



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

Myanmar - Côte d'Ivoire - Guinea



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.



Myanmar

Myanmar has a population of 51 million people with circa 70%¹ living in rural areas and depending on agriculture for their livelihoods. Governance of tenure is a complex issue in the country, and after years of civil war, ensuring equitable and sustainable management of land and natural resources has become a national priority. In 2012 the government adopted two land related laws, namely the “Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law” and the “Farmland Law”. However, the former opened the allocation of land not formally registered to domestic and foreign investors, affecting community-managed resources, something which was already an issue due to laws enacted 20 years prior (e.g. “Management of Culturable Land, Fallow Land and Waste Land” law). The latter law instead saw in excess of 9 million smallholder parcels registered, covering circa 24 million acres of land. However, the registration process was not always implemented properly, resulting in a number of registration errors. Neither law addressed customary/communal tenure systems nor the land rights of ethnic groups.

To address these issues, and to make the process more inclusive, the government organized a consultation process to discuss a new draft National Land Use Policy (NLUP) in October 2014, to design an overarching framework for the governance of tenure of land and related natural resources. In parallel, various grassroots organizations organized pre-consultation workshops throughout the country, to raise awareness on the draft and facilitate the response of local communities. The overall process was key in allowing for constructive dialogue and building trust between stakeholders. The policy was approved in January 2016, indicating the VGGT among its basic principles to guarantee equitable land access to smallholders and landless people, with consideration for customary land and gender equality.

¹ www.fao.org/capacity-development/news-list/detail/en/c/378889/

Activities in the country

During the consultation process on the NLUP, the network **Land in our Hands (LIOH)** and other key CSO networks were strongly engaged at local level. FAO decided to join efforts with LIOH, along with the **Transnational Institute (TNI)**, and the local office of FIAN International to implement a series of specific capacity development activities on the use of the VGGT.

Through the project, two capacity development workshops were organized in Yangon and in Mandalay with participants from LIOH-affiliated organizations, environmental, development, human rights and women’s rights NGOs, and a government representative. A draft translation of the VGGT in Myanmar language was produced for use during the training events in order to allow for better discussion and understanding of the main concepts and principles of the VGGT. Training materials were made available in Myanmar language wherever possible.

© **Land in our Hands (LIOH)** is a farmers network comprised of more than 60 community-based organizations and CSOs dedicated to promoting, protecting, respecting, and fulfilling the tenure rights of small-scale farmers and fisherfolk, particularly rural women and ethnic communities, striving for durable peace and equitable and sustainable development in Myanmar.

© **Transnational Institute (TNI)** is an international research and advocacy institute committed to building a just, democratic and sustainable planet. TNI acts as a unique nexus between social movements, engaged scholars and policy makers and has been active for more than 40 years.

Main areas of impact

The trainings provided a key opportunity for CSOs to build a common understanding around the use of the VGGT, and to discuss and to elaborate their inputs in the ongoing land reform process. In turn, this has allowed for CSOs to engage together with other state and non-state actors, paving the way for the development of a national multi-stakeholder VGGT platform.

As work in Myanmar continues to move forward, there is strong potential for future development in the promotion and inclusion of the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines on Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF), furthering complementary work on the two guidelines as well as finding synergies between CSOs and grassroots organizations involved in the agricultural and fishery sectors.



Côte d'Ivoire has a growing population of over 22 million people, with over 60 ethnic and cultural groups. In recent years, urbanization has been expanding, with the population almost evenly divided between rural and urban areas, and with 65 percent of land used for agriculture. Tenure insecurity in the country is a complex problem, partly due to the country's complicated history since independence in 1960, which saw moments of economic highs and lows. In recent years, the country has seen somewhat steady economic growth, yet one that benefits urban areas more than rural areas.

In 1998, with the support of the World Bank, Côte d'Ivoire adopted the Rural Land Law (Law 98-750 adopted 23 December 1998), which aimed to transform customary land rights into private property rights regulated by the state. The law is considered to be ambiguous, overly complex and costly, and has caused conflict, sometimes violent, among ethnic groups over issues such as land access and use of resources. The State in general lacks the institutional capacity to properly implement the law. Modifications to the laws were made in 2004 and 2013, yet a revision of the overall legal framework related to rural land is planned for 2018.

In recent years, some progress has been made, particularly at the institutional level with the establishment of the Rural Land Agency (AFOR) in 2016. On 18 January 2017, the government announced the adoption of the new Rural Land Policy Declaration, which aims to identify and formalize the mostly informal boundaries between rural villages, and clarify land property rights of rural landholders. Some of the questions and concerns raised by the 1998 policy remain with the updated law, therefore efforts are needed to ensure that implementation of the new policy is done in close consultation with customary groups and rural populations.

© *Plateforme des Femmes du Vivrier Pour la Sécurité Alimentaire* (PFEVISA) is a cooperative of female producers created in 2014 representing 5 regions of the country, which works to raise awareness on the importance of consuming natural, organic products in order to lead a healthy life and ensure their food security. PFEVISA is currently working to expand their representation to other regions of the country.

Activities in the country

Building on the work done at regional level, through the regional workshops organized with the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles, FAO decided to implement capacity development activities at national level to further support VGGT implementation in light of the new land policy process.

Working together with the **Plateforme des Femmes du Vivrier Pour la Sécurité Alimentaire (PFEVISA)** and the national platform of the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles, a three-day training workshop for CSOs was carried out in Abidjan 18-20 December 2017. This workshop saw the participation of 30 CSO representatives.

Main areas of impact

The activities with PFEVISA are complementary to the ongoing country project *Renforcement de la prévention et de la gestion pacifique des conflits fonciers* (UNJP/IVC/033/PBF), which aims to strengthen the capacities of the State, CSOs, communities and other actors in the agricultural sector to understand and implement rural land security, particularly the application of the rural land policy in support of the prevention and resolution of conflicts. In support of this work, two workshops were organized with the civil society platforms ALERTE-Foncier and Audace Institut Afrique Platform, on 26 January 2018, and the WSFC summer school on 3-4 February 2018 in Yamoussoukro.

The activities of the project, together with the formation of the national platform, comes at a crucial time in the country where land reforms are currently underway. The national platform brought together some 30 civil society and grassroots actors, working to defend the rights and common lands of urban and rural communities and towards sustainable change for all. The trainings conducted through the project have allowed communities to know and better understand the VGGT as a tool. In Sakassou, participants were able to see how the VGGT could be used in the fisheries sector to reinforce their management practices of the resources around Lake Kossou. In Thongon, the trainings led to the development of a project to assess the impacts of mining on land and communities and post-mining management. Overall, participants and their communities are better able to engage in the national process and advocate, sensitize and dialogue with political leaders and communities.



In the Republic of Guinea, tenure issues are of key importance, with two-thirds of the population living in rural areas, and over 70% of the population working in the small-scale farming, fishery, forestry, and mining sectors. With the political instability the country has faced in recent years, conflicts over rights to land and other natural resources have increased.

Many of Guinea's formal land laws and policies recognize customary land rights. However, statutory policies do not always coincide with customary practices, and state administration institutions lack crucial capacities and resources in order to properly implement these policies, therefore leaving most of Guinea's land formally unregistered and vulnerable to transfer by both the State and privatization.

At regional level, the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles together with the support of this project and FIAN International, have made efforts to establish a regional multistakeholder platform to encourage experience sharing and dialogue with CSOs and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) representatives on the implementation of the VGGT in West Africa. In 2017, two key regional activities took place: a multistakeholder dialogue in Nigeria in February 2017; a regional CSO training in Ghana in October 2017. The interest generated from these workshops led to a number of country-level activities to be developed.

Activities in the country

Building on the momentum of the abovementioned regional workshops, FAO decided to work together with the **University Youth Association for Environmental Protection (AJUPE)**, and, together with the national platform of the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles, organized a training workshop for CSOs on the VGGT.

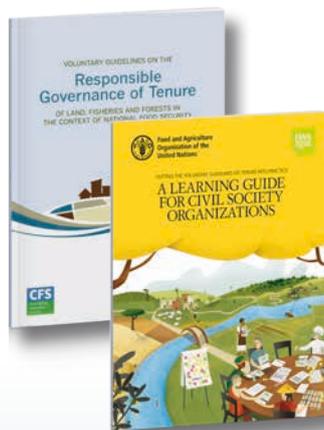
© *Association des Jeunes Universitaires pour la Protection de l'Environnement (AJUPE)* is a national NGO, based in Labé which promotes and monitors community-level development projects. AJUPE acts as focal point for the national platform of the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles and is active in mobilizing CSOs on issues related to land, water, seeds and agroecology.

The workshop took place in Conakry, 24-26 October 2017, and brought 30 delegates from four of Guinea's Natural Regions, including members of the national peasant platform, Confédération Nationale des Organisations paysannes de Guinée (CNOPG) and CSO networks. A work plan for the national platform of the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles was designed to continue mainstreaming the VGGT at country level.

Main areas of impact

The workshop promoted a participatory approach, through use of the methodology and techniques of the learning guide. The discussions on each theme allowed participants to exchange knowledge through concrete examples taken from their respective experiences and contexts with regard to obstacles, prevention, management and resolution of land conflicts.

As a result of the project's activities, members of the national platform of the West-African Convergence of Land and Water Struggles as well as other CSOs are now more aware of the principles of the VGGT and how they can be used in the Guinean context. Thanks to the workshop they have become more involved in the discussions on the new land law currently being developed, and local government officials are in turn more aware of the specific issues and concerns of local communities.



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>

All information included in this leaflet is based on documentation produced through the project by FAO and implementing partners.

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