

CFS **CFS 48** **SIDE EVENT**
 COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY
 Special Session
 4 June 2021

Operationalization of the VGGT through Innovative Mechanisms in Open and Transparent Land Governance

Thursday, 3 June 2021
 9:00am - 10:30am CEST

Speakers:
 Ellen O. Pratt, Liberia Land Authority
 Laura Meggiolaro, Land Portal Foundation
 Sam Szoke-Burke, Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI)
 Tim Hanstad, The Chandler Foundation
 Javier Molina Cruz, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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Organizers: CHANDLER FOUNDATION, Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, land portal, ODC open data charter

Operationalization of the VGGT through Innovative Mechanisms in Open and Transparent Land Governance

Summary of Outcomes

This CFS 48 Side Event explored the benefits of open and transparent land governance systems for the Voluntary Guidelines of the Governance of Tenure. It considered VGGT provisions on the legal recognition and allocation of tenure rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, how rights are transferred and how land transactions are undertaken.

Javier Molina Cruz, Senior Land Tenure Officer at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was the chair of the event. During his introduction, he noted that according to article 7 of the [VGGT](#), governments should identify all existing tenure rights and right holders, whether recorded or not, including for indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems.

Sam Szoke-Burke, a Legal Researcher for the [Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment \(CCSI\)](#), highlighted the importance of designing systems that meet the needs of diverse constituencies to assure less-dominant actors, such as communities, indigenous peoples, and women, are not left behind. He emphasized four critical components of transparency, including disclosure of all relevant and accurate information in a timely manner, safe access to information, providing information in comprehensible formats and ensuring governance systems are open and democratically responsive.

Tim Hanstad, CEO of the [Chandler Foundation](#), underlined that strong land rights upheld by land institutions provide housing security, give confidence for individuals to invest in land and businesses, allow companies and households to borrow using land as collateral, enable governments to collect property taxes, and are a foundation for sustainable environmental stewardship. He underscored that working land tenure systems and institutions serve as the foundation for sustainable prosperity. Mr. Hanstad noted that corruption is a cancer that substantially limits the ability of government institutions – including land institutions -- to provide the good governance necessary to build an inclusive prosperity.

Natalia Carfi, Interim Executive Director of the [Open Data Charter](#), presented their Open Up Guide methodology, which is a tool aimed to be used by governments to collect, manage, and release sectoral data to improve data quality, availability, accessibility and use to promote citizen engagement, decision making and innovation, focusing on a range of sectors and addressing agriculture, climate change, corruption and land governance.

Laura Meggiolaro, Team Leader of the Land Portal Foundation, then presented the [Open Up Guide on Land Governance](#), which is directed at governments as a playbook to support them in making their land governance data open and available for others to reuse. She underscored how the Open Up Guide on Land Governance sets out clear key datasets for land management accountability, and how they should be collected, stored, shared, and published for improving land governance and transparency.

Ellen O. Pratt, Commissioner of the Liberia Land Authority, emphasized that her institution plays a pivotal role in land governance in Liberia, as they are tasked with effective and equitable land governance. She indicated that with the help of our multi stakeholder platform for the VGGT, Liberia passed a landmark legislation in support of land rights, named the Land Rights Act in 2018, arguing that this is one of the most progressive laws in support of customary land tenure on the African continent. She said that lack of information is a key challenge, particularly because 43% of the Liberian population is illiterate, indicating that key provisions of law, particularly sections relating to customer land tenure, were translated into local languages, as well as broken down into 'Liberian English.' Ms. Pratt extended her gratitude for the initiative to develop the Open Up Guide on Land Governance, and said that the Liberia Land Authority is prepared to pilot this guide in Liberia.

Chris Hegadorn, CFS Secretary, took the floor, and expressed appreciation for Ms. Pratt's presentation, and indicated that there is a great need to hear about these shared experiences to help inform other countries who are struggling with many of these same issues, such as questions of governance and fighting corruption, which undermines so much of the good work that is being done.

Social Media Highlights



Special #CFS48 side event on the #VGGT & open and transparent land governance with @ChandlerFdn @CCSI_Columbia @opendatacharter @UN_CFS @TimHanstad @landportal #landrights #opendata Exploring other dimensions of VGGT including planning land use and combating land degradation



Tim Hanstad @TimHanstad

Governance of land resources is a critical government function with huge implications for all citizens.

Join me at a #CFS48 side event tomorrow to learn more.

Register here: mailchi.mp/landportal/cfs...

@landportal @Landesa_Global @CCSI_Columbia @opendatacharter

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[@landportal](#) Ellen O Pratt speaks about the work of the Liberia Land Authority and new Land Rights Act specifically recognising customary tenure rights. Highlights the importance of clear accessible messaging about rights in law. Explanatory guides translated into local languages.



10:07 AM · Jun 3, 2021 · Twitter Web App



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Highlights the key challenges of data fragmentation and the need to ensure that we digitise correct information so as not to legitimate corrupt transactions.

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Nearly 70 percent of Liberia's 3.3 million citizens live in rural areas and own their lands collectively according to customary laws. Despite strong customary claims, for the past 62 years the Liberian government claimed all lands as owned by the state.

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New Act enables communities may define themselves according to community members' preferences – so long as they do not discriminate or exclude residents.

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Community members are considered to be the private owners of their customary lands. The Land Rights Act ensures that customary land ownership is private land ownership, as protected as private lands bought and sold on the land market.

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