



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

Kyrgyzstan

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.

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.



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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.



Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan, agriculture is fundamental for the country's economy, accounting for more than 30 percent of the GDP and employing more than half of the population. In many parts of the country there is both a lack of land and of non-agricultural employment, therefore smallholders face limited capacities to provide a sufficient livelihood for themselves and their families. The Land Code of 1999 regulates agricultural land, industrial lands, settlement areas, forests, protected natural territories and reserve land, yet customary practices still greatly influence the development of formal legislation procedures, resolution of land disputes and observance of the law in the villages. Concerns have been raised by farmers on the legislative frameworks which oversee land distribution (e.g. the Land Redistribution Funds), which often lead to conflicting roles of state and local government officials.

Moreover, the country faces a range of tenure issues such as geographically unbalanced use of pastoral lands, insecure women tenure rights, and unsustainable land use and water systems. Access to land and natural resources has often been a cause of conflict between Kyrgyzstan and neighbouring countries.

Since FAO appointed a Representative to the country in 2014, efforts have been made to provide policy and institutional support with regard to the agriculture sector, including crop, livestock and fisheries projects, and support to sustainable land and forest management in the face of climate change. The VGGT has proven to be an essential tool that can contribute to national efforts towards the eradication of poverty and malnutrition in the country, through the promotion of secure tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests.

In December 2016, the FAO Regional Office of Europe and Central Asia (REU) organized a capacity development workshop in Budapest, Hungary for CSOs on the implementation of the VGGT which successfully trained circa 40 CSO representatives on the role of civil society in implementing the VGGT at country level. During this workshop, the methodology of the project's Learning Guide was presented to participants as a useful modular training tool to be used for CSOs. During this workshop, the Kyrgyz Republic was identified as a beneficial country for implementing this project considering the need to address sustainable land management in Kyrgyzstan, along with the number of land-related regulations in place (e.g. Land Code (1999), the Law on peasant farming (1999), developed after/in frame of the Land Reform in 1991).

Partnering with civil society

Through this project, FAO worked with the **Nomadic Livestock Keepers' Development Public Fund**. The Fund has a strong presence at grassroots level, and their connections and collaborations with other CSOs was a great asset to the project as it allowed for a wide range of actors most directly affected by the national land reform processes to be involved in the activities.

© *Nomadic Livestock Keeper's Development Public Fund* is a sister organization of the Kyrgyz Sheep Breeders Association (KSBA), a national cooperative which has become an important player in the sheep industry, and 117 local level Sheep Breeders Groups.

Activities in the country

Together with Nomadic Livestock Keepers' DPF, the project implemented a number of activities in the Kyrgyz Republic, in particular organizing two national level and one sub-regional capacity development workshops.

The first national-level training workshop was held in Suusamyr in August 2017 and brought together 35 representatives of pastoralist communities, including women and youth. The workshop had a particular focus on pasture land, and helped improve knowledge and understanding on the principles of the VGGT as well as the application of the FAO Governance of Tenure Technical Guides on 'Improving governance of pastoral lands'.¹

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5771e.pdf>



The VGGT principles were assessed from the perspective of the National Pasture Law, adopted in 2009.

The second national-level training workshop was held in Bishkek in October 2017, training 30 representatives of national NGOs on the VGGT. On the second day of the workshop, a public awareness-raising event was held at the Ministry of Agriculture Conference room for Kyrgyz parliamentarians and government officials in order to strengthen dialogue between the government and CSOs.

Finally, although not directly funded by the project, a sub-regional 2 day workshop was organized with additional sources of funding in April 2018 in Bishkek bringing together 53 representatives of CSOs and grassroots organizations from the land, fisheries and forestry sectors from various Central Asian countries, including Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, to share and exchange their experiences on implementing the VGGT in their home countries. The aim of the workshop was to further develop the capacity of CSOs on the VGGT and intensify the dissemination of information and experiences on the VGGT within the sub-region of Central Asia, where tenure rights are generally less secure and land governance weaker than in the rest of the region. Part of the workshop was dedicated to presenting and testing the Learning Guide and exchanging views on how the modular approach could be applied in their respective countries.

Links with other VGGT initiatives

The results of the project have been closely linked to other VGGT initiatives (both directly and indirectly connected) taking place at national and regional levels.

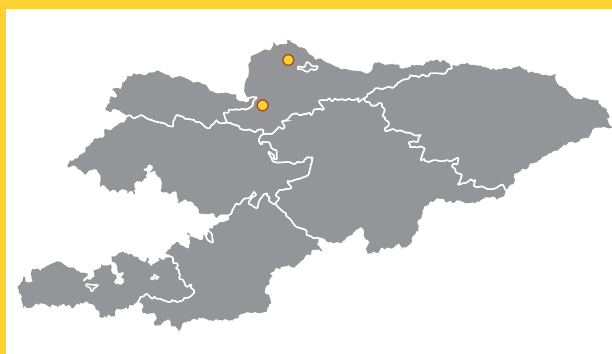
The project's country-level activities, in particular the subregional workshop, allowed for more links to be made among actors across the Europe/Central Asia region and identify and build synergies with other VGGT-related activities, such as the FAO REU project on the implementation of the Guidelines in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The project was implemented from September to December 2017 and, in addition to raising awareness on the VGGT among key stakeholders, assessed the legal and institutional framework for the compliance with VGGT and prepared a roadmap for the targeted implementation of the recommendations in both countries.

Main areas of impact

The capacity development given through this project positively impacted a number of areas within civil society's work on tenure issues in Kyrgyzstan. In particular, the project saw positive results in building stronger CSO networks both at

ACTIVITIES

- © 1 Training workshop in Suusamyr.
- © 1 Training workshop in Bishkek.
- © 1 Awareness-raising public event on the VGGT in Bishkek.
- © 1 sub-regional workshop in Bishkek.



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national and sub-regional levels, raising awareness among grassroots organizations, and strengthening those actors to engage in national policy processes.

Strengthening CSO networks

The activities of the project contributed greatly to strengthening CSO networks in both the country and the region. The workshops resulted in the creation of partnership and networking platforms among CSOs and grassroots organizations working on VGGT and related tenure issues. CSO leaders also agreed to meet with experts from the Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development to discuss further collaboration on the use of the VGGT in the country.

Links to national policies

The public event with members of the Parliament and other government officials was incredibly important in building links between CSOs and what is happening at national level in

terms of policy. During this event, delegates from the pastoral community and from various national NGOs were able to address government officials directly on the wide use of the VGGT in enhancing tenure-related policies and legislation, and how to encourage active involvement of grassroots organizations.

Parliamentarians were able to provide attendees with feedback on the ongoing legislative processes to ensure that the country's national strategy on food security was moving forward.

Reaching grassroots levels

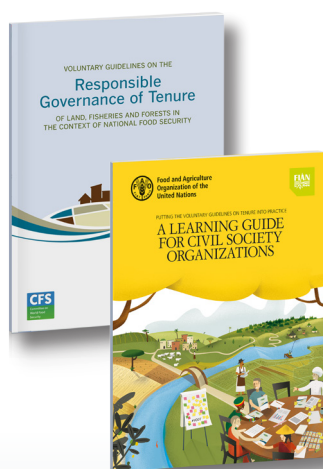
Strong efforts were made to ensure that the information shared during these workshops were publicized to reach a

wide audience at local levels. Press releases, announcements, interviews and articles were produced for local newspapers, TV and radio in Kyrgyz language. The workshops have led to continued dialogue with journalists, reaching an informal agreement with the National Radio Channel, to collaborate and support future VGGT activities.

During the public awareness-raising event with Parliamentary members, all materials and relevant information were provided to the government officials both in hard copy as well as soft copy through the distribution of memory sticks containing all related documentation. The event was also widely broadcast by local TV, radio and newspapers allowing for the information shared to be even further disseminated.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ **Strong collaboration** with the Nomadic Livestock Keepers' Development Public Fund.
- ✓ **Wide network** and exchange of experiences both in-country and in the region.
- ✓ **Involvement of media outlets** and news organizations in broadcasting events and further disseminating information to 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-vgmt-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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