



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

Malawi

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.



Malawi

In Malawi, the majority of the population rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Yet, over the past decade, rural Malawians have witnessed a surge in large-scale land acquisition for commercial agriculture, which has threatened their access, use and ownership of customary land. In order to protect people's tenure rights, a review of the national laws and legal framework was strongly needed.

In February 2002, a new Malawi National Land Policy (MNLPP) was adopted, but remained ineffective due to the lack of a related legal framework. An attempt to reform the Land Law was made in 2013 when the Parliament proposed the Land Bill and the Customary Land Bill. The draft amendments received some criticism from civil society due to the lack of provisions to ensure equal access to land for women, and from traditional chiefs due to limitations of power over customary land. By the beginning of 2017, a total of 10 land laws had been passed by Parliament awaiting final approval to be made operational: Land Bill, Customary Land Bill, Land Survey Bill, Physical Planning Bill and amendments to the existing laws (i.e. Registered Land Bill, Land Acquisition Bill, Malawi Housing Corporation Bill, Forests Bill, Public Works Bill, and Local Government Bill).

Partnering with civil society

Considering the limitations of the legal framework, the project adapted the Learning Guide to focus on using the VGGT as a stopgap to help local communities have better awareness of their tenure rights, increased understanding of the tools to defend those rights, and be better positioned to take part in the national policy processes related to access to land and other natural resources.

In order to reach a wide range of civil society actors in the country, FAO partnered with **LandNet Malawi**, a main civil society network made up of over 40 national CSOs and NGOs working on land issues in Malawi. The organization's network is very active in the areas of advocacy for equitable legislation regarding access to resources and tenure security. They were heavily involved in the National Land Policy and New Land Law development process, making them a strong partner for this project.

© **LandNet Malawi** is a CSO network advocating for pro-poor and equitable land and natural resources policies and legislation. Since 2003, LandNet has been a member of the "Special Law Commission on the Review of Land-related Laws" to translate the findings and recommendations of the National Land Policy into a New Law. This work culminated in the repeal of four Acts and the publication of eleven land related Bills presented to Parliament in June 2013. It is currently member of the national Technical Working Group on Land Governance.

Activities in the country

In 2015, the project organized a number of awareness-raising and capacity building workshops, particularly focusing on the Salima, Dedza and Netchu districts. A total of 3 Training of Trainers (ToTs) were held, training a total of 10 national trainers to be able to further replicate such workshops.

Additionally, at community level, 3 VGGT awareness-raising meetings were held and 7 VGGT meetings with local government representatives, including one specifically with parliamentarians in Salima, to discuss the VGGT, the national land policy and the new land laws. These workshops sensitized over 350 persons, including civil society representatives, village headmen, traditional leaders, district government officials, and parliamentarians. To further the outreach of the project, 2 radio programmes were broadcast in the local language Chichewa on the VGGT (broadcast on Zodiak FM and Bembeke FM). Through these programmes, information on the VGGT and how the guidelines could be used was

spread to reach those members of the community that could not participate in the workshops and/or who are unable to read the related documentation.

In support of the activities, LandNet simplified and translated the VGGT into local languages as well as produced a set of promotional posters to help raise awareness on the VGGT to be disseminated and shared at local level.

Since the project was tailored to the specific country context, the workshops also included specific sessions on gender, the principles of Responsible Agriculture Investment (RAI) and the Right to Food Guidelines (RtF) to further capacitate the participants on key international policies and normative tools.

Through the Delivering Results Together Fund, FAO was able to secure more funding to extend the reach of the project to eight more districts. As of the end of 2017, 14 out of the 28 district structures had been trained by the trainers who participated in the capacity development activities of this project.

ACTIVITIES

Workshops held at district-level:

- 3 Training of Trainers.
- 3 community level awareness-raising workshops.
- 6 awareness-raising meetings with local government staff.
- 1 awareness-raising meeting with parliamentarians.
- 2 radio programmes on VGGT broadcast in Chichewa language.

People trained:

- 10 national trainers.

People sensitized:

- 140 CSO reps.
- 120 village headmen; 18 traditional leaders.
- 51 government staff; 30 parliamentarians.



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Links with other VGGT initiatives

A similar Right to Food project and World Bank investment project, with FAO technical assistance, is underway in the Shire Valley (Shire Valley Irrigation project). This project aims to help the government pilot the law Land Act, especially the Customary Land Law and secure the tenure of small orders within the contest of the development of irrigation blocks.

The land component of the Shire Valley project is part of the VGGT implementation at national level. This project was approved by the World Bank in June 2017 and will be implemented in 2018.

Thanks to the success of this project's capacity development trainings, additional ToT workshops were held in Thyolo, Mzimba and Kasungu districts within the framework of a Right to Food Project supported by FAO and UNWOMEN.

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 Malawi. In particular, the project saw positive results in building stronger CSO networks, raising awareness among grassroots, and strengthening those actors to engage in national policy processes.

Strengthening CSO networks

As a result of the project, there is a clearer understanding of which CSO actors are working on VGGT issues in Malawi.

These actors have enhanced their capacities in areas of advocacy and capacity development, reaching wider audiences to further support people on the ground.

ToTs were scaled up to 14 out of 28 districts existing in Malawi, greatly widening the network of CSOs working on VGGT. Creating a solid network of CSOs working on issues of land rights at district level was crucial to identify key issues (such as access to district resources), and address them effectively with relevant stakeholders.

Links to national policies

Through its partnership with LandNet Malawi, the project was able to impact the work of the Land Governance Technical Working Group, a multi-sectorial and multi-actor platform chaired by the Ministry of Lands, comprising of relevant government ministries, academia, CSOs, donor agencies and the private sector.

Through this platform, consensus was reached on the proposed land bills for them to finally be approved by Parliament.

In particular, the project supported the sensitization of traditional chiefs, who previously showed strong opposition to the new law proposals. However, through raising their awareness of the VGGT and ensuring inclusiveness in the policy discussions, their opposition was lowered and allowed for the new land laws to be enacted.

Furthermore, participants to the trainings drafted a gender-sensitive proposal to ensure equitable access to land; this and other recommendations related to gender were incorporated into the provisions of the recently passed land bill.

Reaching grassroots levels

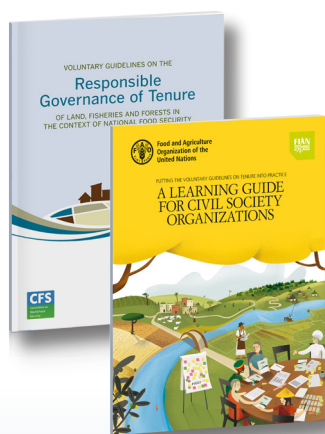
The project had a remarkable impact particularly at local level. Those who were trained during the ToTs were able to conduct subsequent awareness-raising meetings at community level, further reaching the grassroots levels. The principles of the VGGTs were even translated into two local languages—Chichewa and Tumbuka—increasing the number of people sensitized on the principles.

The VGGT proved to be an essential tool for informing Malawians on land rights protection. The context analysis carried out during the workshops highlighted the main land issues, and the VGGT provided participants with stronger arguments to be able to better defend their rights. The project saw the effects of the trainings in cases such as Malele fishing island and Bibi Kuulunda (see box below). In these communities, people stood in defense of their rights, and thanks to the awareness raising and increased dialogue, traditional chiefs agreed to use the VGGT in investment negotiations and incorporate VGGT principles in their approach to land administration.

In addition, women dialogue groups were set up in all districts where the project was implemented, facilitating women's participation in land issues. These spaces aimed to build women capacities, confidence, leadership and advocacy skills. Therefore, women can actively participate and raise their voice in spaces where land issues are being discussed.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Strong **partnership** with LandNet and their well-organized CSO network.
- ✓ **Targeting various levels**, national, subnational and community levels, bringing different stakeholders towards a common understanding on the enactment of the national land law.
- ✓ Selecting **key drivers of change** as training participants: people with strong interest in land issues that can influence the dynamics in decision making processes (i.e. traditional chiefs, women associations, smallholder cooperatives, etc.).
- ✓ Effectiveness of using **other media channels** (e.g. community radio) to further reach and disseminate information to grassroots levels.
- ✓ Importance of translating **materials and documents** into local languages for further dissemination to grassroots communities.
- ✓ Ensuring **support for follow-up** of the action plans.



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

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/increase-use-of-vggt-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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