



Increase the use of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure among CSOs and Grassroots Organizations

Sierra Leone

The *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT)* set out **internationally-accepted principles and standards** for responsible practices, providing a framework for governments, the private sector and civil society to use when developing policies and programmes for improving food security. FAO has been working in more than 58 countries, providing technical assistance for awareness raising, multi-stakeholder platforms, training and capacity development, and support to the assessment, formulation and implementation of national policies and laws.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are **key partners** in this effort. It has been recognized time and again that ensuring the same level of information and capability among

stakeholders leads to more meaningful participation in dialogue processes.

In this project (2015-2018), FAO has worked in 21 countries (see map below) through partnerships with national CSOs in carrying out awareness-raising and capacity development workshops to:

- Enhance civil society's **knowledge and understanding of the VGGT**;
- Increase **network and advocacy skills** to defend their tenure rights and **strengthen partnerships** for wider application of the VGGT at all levels;
- Build capacities for **effective participation in policy processes** related to tenure reform processes and national VGGT multi-stakeholder platforms.

The main product of this project has been the **capacity development manual** for CSOs, *Putting the Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure into Practice: A Learning Guide for Civil Society* in partnership with FIAN International, which draws upon the *People's Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests*, developed by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty



(IPC). In 2017, an adaptation of this Guide was developed to integrate the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*, the roll-out of which is currently in a pilot phase.

Local civil society partners played a key role in the successful implementation of the project. With their knowledge of the local context, the Learning Guide could be adapted to link the VGGT to on-going processes within the country.

As part of FAO's global VGGT implementation programme, this project identified specific opportunities for potential or ongoing processes of tenure reform, and/or specific CSO networks or multi-stakeholder processes where FAO input would be most effective.

LEARNING GUIDE

The Learning Guide uses **participatory and experiential learning, based on participants' active interaction and their direct experience on tenure.** The methodology follows a modular learning process of five main elements to gradually build the user's knowledge and capacities. This **modularity** allows for the guide to be adapted to the audience's needs, including knowledge level, CSO objectives, and specificities of the country tenure context.



ACTIVITIES AT COUNTRY LEVEL

AFRICA: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania. **ASIA & PACIFIC:** Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines. **EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA:** Kyrgyzstan. **LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN:** Colombia, Guatemala.



Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, land is a critical source of livelihood for the majority of the rural population. There have long been disputes over the use of these resources, whether due to cultural or religious practices, or due to tensions related to civil war. However, pressure on these resources has continued to increase due to growing demand for land to support large-scale agriculture, mining, timber and energy production. Population increase has also contributed to mounting pressure alongside the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. In addition, the lack of accurate land mapping and registration increases tenure insecurity in the country.

The country has two main systems of land governance: in and around Freetown, on the Western Area Peninsula, there is a British-style statutory land system; the rest of the country is governed by customary land systems. For the customary systems, the "Protectorate Land Ordinance" (Chapter 122), in effect since 1927 and amended in 1961, provides that "all land in the Protectorate is vested in the Tribal Authorities who hold such land for and on behalf of the native Communities concerned", and further specifies that non-natives cannot buy land, but may lease it for a period of up to 50 years. Both the Tribal Authorities and the District Council have to consent to such leases (Governor of Sierra Leone, 1927). Investors often use this Act to avoid direct consultations with land owners/users, relying exclusively on the signature of the local Paramount Chiefs.

In this context, the VGGT are an important instrument to tackle these issues and improve governance of land and natural resources in Sierra Leone. In early 2014, the Government of Sierra Leone launched a project to kick-start national implementation of the VGGT¹ and a participatory Institutional Framework was set up to follow up on activities and ensure the inclusion of VGGT principles in new tenure policies and regulations.

¹ With technical support from FAO and financial support from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMEL).

Partnering with civil society

To support the implementation of the VGGT in Sierra Leone, this project focused on strengthening the capacities of civil society particularly at grassroots level. FAO worked alongside with key CSO actors in the country to reach grassroots levels, strengthen their understanding of the VGGTs and give them concrete tools to be able to more effectively engage in the institutional framework and the ongoing national dialogue on new tenure policies.

Through this project, FAO worked in partnership with **Green Scenery**, a national NGO, and the network **ALLAT** (Action for Large Scale Acquisition and Transparency), a joint initiative of several CSOs specialized in human rights, governance, environmental issues, research, advocacy, community development and peace building. FAO also partnered with **Culture Radio** which has a nationwide broadcasting capacity and ability to effectively use the media as a tool for sensitizing members of the public on a wide range of thematic issues including the VGGT.

Activities in the country

Together with Green Scenery and ALLAT, the project was able to organize a series of five trainings that reached all four provinces within the country. Specifically, one training of trainers was organized at national level in Freetown, successfully training 20 trainers – including 3 participants from Liberia. Following on the success of this workshop, the ToT was then replicated by trained trainers in four province-level workshops. These workshops saw a further 20 people trained (10 from CSOs and

© **Green Scenery** is a national NGO working particularly on environmental issues, focusing on the management of natural resources from a justice and human rights perspective. Its actions take place in four main project areas: environmental promotion and protection, livelihood security, human rights and good governance, as well as peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

© **ALLAT** is a network initiative that brings together persons affected by large scale land deals, CSOs and experts to monitor's large scale industrial investments in agriculture and its impacts on the rural population. ALLAT was established to ensure an accountable and transparent land governance system in Sierra Leone.

© **Culture Radio** is an independent radio station in Sierra Leone, located in the capital Freetown. It is one of the most popular broadcasters in the country with about 2.5 million listeners. Culture Radio wants to promote a culture of peace and reconciliation in Sierra Leone. This includes informing the population in an appealing and comprehensive manner about current issues such as land grabbing or safeguarding human rights, as well as critically illuminating government activities. Culture Radio is also coordinating the network of "Journalist against land grabbing".

10 local authorities), helping to further reach grassroots levels. To further disseminate information related to the workshops, Green Scenery produced and printed about 1000 posters

presenting different messages about the VGGT, which continue to be used for awareness raising and sensitization activities.²

In addition to the work related to the trainings, FAO also worked with Cultural Radio to produce four radio programmes on the VGGT: *Understanding the New Land Policy of Sierra Leone and the VGGT*; *Registration – Land rights recording and the VGGT*; *Land Use Planning and the VGGT*; and *Women's Land Rights and the VGGT*. These 60 minute programmes were repeatedly broadcast between June-September 2017 helping to further disseminate information and raise awareness on the VGGT on the ground. In addition, a documentary on the VGGT and New Land Policy was produced in August 2017. This documentary serves as a tool to assist in the replication of the ToT and further promote the VGGT and their use in the national context.

Links with other VGGT initiatives

As previously mentioned, this project stemmed from the work set in motion by the project for the *Implementation of the VGGT in Sierra Leone*, financed by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMEL). Through this project, a multi-stakeholder platform was established, allowing for a functioning institutional framework for VGGT implementation in the country.³ Participation of CSOs in this platform is essential, and therefore the need for specific capacity development activities aimed at strengthening CSOs' abilities to engage in this platform.

To build a more efficient and transparent land registration process, FAO is also supporting the Government in implementing *Solutions for Open Land Administration (SOLA)*, a land administration and registration software. The SOLA system establishes effective links between the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment and the Office of the Administrator & Registrar General through a digital cadaster system that improves quality of data, helps to introduce transparency in land administration, and promotes reliability in protecting both private and customary rights in accordance with the law.

Main areas of impact

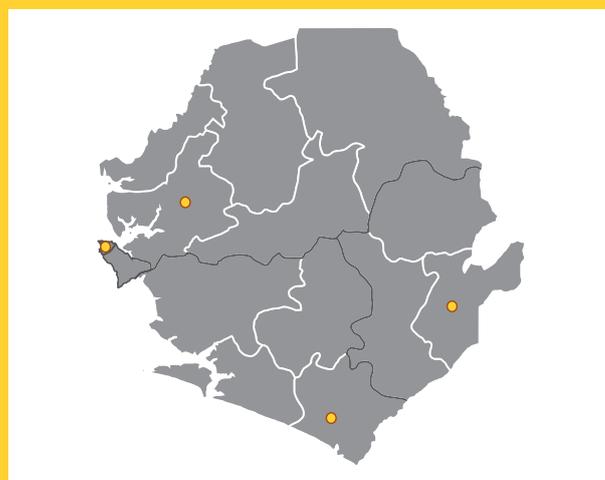
In addition to the links with other projects and initiatives, the capacity development given through this project positively impacted a number of areas within civil society's work on tenure issues in Sierra Leone. In particular, the project saw positive results in building stronger CSO networks, raising awareness at grassroots level moving the debate closer to the

² See Green Scenery website: www.greenscenery.org/posters.

³ For more information regarding the multi-stakeholder platform, see FAO brief entitled, "A good practice on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure: a multi-actor and multi-sector approach in Sierra Leone": <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6270e.pdf>

ACTIVITIES

- ◎ 1 National level ToT in Freetown.
- ◎ 4 Province-level ToTs in:
 - Freetown for the Western province;
 - Port Loko for the Northern province;
 - Pujehun for the Southern province;
 - Kailahun for the Eastern province.
- ◎ 4 radio programmes on VGGT of 15 minutes each.
- ◎ 1 Documentary produced.*



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level of the affected people on the ground, and strengthening those actors to engage in national policy processes.

Strengthening CSO networks

At national level, the trainings realized through this project directly helped CSOs enhance their participation in the Multistakeholder Platform and strengthen their contributions to the VGGT Technical Working Group of Sierra Leone.

At provincial level, the trainings allowed for local CSOs to connect with each other as well as find ways to continue to work together for tenure security. After the workshops participants created a virtual chat group, using the mobile application Whatsapp, in order to maintain contact, particularly with ALLAT and Green Scenery, and continue to discuss tenure issues in their communities.

CSOs representatives from Liberia were invited and attended the ToT (and vice versa) in order to facilitate learning exchange and create synergies amongst civil society organizations dealing with similar tenure issues in the two countries.

* <http://www.cultureradiosl.org/>

Links to national policies

Trained CSOs which benefitted from capacity building activities are now replicating VGGT-related trainings on tenure policies/legislation without FAO-funding for local authorities and other relevant actors within their constituencies. Specific focus lies on the implementation of the National Land Policy and the role of local authorities in its implementation or on the rights of women in land governance. In addition FAO and ALLAT organized a VGGT training for parliamentarians in June 2017 to sensitize them on the issues.

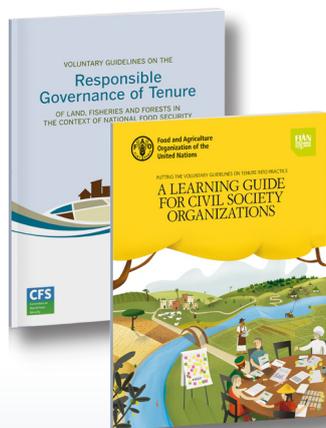
Reaching grassroots level

After the province-level trainings, participants continued the work to disseminate information on the VGGT, engaging their communities, families and friends, raising awareness on the use of VGGT, keeping Green Scenery informed of their initiatives. A number of radio discussions were broadcast in the Tombo Community Radio, which featured the fishermen's union as a follow up to the training in the Western province, reaching a wide audience at local levels.

The workshop in Pujehun, Southern Province, highlighted a number of violent confrontations related to long-standing land issues. Through the training sessions on the VGGT and its use, several VGGT principles were identified as key tools to help promote more effective dialogue on these contentious issues. As a result of these trainings, Green Scenery and Culture Radio organized a joint national land conference that brought together land owners and users, as well as other stakeholders, during which the VGGT was presented as a key advocacy tool.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Strong **partnership** with 3 different national organizations: Green Scenery, ALLAT and Cultural Radio.
- ✓ **Effective road map** of capacity development activities as linked with VGGT implementation.
- ✓ **Participatory and multi-actor** approach within Institutional Framework.
- ✓ Use of **concrete cases** of tenure rights violations brought directly by the participants to the workshop.
- ✓ Effectiveness of using **other media channels** (e.g. community radio) to further reach and disseminate information to grassroots levels.
- ✓ Importance of **engaging parliamentarians and private sector** in VGGT implementation.
- ✓ Key **role of academia** in promoting VGGT principles and research in curriculum.
- ✓ Importance of **fighting corruption and discrimination** in land governance and enhancing transparency and inclusiveness.
- ✓ Promotion of key VGGT principles to help **de-escalate violent confrontations** between land owners/users and investors.



For more information on this project and FAO's work on the VGGT see:

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/increase-use-of-vgg-t-in-civil-society/en>
<http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/course/CSOMOB>

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