible, results-driven restoration leaders in the global spotlight, elevating grassroots initiatives into narratives that resonate with policymakers and investors. As these examples gain visibility, land restoration is increasingly framed as a core component of national development pathways and sustainable investment strategies. This growing recognition reinforces momentum toward stronger policies, laws and programmes for restoration worldwide. Building on this foundation, an expanded 2026 edition – planned ahead of UNCCD COP17 – will extend regional reach and consolidate the Awards' contribution to this global policy dialogue.

“

RestorLife Awards

2.3M

reached

124 countries

1,127 applications submitted

Exhibitions



In 2025, exhibitions served as a channel for ICO to connect and engage with the public, policymakers, practitioners and private-sector actors across regions. Over the course of the year, the Initiative mounted nine exhibitions across Europe, the Middle East, North America and Africa, collectively reaching more than 74,000 in-person visitors and significantly expanding global visibility for land restoration.

The exhibition programme spanned a diverse set of policy, scientific and public-facing platforms. Flagship engagements included *Save Land United for Land* in Germany (see details above), the Fourth Financing for Development Conference (FFD4) in Spain, Global Futurescapes in Saudi Arabia, Istanbul Forest Innovation Week in Türkiye (see above), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in the United Arab Emirates and Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) in Kenya.

Sector- and practice-oriented audiences were reached through the Ecological Restoration Business Association (ERBA) Policy Conference, the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) Annual Conference in the United States, SER Europe in Estonia and START HACK in Switzerland.

Attendance levels reflected strong interest across contexts, with approximately 15,000 participants engaged through Financing for Development, 10,000 at IUCN, 3,000 at Global Futurescapes, 1,400 at SER, and 1,100 at Reforest Fest, alongside additional engagement at regional and thematic events. ICO exhibitions featured restoration tools, education programmes and real-world solutions, and offered spaces for dialogue with governments, civil society, financial institutions and businesses.

Taken together, the 2025 exhibition portfolio reinforced land restoration as a cross-cutting priority within development finance, biodiversity, climate resilience, economic transformation and youth agendas. This sustained presence across major international forums strengthened partnerships, broadened practitioner and public engagement, and increased the policy salience of land restoration.



ENGAGING WITH OTHER GLOBAL PROCESSES

United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNDEC)

Under the framework of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNDEC) (2021–2030), the Initiative in September convened a Land Challenge Partner Meeting in an online format.

The meeting was part of GLI's ongoing efforts to ensure global restoration policies, laws and programmes are informed by practical experience from the field, thus directly supporting the Decade's objective to halt and reverse ecosystem degradation worldwide.



G20 GLI and UNDEC continued collaboration in exhibitions to socialize the concept of land restoration. Georgina Bwango, UNCCD G20 GLI (right) with colleagues from UNDEC at the joint UNEA exhibition at UNEA-7

“

The Land Challenge is a critical instrument for bridging implementation, markets and long-term legislative impact

The Land Challenge brings together governments, practitioners, technical experts, and private-sector actors to exchange real-world insights from restoration implementation. Through this structured space for peer learning, the Initiative helps decision-makers to align national and international strategies with on-the-ground realities.

The partner meeting focused on three interconnected priorities: advancing the restoration economy, strengthening private-sector engagement and sharing collective progress across the global network.

The discussions highlighted the rapid growth of the restoration economy. The Partners also shared operational updates on community-led restoration, soil health improvement, seedling expansion and integrated restoration-and-carbon business models, which demonstrated how policy commitments are being translated into tangible action.

Updates from the UN Decade Secretariat outlined new land and ocean flagships, forthcoming initiatives at major UN milestones and the preparation of the mid-2026 progress report, ensuring strong alignment between partner activities and global reporting processes. Education initiatives, including Generation Restoration Schools and Nature Positive Universities, further illustrated how capacity building is expanding across sectors and regions.

The Land Challenge is a critical instrument for bridging implementation, markets and long-term legislative impact. These partner meetings are expanding the global practitioner community towards the cumulative target of networking one million practitioners by 2040, strengthening their collective ability to influence national decision-making in the process.

United Nations Environment Assembly-7 and UNDER

In 2025, the G20 Global Land Initiative collaborated with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration during the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) in an exhibition for learning and to showcase leadership and best practice in land restoration.

The Initiative's Restoration Wheel provided learning through play. ICO also disseminated information materials, including flyers about its mandate, priorities and achievements, to a diverse global audience. The exhibition, a collaboration with several organizations that are involved in restoration, helped to amplify visibility, build on each other's strengths to draw participants in and share a wide range of restoration efforts.

The UNCCD pavilion, organized with financial support from ICO, brought together the Rio Conventions (on biological diversity, climate change and desertification). Participants captured substantive policy reflections, including the key messages emerging from a reflection of the G20 GLI's progress since its creation in 2020 (Riyadh +5 reflection). The Initiative's continued relevance as the G20's dedicated platform for addressing land degradation, restoration and conservation was reaffirmed.

“

Activity is aligned with the G20s call to collaborate and build synergy with ongoing initiatives, such as UNDER and the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework

Members acknowledged tangible progress since 2020, while emphasizing the need for stronger G20 ownership, clearer political positioning and deeper institutional alignment with UNCCD guidance. These reflections are important contributions in shaping the future direction of the Initiative, ensuring sustained visibility within global processes while strengthening its strategic positioning going forward.

This exhibition was a useful platform for sharing knowledge and building capacity among G20 members, non-member countries and other stakeholders by supporting the exchange of know-how, accelerating dissemination of best practices and reinforcing the Initiative's role as a convening platform for dialogue on land conservation and restoration.



Yamine Fouad, UNCCD Executive Secretary, speaking at UNEA-7



ANNEXES

Annex 1: Restoration Returns Grants An Overview of Applicants and Beneficiaries

Figure 1.1: 2024 Applicants by Nationality

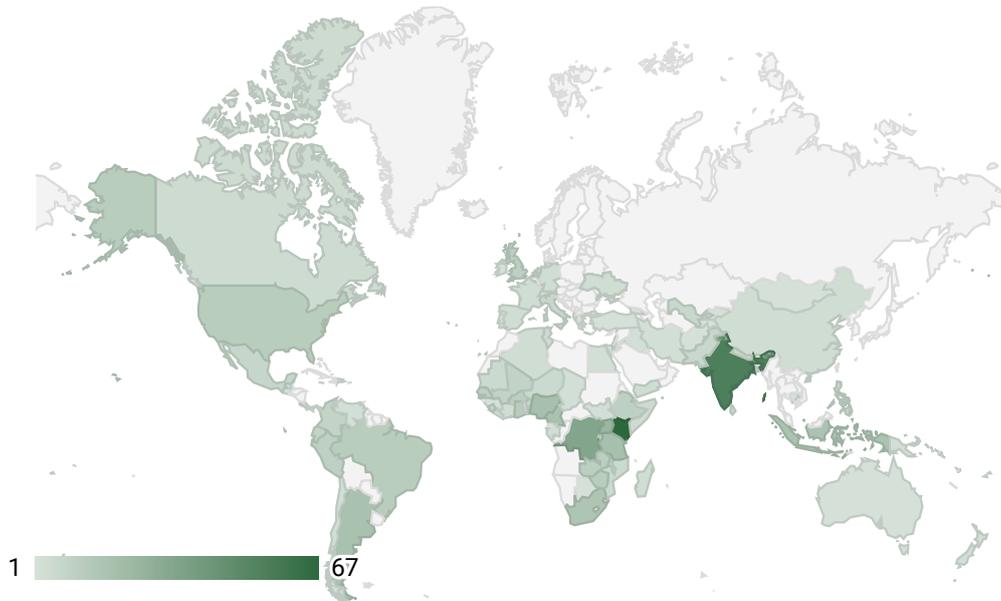
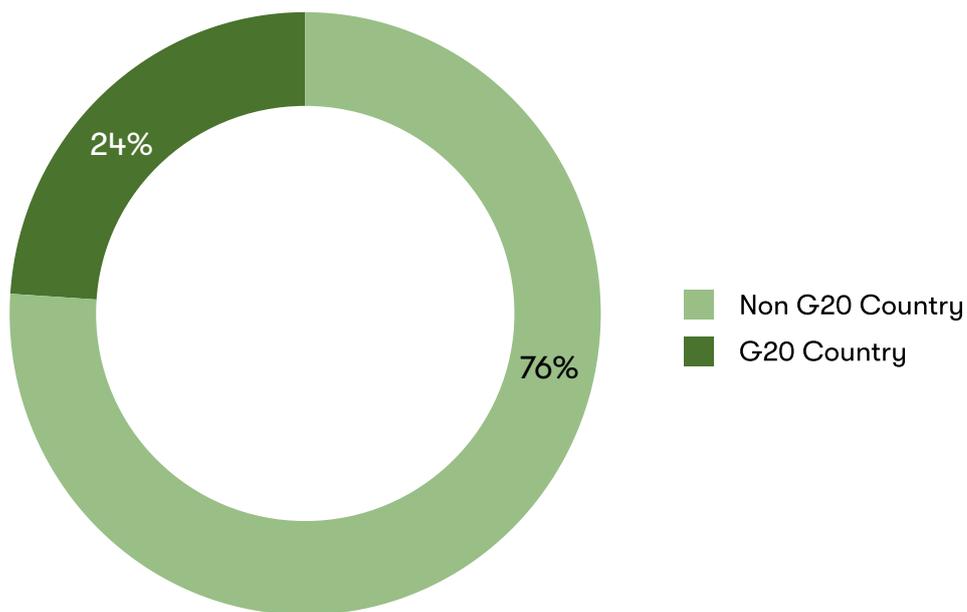
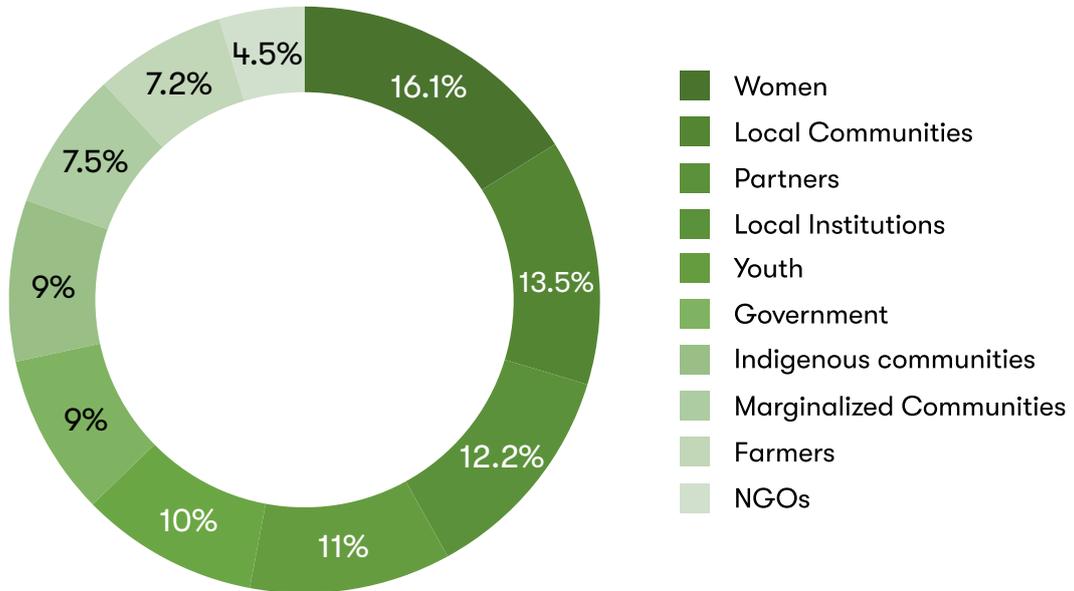


Figure 1.2: Percentate of Country Membership of 2024 Applicants



1.3: Percentage of Beneficiaries of the the 39 Selected Projects



1.4: Number of Restoration Practices Used in the Projects Selected

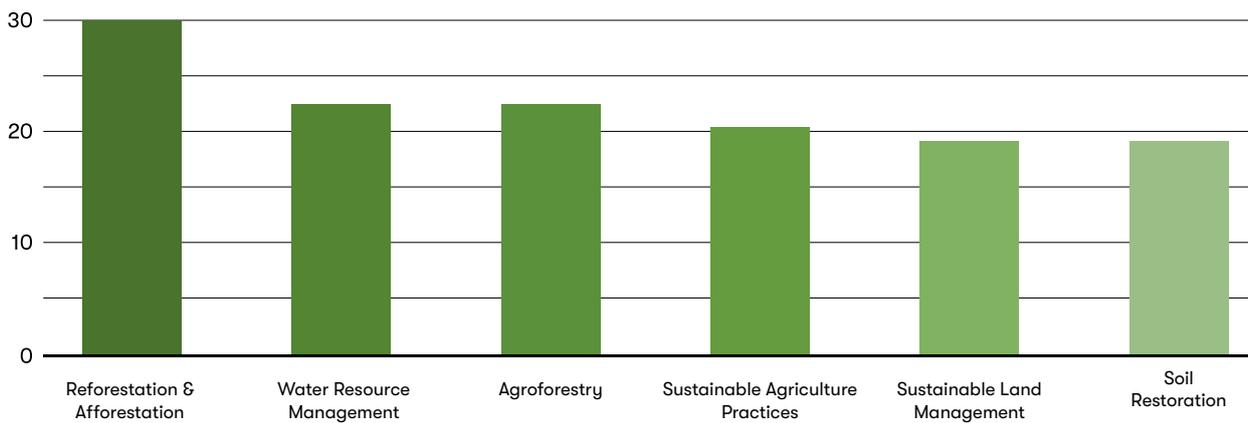


Figure 1.5: 2025 Applicants by Country

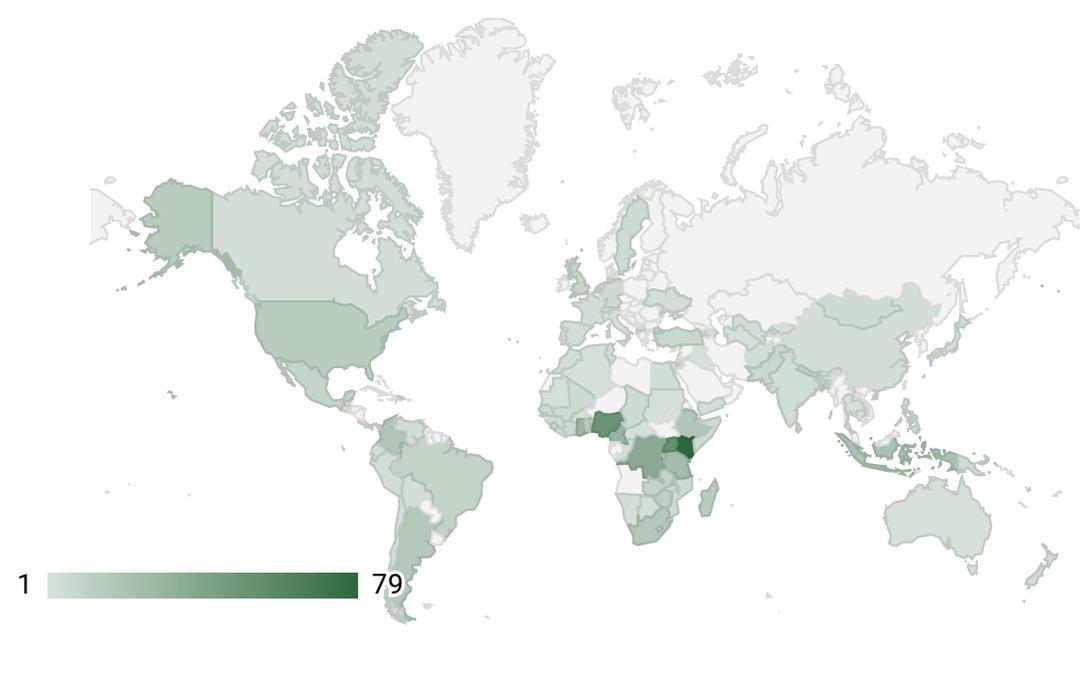
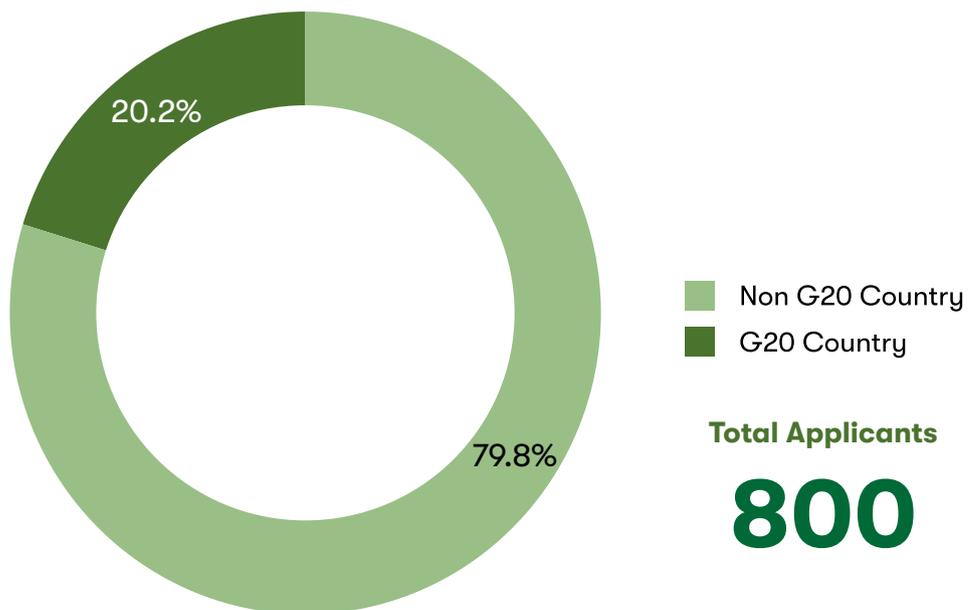


Figure 1.6: G20 Country Membership of Applicants in 2025



Annex 2: Youth Ecopreneur Programme Participation and Reach (2025)

Figure 2.1: Nationality of Selected Youth Ecopreneurs

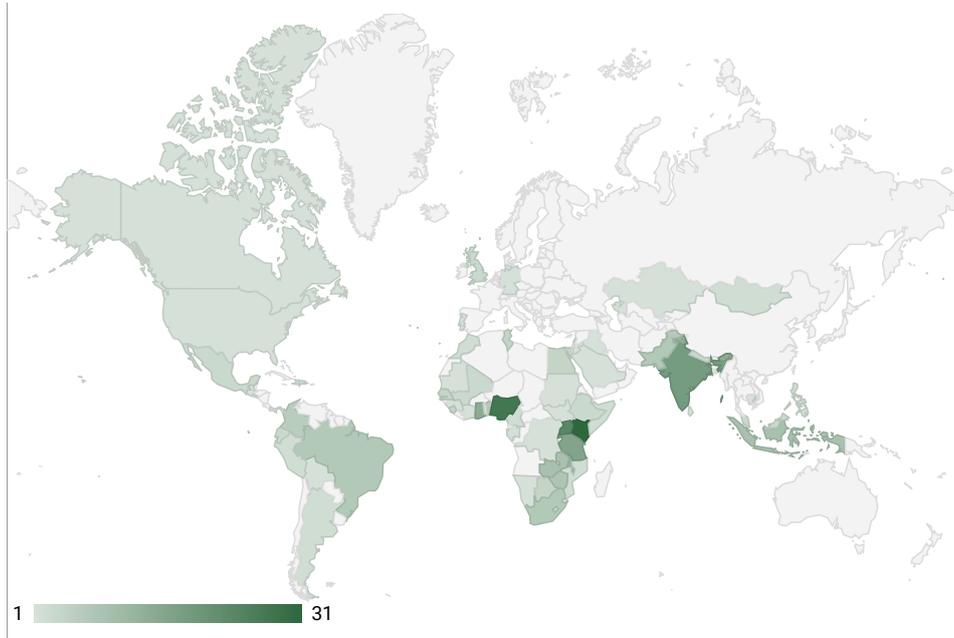
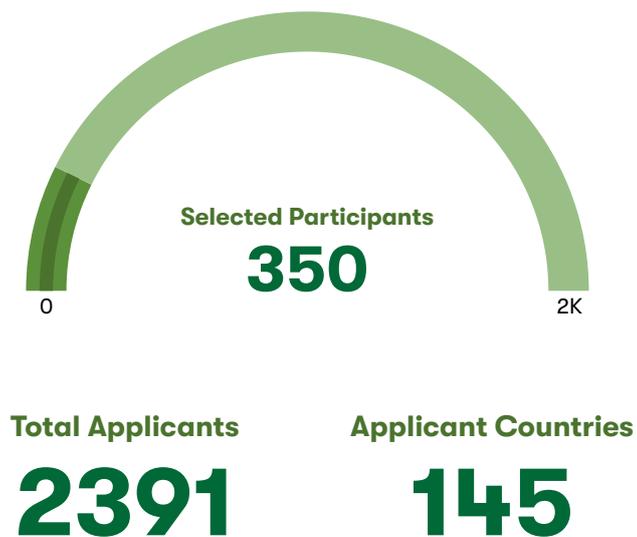
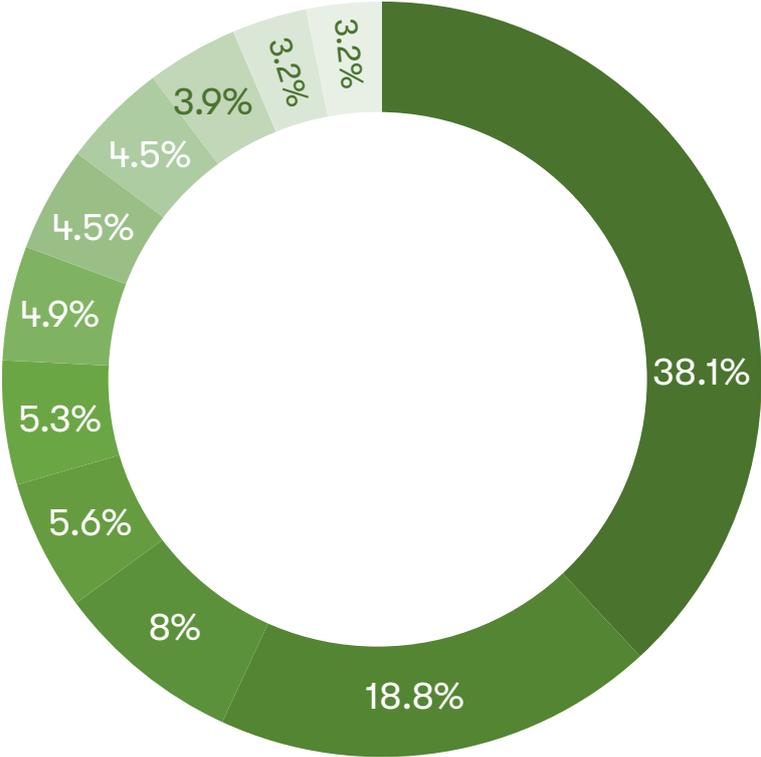


Figure 2.2: Distribution of Applicants and Selected Participants



Annex 3: Direct Beneficiaries of G20 GLI Capacity Building Activities in 2025

Figure 3.1: Percentage of Course Participants



- Agriculture University Training of Trainers, India
- Faith4Land Masterclass
- Post Mining Landscape Restoration: A Hands-on Workshop
- Land restoration in lowlands
- Ecopreneurs
- Ecological Restoration of Mining Affected Areas
- Building Resilient Landscapes: Sustainable Land Management and Restoration for Africa's Agricultural Future
- G-CAP 2025
- Post Urban Planning
- LSE Strategic Comms
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Training Attendees

533

Training Programs

11

Annex 4: Uptake and Use of G20 GLI University Courses in 2024 and 2025

Figure 4.1: Urban Course Recipients in 2025 by Institution Type

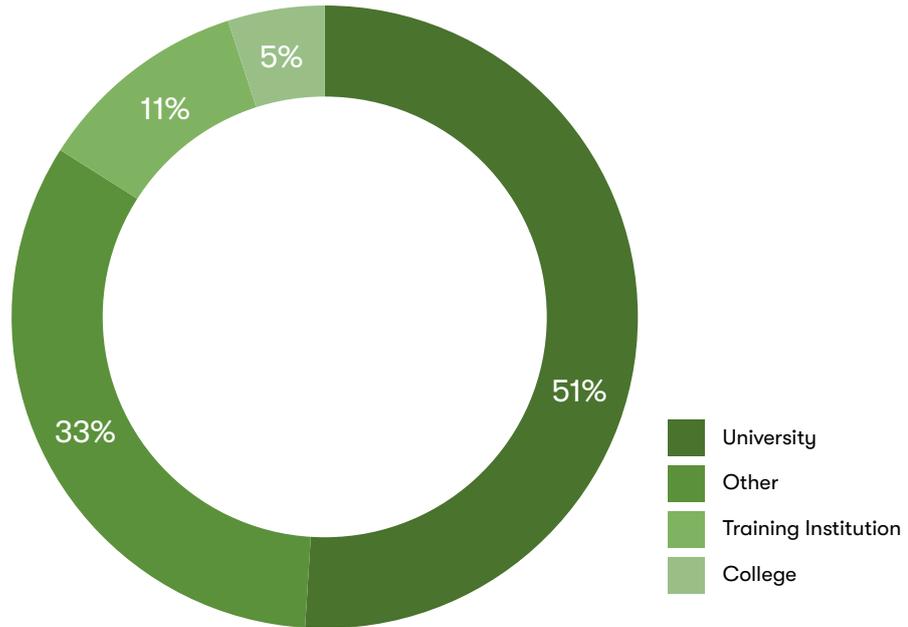


Figure 4.2: Urban Course Recipients in 2025 by G20 Country Membership

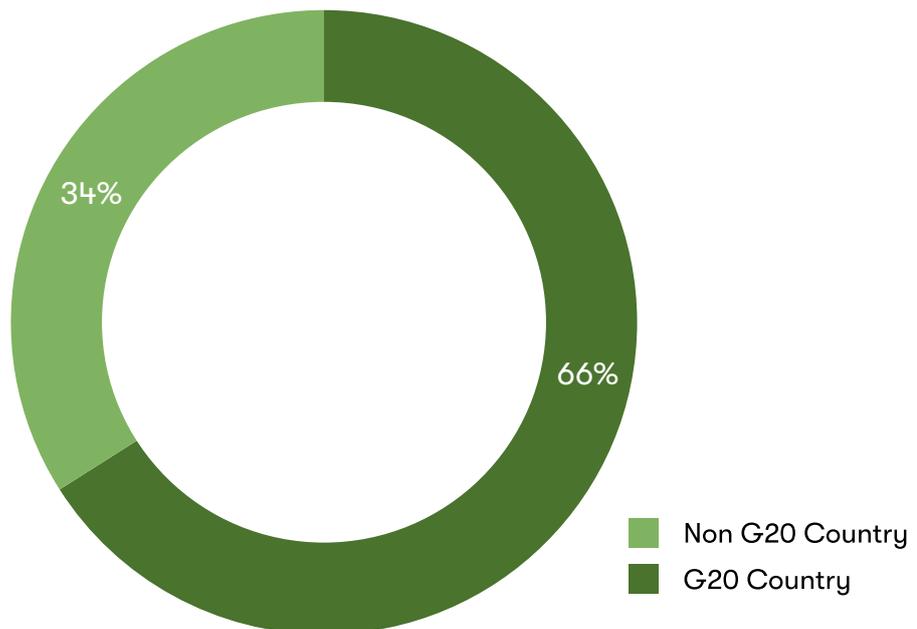


Figure 4.3 Agriculture Course Recipients by December 2025

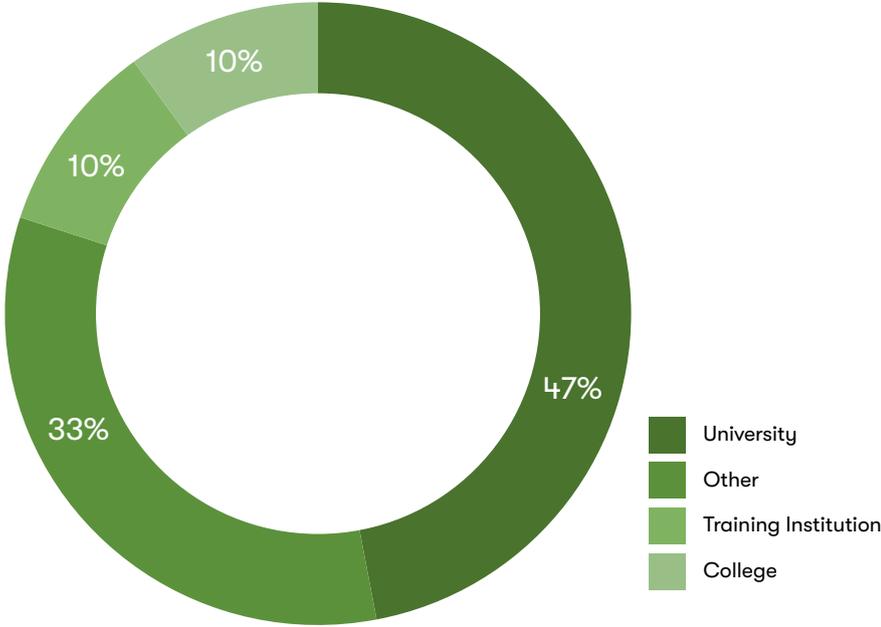
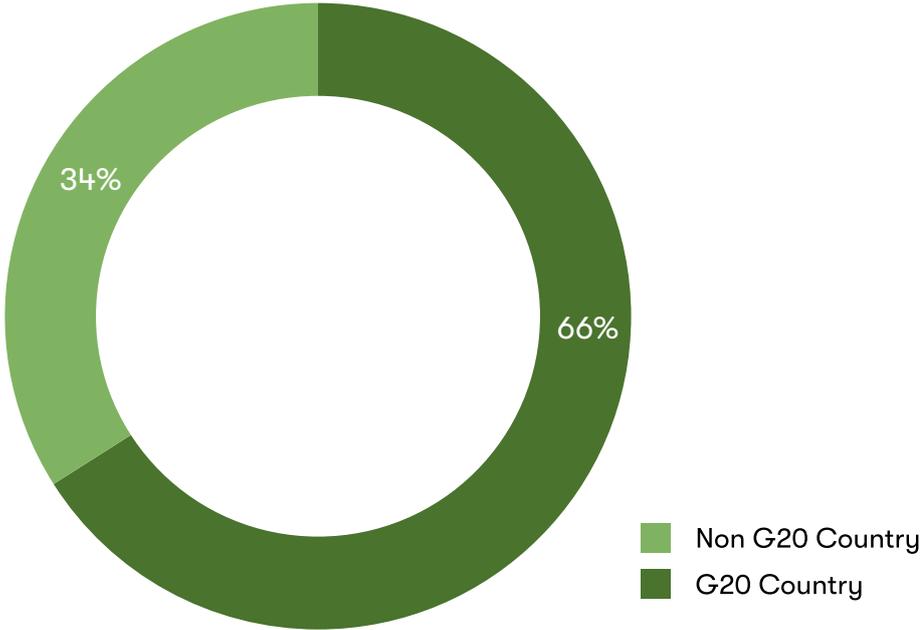


Figure 4.4: Agriculture Course Recipients by G20 Country Membership by December 2025





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**G20 GLOBAL
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