



# SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE OF TENURE OF LAND, FISHERIES AND FORESTS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY IN **NIGER**

## Project update

The implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) in Niger led to the construction of the process called *États généraux du foncier rural*, which triggered the elaboration of a national land policy based on an inclusive and participatory approach.

## Outcomes and impacts

### Preparing a historic land tenure forum in Niger

This project helped FAO to provide continuous support in preparing a historic multi-actor land tenure forum in Niger, called the *États généraux*, apex of a long preparation process aiming to take stock on the tenure situation in the country. The *États généraux*, organized on the basis of a request made by the National Committee of the Rural Code in October 2014, were prepared under the aegis of the President of the Republic in a highly inclusive and participatory way. This process culminated in February 2018 with a 4-day high-level forum attended by more than 300 participants from all sectors and regions of the country. The forum led to an agreement on an action plan and a consensus on elaborating a national land policy with the VGGT and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa as reference.

To steer the process towards the *États généraux* and the preparation of the land policy, a national multi-actor committee was officially established by Ministerial decree by the Ministry of State, Agriculture and Livestock. Ahead of the *États généraux* the committee prepared a report to take stock on the tenure situation in Niger with contributions from a diversity of stakeholders from all regions of the country.

Due to the government's firm decision to continue this participatory and inclusive approach, the committee in charge of implementing the recommendations of the *États généraux du foncier rural*, was expanded from 17 to 44 members to include representatives from key ministries, academia, traditional chiefs, parliamentarians, technical and financial partners, the private sector and civil society actors. From the very beginning, the FAO project supported the establishment and the organization of this multi-actor committee, which has the mandate to oversee the process towards the elaborating of the land policy process after the great success of the *Etats Généraux*.

## Key facts

CONTRIBUTION: 120 000 USD

DURATION: 2015-2018

BENEFICIARIES: national institutions working on land, fisheries and forests, in particular the Code Rural, members of the local land commissions, civil society organizations.



## Consensus building among key stakeholders

To ensure the full engagement of influential stakeholder groups, dialogue and information sessions were prepared with members of the Parliament, as well as with the traditional Chiefs from all regions. Additionally, a large civil society 'pre-forum' brought together CSO representatives from all over the country to prepare the *États généraux*. During this forum, which included a 3-day training on the VGGT, a diversity of civil society actors agreed on a common vision for a land policy and recommended to make use of the VGGT to support local governance initiatives in all regions of the country. These dialogue sessions were possible to organize due to a strong collaboration between different partners and projects, such as the EU funded project PSSFP/RGF, the Belgium funded FMM project and the ProMAP/GIZ.

Engaging with the different groups at an early phase of the process, and working separately with each to understand their concerns and positions, helped to build trust and consensus prior to the engagement in the multi-stakeholder dialogue. It also helped to ensure strong ownership and commitment from key stakeholder groups throughout the process.

## Strengthening stakeholders' capacities for a fully participatory process

A series of national capacity development workshops allowed the strengthening of the capacities of key stakeholder groups at national, regional and local level to take active part in the national process of improving governance of tenure in Niger. In all regions of Niger, a series of workshops was organized together with the committee, GIZ and the French Embassy. These workshops allowed key stakeholders to engage in the process of preparing the *États généraux* and the land policy document. Each region developed an action plan and elected four representatives as their focal points to closely follow the process and ensure information sharing at the local, regional and national level. Finally, a national seminar was held to inform the larger public about the recommendations made in the regions to orient the land policy.

## Assuring strong buy in, partnerships and sustainability

From the outset of preparing the *États généraux* in Niger, FAO worked closely with the Rural Code and buy-in was built all along the process through regular meetings with the national authorities. These dialogue meetings led to an increased commitment from the government, in particular the Minister of State, Agriculture and Livestock, who participated actively in committee meetings and mobilized other ministers to support the idea of preparing a land policy, based on a participatory and inclusive approach.

FAO also played a key role in mobilizing 15 technical and financial partners to support the *États généraux* and the process of elaborating the land policy in Niger. This large group of technical and financial partners now meet on a regular basis to discuss their support to the process, and to organize all land tenure related activities in Niger. This is an important achievement to ensure sustainability of the process beyond this project. Also to ensure sustainability and continuous support to this process (at least until 2020), FAO has mobilized complementary Regular Programme and SDC funds.

