

Unlocking the potential of the VGGT through Land Degradation Neutrality

Side Event 31 – Summary report

13 October 2022

A decade ago, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) unanimously endorsed an internationally recognized reference document for practices regarding the governance of tenure: the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest in the context of National Food Security (VGGT).

This side event at the 50th session of the CFS, co-organized by FAO, UNCCD, TMG and the Land Portal, discussed how integrating the VGGT into land degradation neutrality (LDN) initiatives can re-ignite momentum to enhance tenure security and to unlock multiple social, economic and environmental benefits yielded by land degradation neutrality. The side event was attended by over 140 participants from across the globe.

FAO presented the [technical guide on how to integrate the VGGT into the implementation of the UNCCD and land degradation neutrality](#). The technical guide is a key milestone in the effort to increase tenure security and outlines flexible and action-oriented pathways to bridge the gap between land restoration and responsible governance of tenure at national and local levels. The side event focused on understanding what are the key actions for implementing the technical guide, each of the panellists sharing insights from their respective context of work.

The key messages emerging from the discussions include:

- Accelerating VGGT implementation requires collaborative and multi-stakeholder efforts that fully take account of the complexity, as well as sensitivity of land tenure arrangements in different contexts; it also requires efforts to increase accountability by Governments.
- Young people have competence in land issues, they are key stakeholders in renewing rural areas and hence, their land rights need to be protected and their active participation ensured.
- Civil society plays an important role in adapting the technical guide to local contexts and strengthening upward accountability in LDN initiatives.
- There is a tenure data gap in informing decision-making, a [data story](#) presented by the Land Portal revealed some practical challenges in obtaining policy relevant data and monitoring the implementation of agreed targets at different levels.
- Actions to strengthen tenure security link with a broader development agenda and for instance Canada's Feminist Development Policy supports projects that advance inclusive governance, particularly from a gender equality perspective, and contributes to research efforts to strengthen a just climate transition.
- There are resources under climate finance and the GEF's land degradation portfolio that could be accessed to accelerate the implementation of the VGGT in the context of land-based initiatives.
- Further investments are needed to support African countries to establish meaningful partnerships and strengthen their capacity to mainstream rights-based LDN action across institutional silos.

- Regional coordination can help link global frameworks to national and local action, facilitate technical support and capacity building, and strengthen monitoring of national and global processes.
- Protecting the land starts with the people – the VGGT provide a robust reference point for recognizing and safeguarding legitimate tenure rights, even where such rights may not be codified in law.

Panellists:

- Lifeng Li, Director of the Land and Water Division at FAO
- Juliet Luwedde, Global Focal Point for UNCCD Youth Caucus
- Aurelie Bres, Land Tenure Officer at FAO
- Marioldy Sanchez, Manager of the Forest Alliance at AIDER, former UNCCD CSO panel member
- Daniel Hayward, Country Research and Engagement Consultant at Land Portal
- Elizabeth Brilliant, Senior Policy Analyst and UNCCD National Focal Point at Global Affairs Canada
- Ulrich Apel, Senior Environmental Specialist in the Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- Asher Nkegbe, Upper East Regional Director of the Environmental Protection Agency of Ghana and UNCCD National Focal Point for Ghana
- Ombretta Tempra, Human Settlements Officer – Land Specialist, GLTN/Arab Land Initiative
- Miriam Medel, Chief of External Relations, Policy and Advocacy Unit at UNCCD

The event was moderated by Jes Weigelt, Head of Programmes at TMG