

Key Messages: Outcome of the Technical Thematic Forum to Commemorate The 5th Anniversary of the VGGT

5 -6 October 2017, FAO Rome

What have we achieved?

In their first five years, the VGGT have contributed to remarkable shifts in land governance. People, including the most vulnerable and marginalized (pastoralists, peasants, rural women, fisher folks, rural workers and indigenous peoples) are already using the VGGT to claim, secure and restore their legitimate rights to land, forests and fisheries.

The VGGT have been a game-changer. At global level, the SDGs recognise land governance as critical to achieve the human right to food and nutrition, food security, poverty eradication, and more broadly the development goals.

In many countries, we see evidence of the VGGT being used to:

- Open space for inclusive policy dialogue for different claims/demands over land;
- Broaden participation in tenure governance processes, especially by women and vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- Encourage and enable legal reform processes, including VGGT incorporation into national legislative and policy frameworks
- Support efforts by rights holders to claim, secure and restore their legitimate tenure rights
- Contribute to more responsible land-based investments

The VGGT offer guidance to advance a people-centered approach to responsible governance of land, fisheries and forests based on the universal human rights framework. They enable people to exercise their rights to access, use, manage and control natural resources in an equitable and transparent manner, contributing to the 2030 Agenda to “Leave no one behind”.

What are the challenges?

Even though important achievements have been made over the past five years, responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests remains a critical challenge.

Billions of people are suffering from insecure access to land and other natural resources. In many countries, loss of secure access to natural resources, land concentration, and harmful practices of some investors are occurring at the expense of peasants, indigenous peoples, fishers, pastoralists and rural workers. More land and environment defenders are targets of violence each year, many of them losing their lives.

Lack of and/or inadequate policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for investments, including land transactions, is limiting opportunities of improved governance and promotion of responsible investment for rural transformation.

Weak governance of tenure jeopardizes sustainable management of natural resources and fuels conflicts, involuntary displacement and migration. It increases vulnerability to climate change, particularly of vulnerable groups and threatens efforts to conserve biodiversity.

What is the way forward?

To meet these challenges and to build on the achievements already made, the technical forum identifies the following strategic areas for action:

- Ensure that the application of VGGT is based on fundamental human rights;
- Ensure the effective protection of those defending the legitimate rights to land and natural resources;
- Continue the dissemination and awareness raising on the use of the VGGT to improve the governance of tenure;
- Promote systemic approaches to responsible governance of tenure. This requires addressing all aspects of land, fisheries and forestry governance and administration in a coordinated manner and with a medium to long-term perspective;

- Strengthen inclusive multi-stakeholders approaches for the application of the VGGT based on the principles of participation and accountability and mechanisms for conflict resolution. This demands strengthening capacity of all actors, in particular legitimate right-holders, to organize autonomously and to participate effectively; and to share lessons among different actors in multi-stakeholder platforms for tenure governance;
- Link tenure governance to strategies for sustainable and inclusive rural transformation, food systems, and territorial development, including responsible investments;
- Foster monitoring, of governance of land, fisheries and forests, and their contribution to the realization of the human right to food and the SDGs. This should be based on participatory and gender sensitive approaches, building on the CFS monitoring mechanism on implementation of the VGGTs;
- Promote the use of the VGGTs as central to peace-building in conflict and post-conflict situations;
- Integrate the VGGTs into strategies for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, as well as conservation of biodiversity;
- Elevate the importance of water tenure and move forward in establishing the concept in normative processes as well as in practical work.

Governments, UN agencies, development partners, land holders of legitimate rights to land, fisheries and forests, CSOs and the private sector are encouraged to keep momentum in use and application of the VGGT in light of the importance of governance of tenure for the realization of the human right to food and achieving the SDGs. To reach these outcomes, increased and more effective use of resources, coherence, accountability, more political support, and a long-term commitment are indispensable.

This event was jointly organized by the European Union and the FAO