



A good practice on multi-actor dialogue

The Voluntary Guidelines at the heart of Senegal's tenure reform

Context

Recent increased investment in Senegal's agricultural land, together with the challenges associated to climate change, salinization, and soil acidity and erosion have all combined to exert growing pressure on land resources. Since the adoption of the Law no. 64-46 of 17 June 1964 on the national domain, there has been no reform of the rural land tenure system in Senegal, despite the numerous contextual transformations that occurred over time.

To address the issue of land governance, Senegal has set up a National Land Reform Commission (CNRF) in order to carry out a major overhaul of the country's land tenure system. The National Commission responsible for the tenure reform was created by the Decree n°2012-1419 of 6 December 2012 on the creation of the National Commission on Land Reform. To implement this process, the National Commission on Land Reform has opted for an inclusive federal approach, based on establishment of platforms and open dialogue.

In this favourable context, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) committed to support a multi-actor initiative to implement **the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT)** in Senegal and to ensure the effective management of natural resources encompassing a sustainable development perspective.

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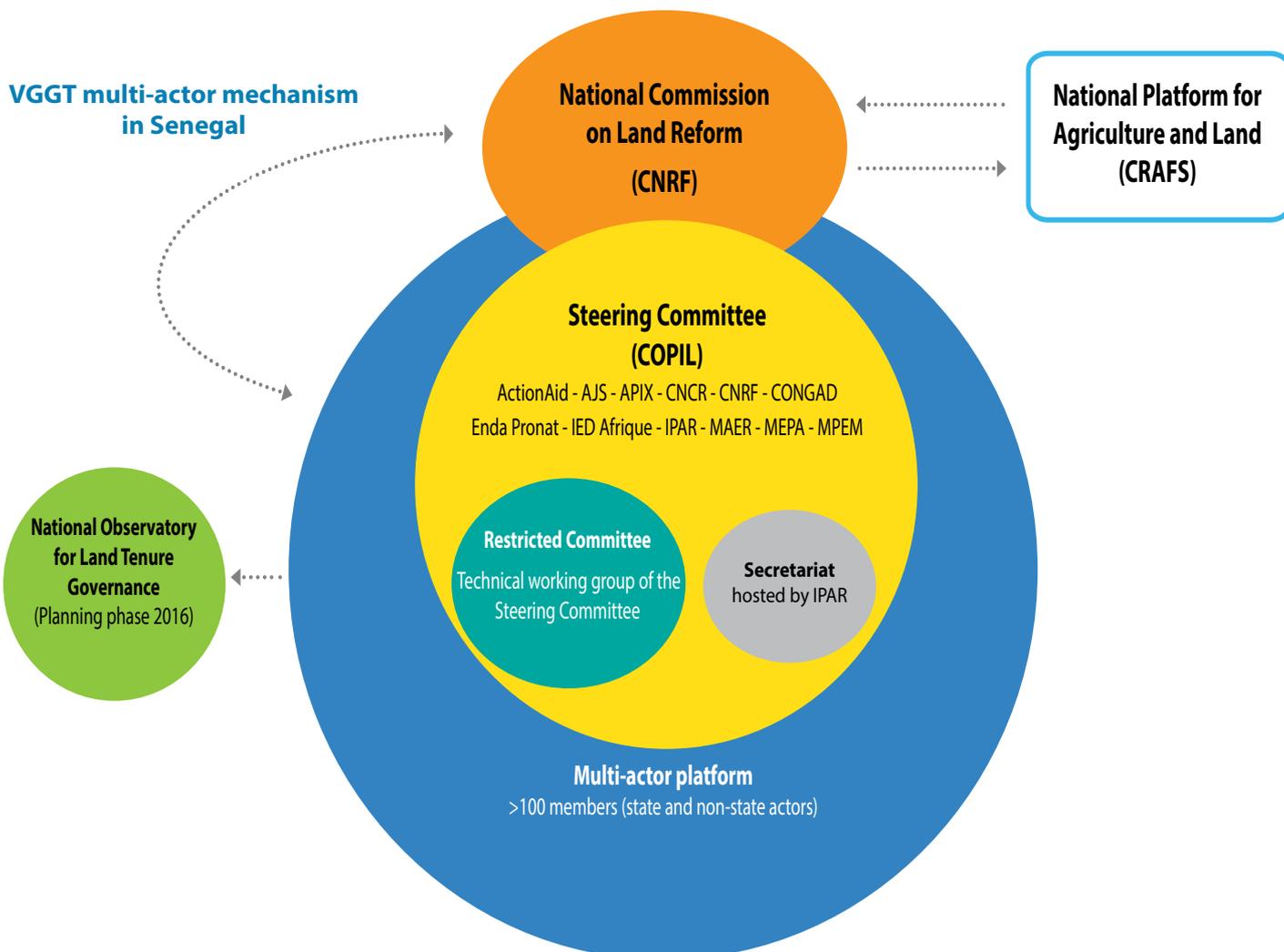
Methodological approach

In Senegal, the operationalization of the VGGT is an example of a **participatory process** that has led to the creation of a multi-actor platform and dialogue mechanism, aimed at fostering effective land governance as well as land tenure reform more specifically.

- ▶ **A national multi-actor platform** was set up during the first VGGT workshop in 2014, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment (MAER), FAO and the Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR), an independent think tank with focus on rural and agricultural development in West Africa. Strong input was provided by the national peasant platform, the National Council for Consultation and Rural Cooperation (CNCR) and financial support was provided by the governments of France and Italy, as well as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).



- ▶ The commitment of several of the participants following the first VGGT workshop, including representatives from civil society organizations (CSO), academia, the government, private sector, local authorities and producer organizations, led to the launch of a Steering Committee for VGGT implementation (Comité de pilotage), which is now meeting on a regular basis.
- ▶ **The Steering Committee** is chaired by a representative nominated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment (MAER) and co-chaired by a representative from the National Council for Consultation and Rural Cooperation (CNCR). The members include, inter alia, representatives from the National Commission on Land Reform (CNRF), the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy (MPEM) and the Ministry of Livestock and Animal Production (MEPA), the National Agency to Promote Investments and Major Projects (APIX), non-government organizations (ActionAid, Enda Pronat, the NGO council for development (CONGAD), the Innovation Environment Development (IED Afrique), the Senegalese Association of Lawyers (AJS) and the Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR)).
- ▶ The Steering Committee organized **the second national workshop in July 2015**, which was co-chaired by the National Commission on Land Reform and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment. The event focused on the operationalization of the VGGT in the context of the land reform process, with financial support from the Italian Cooperation for Development.
- ▶ In 2016, extensive work carried out by the Steering Committee led to the participatory design of the project to strengthen the dissemination and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines in Senegal, which will run for two years, with financial support from the Italian Development Cooperation.



The project, with the Steering Committee at its helm, aims to strengthen the capacities of all those involved in the VGGT implementation, to support and to implement the VGGT through pilot activities, especially at local level.

- ▶ The national VGGT project builds on existing efforts to improve tenure governance and on the **inclusive multi-actor approach**, with the Steering Committee at its core.
- ▶ The roles and responsibilities of the **Steering Committee** and its relationship with **all actors involved in the national multi-actor platform** are defined in a VGGT Project Management Manual in Senegal.

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Key success factors

Definition of multi-actor mechanisms and inclusive processes

The operationalization of the VGGT in Senegal is an example of an inclusive process, which involves different actors coming together in the Steering Committee to apply the guidelines and strengthen the ongoing tenure reform processes. The strong will to engage in dialogue and build synergies between different actors engaged in the process is a crucial factor for success. The multi-actor mechanisms are essential to give space for their interaction and plan for activities. The multi-actor mechanisms in Senegal have evolved over time and include now the following innovative structures:

- ▶ A wide national VGGT platform comprising more than 100 members.
- ▶ A platform Chair rotates every six months.
- ▶ An inclusive and consensus-oriented Steering Committee in charge of decision-making, managing, monitoring and implementation of planned activities.
- ▶ A technical working group within the Steering Committee, meeting on a daily basis.
- ▶ A Secretariat, serving as a coordination mechanism, in charge of administrative tasks, hosted by the Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR).

Box 1: A manual for defining roles and responsibilities

*The transparent implementation process in Senegal is reflected in a **Project Management Manual (2016)** developed by the Steering Committee, in order to define the roles and responsibilities of platform members and avoid duplication and disputes. The manual serves as a guide for the coordination between the different structures of the multi-actor mechanisms, as well as their responsibilities in terms of financial management. It highlights the crucial role played by the Steering Committee in the management, implementation and monitoring of the national VGGT project, and in the participatory decision making.*

An active and well organized civil society

In Senegal, civil society actors – particularly farmers' associations – are playing a central role in land reform and VGGT implementation. Civil society actors have historically been in the forefront of struggles and discussions for land governance in the country. The National Council for Consultation and Rural Cooperation is an example of a transparent farmers' network with an internal mechanism of accountability to its members. In 2010, before the launch of the VGGT, CSOs united to create the **National platform for Agriculture and Land** (Cadre de recherche et d'action sur le foncier au Sénégal, CRAFS), an autonomous coordination mechanism to organize land tenure activities. The CRAFS has played a central role in the process of coordinating efforts around the tenure reform process, despite diverging views on some of the most complex questions. The strong impetus from CSOs in Senegal is reflected in a series of activities and tools being developed at national and regional levels (see Box 2).

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Political commitment

A key factor for successful VGGT implementation in Senegal is the strong political commitment. The National Commission on Land Reform deliberately initiated a decentralized and inclusive process (including more than 118 decentralized consultations).

The Commission has since received and integrated reform proposals from all relevant key actors, including CSOs. The government's active participation in the VGGT Platform and Steering Committee strengthens the stability and effectiveness of the multi-actor mechanisms

As part of their national commitment the government proposes to set up a **national observatory** – as suggested in the draft land policy document – to collect and disseminate information and to monitor the implementation of the land policy reform. The observatory would follow the same principles of multi-actor engagement already being successfully promoted for the drafting of the land policy document itself. The national observatory would play a role in identifying challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the land policy, as well as providing guidance to develop strategies and support to policy-makers.

A major success in Senegal

Setting VGGT implementation in the context of the national tenure reform context is a major success of the multi-actor discussions. The platform has become important forum for discussion on how the VGGT can contribute to national policy making. The VGGT principles are now widely quoted as a key reference for everyone engaged in the tenure reform process.

Results

Key results of concerted efforts to reform governance of tenure include:

- **Capacity development and dissemination of VGGT**

The national VGGT project has fostered continued dialogue between state and non-state actors and has provided support for capacity-building activities targeting CSOs (supported by the Kingdom of Belgium and FAO) especially for women and young people. The project supported the civil society actors to organize a series of actions (see Box 2).

Establishment of the Steering Committee for VGGT Implementation (COFIL)
The Steering Committee is the key dialogue mechanism for consultation and decision-making regarding VGGT implementation

2nd National VGGT Workshop: Contextualization and Implementation of the VGGT

The Steering Committee constitutes the main forum for dialogue of all relevant actors:

- The Committee is chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment
- Co-chaired by the CNCR (National Council for Consultation and Rural Cooperation)
- IPAR hosts the Secretariat

2014

1st National VGGT Awareness-raising Workshop

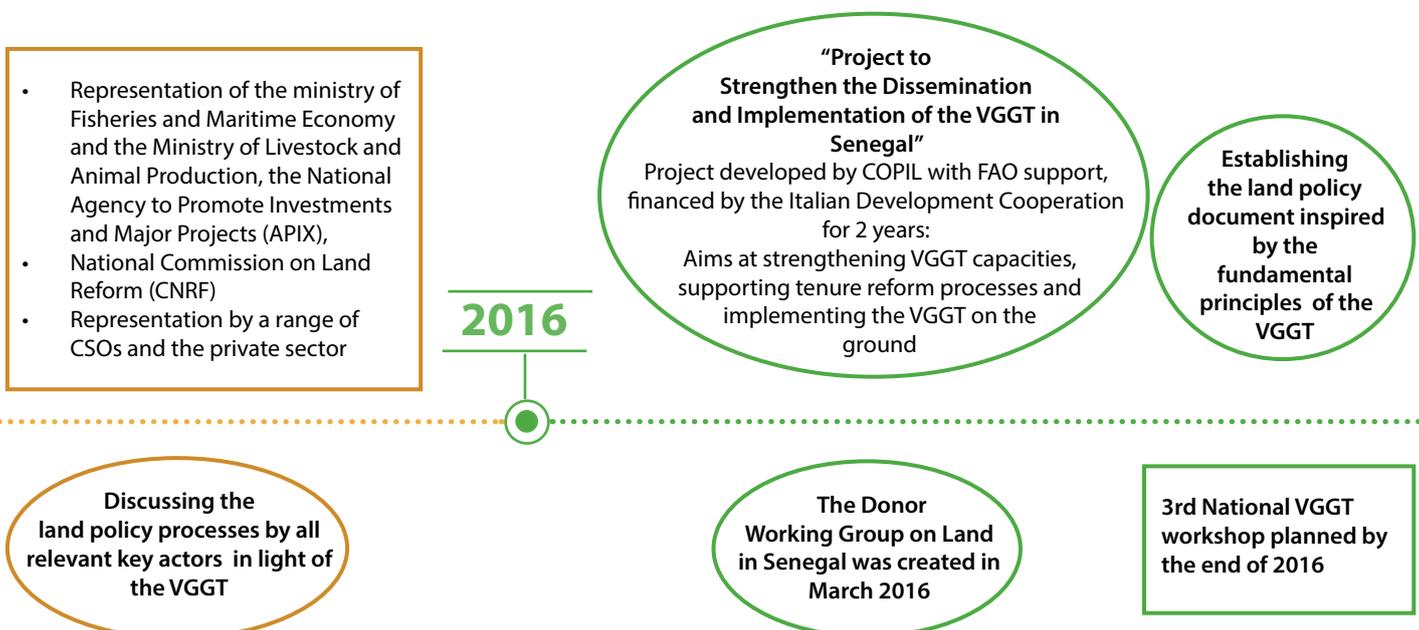
Involvement of various stakeholders:

- Around 100 participants
- NGOs, governmental institutions, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector

2015

Box 2: CSO activities

- Together with the National Platform for Agriculture and Land, the National Council for Consultation and Rural Cooperation organized a national tour of 45 departments, to inform people about the land reform.
- CSOs are currently setting up nine local groups, as community multi-actor spaces for dialogue on land tenure and the VGGT.
- With FAO support, CSOs have organized workshops to train other CSOs and grassroots organizations at district level, in some cases specifically targeting women and youth.
- CSOs have expanded their activities by training journalists, paralegal staff and parliamentarians on the VGGT.
- Local facilitators have received training to disseminate the VGGT in rural areas.
- The National Council for Consultation and Rural Cooperation has teamed up with the Associative and Community Radio Union to produce and broadcast some 30 radio programmes in several departments.
- CSOs have played a key role in promoting and proposing activities for the VGGT project in the Senegal River Basin, jointly implemented by FAO and IPAR, with financial support from the German government. See: www.ipar.sn/Bassin-du-Fleuve-Senegal-Dialogue-multi-acteurs-sur-les-enjeux-de-la.html?lang=en.
- Local authorities have been closely involved in CSO activities seeking to strengthen capacities and implement governance mechanisms (monitoring units) to improve land tenure governance at local level.
- Fact sheets are generated to explain the VGGT to a wider audience, especially at local level. The translation is intended in five national languages (Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, Jola-Fonyi, and Mandinka).
- With FAO support CSOs are developing tools to analyze case studies in the context of the VGGT. For example, a tool will be set up in order to assess tenure initiatives and projects through a VGGT-based framework of analysis tailored to the Senegalese context.
- In September 2015, CSOs launched a National Observatory for Land Governance (ONGF) in order to monitor governance of tenure in the country. The Observatory consists of district level watch groups – led by local peasants and farmers’ organizations – which gather and report data and information to the observatory. See: http://www.hubrural.org/IMG/pdf/l_ongf_version_finale_mars_2015.pdf



- **The VGGT as a framework for land policy**

The VGGT and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G) constitute the international legal frameworks for the draft land policy document in Senegal. Building on the VGGT's principles and recommendations, the land policy document puts a strong emphasis on the recognition of all legitimate tenure rights, including those that are not officially recognized (section 1.1.1.1, p 5). It promotes family farming, offers positive incentives for sustainable investment in agriculture, and aims to prevent any loss or infringement of tenure rights.

In September 2016, the National Commission on Land Reform shared a new draft of the document and conducted a new series of consultations with CSOs, local authorities, parliamentarians, private sector actors, and technical and financial partners. The National Commission on Land Reform assures that the concerns and suggestions of all stakeholders will be integrated into the final document. Following validation, envisioned before the end of 2016, the Commission plans to formulate a proposal for a new legal tenure framework.

- **Collaboration with technical and financial partners**

A new commitment for collaboration from technical and financial partners, including France, Italy, the European Union, USAID and the World Bank, creates a valuable opportunity to leverage the work of the national VGGT platform in Senegal. A **Donor Working Group on Land in Senegal, chaired by FAO and France**, was created in March 2016. The group aims at supporting the ongoing national tenure reform process and took stock of related existing activities, supported by resource partners. In addition, the **Global Donor Working Group on Land, chaired by USAID**, decided to support the Donor Working Group on Land in Senegal as a pilot group, together with two other countries (Colombia and Myanmar).

Training by the CNCR
at the Youth
College in Thiès.
11-12 December 2015



Challenges for sustainability

- ▶ The key challenge derives from the scope of the reform process objectives. The multi-actor approach in Senegal involves taking into account and consolidating a wide variety of interests and priorities that need to be integrated into a coherent framework.
- ▶ Although an inclusive and clearly defined multi-actor process requires more investment of time and resources at the beginning of the policy drafting process, it can improve governance of tenure in the long run.
- ▶ Strong private sector engagement is crucial to avoid tenure conflicts and ensure sustainable and responsible investments. There is scope for greater engagement of private sector representatives in the national processes of tenure governance, and specifically in the operationalization of the VGGT.
- ▶ Following the adoption of the draft land policy document, it will be crucial to maintain this multi-actor dynamic in planning activities and in the prioritization of actions. This would make an important contribution to the long-term success of the tenure reform process. As a driving force of multi-actor discussions, the Steering Committee can advise and provide technical support to the National Commission on Land Reform, based on the VGGT.

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Scaling up

Various aspects of the multi-actor mechanisms demonstrate a high level of openness, inclusiveness and transparency:

- ▶ Openness of the national platform and the Steering Committee to new members and partners.
- ▶ Consensus is the modus operandi of the Steering Committee.
- ▶ The coordination mechanism improves the flow of communication between the different institutions. For example, the Steering Committee has the responsibility to report to the platform as a whole. The Coordinator is tasked with producing regular reports on progress of activities and the financial situation.
- ▶ The mentioned manual defines the relationships and responsibilities of relevant actors involved in VGGT implementation.

These key elements should be taken into account by countries wishing to implement the VGGT inspired by Senegal's success. However, they must be adapted to the national context of each country.



Conclusions

In Senegal, the inclusive multi-actor dialogue and mechanisms have enabled citizens to engage in critical discussions to improve tenure governance. Senegal has launched a participatory process as a crucial step to allow citizens taking part in shaping the country's future tenure governance system. The National Commission on Land Reform has shown strong political commitment to revitalizing stalled national tenure reform process, supported by VGGT as a critical framework to resolve land tenure issues. The Commission is fostering equitable access to land and natural resources, so as to safeguard investments made by family farms, agribusiness enterprises and small-scale farmers and fishers, as well as forest dependent communities, while contributing to sustainable development. The inclusive reform process and open dialogue witnessed between state and non-state actors has strengthened the ownership, accountability and sustainability of VGGT operationalization in this country. In particular, the innovative activities carried out by the Steering Committee throughout the two years of the national VGGT project will make a valuable contribution to the tenure reform process in Senegal.

«The Voluntary Guidelines represent a human vision of land and natural resource management, which reflects the African approach of the social and spiritual value of land, beyond economic interests. Their principles are universal and the messages they carry are welcomed by everybody. If we compare the tenure reform process in Senegal to the building of a wall, everyone must help in the construction and be able to see his or her brick in the final result.»

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More information

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