

Tenure Security for All: The case for local and global action to advance implementation of the VGGT

Side event 33 - Summary Report

Friday, 27 October 2023, 13:30 - 14:45 (CET)

This event was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom, the International Land Coalition (ILC), the Struggles for Land Forum, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, TMG Research, the Land Portal Foundation, and the Netherlands Enterprise and Development Agency (RVO).

The escalating pressure on food systems and land use, climate change and eroding respect for human rights have led to a deepening global crisis in the recognition and protection of tenure rights, which are essential for food security and livelihoods for millions of people. However, progress towards achieving SDG target 1.4 on equal rights to ownership and control over land and other resources, as well as other land-related SDGs, are off track. In 2012, the CFS endorsed Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, or VGGT in short, which provide the guiding global framework for good land governance. But in 2023, at the half-point mark of the SDGs, urgent and coordinated global action is needed to mobilize political action and investment to achieve tenure security for all.

The key messages emerging from the presentations and discussions include:

- Land and tenure security are central for those who live on and from the land, for livelihoods, for socio economic well-being, for the cultural, family and personal ties to land, but also important to peace, democracy, climate and nature.
- Accelerating a new focus of 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, but most importantly, it requires efforts to increase accountability by governments.
- More coordinated global and local action is needed to advance tenure security. There is need for lots of different actions at different levels and the more actors can join forces, the more powerful and effective they will be. Many more different players need to be mobilized to make the case for land tenure security on a global scale.
- The existing *global land agenda* actors are a very loose coalition of organizations who have been joining forces over the last two years, all from different stakeholder groups, but keen to expand that and bring others on board. Yet, more collaborators and more voices are needed to really start campaigning and having a more unified message that can be taken to different events.
- There are moments in which political forcing happens, such as in high-level summits where political leaders come together, and they are put under pressure or have incentives to make commitments. Such moments can definitely help in mobilizing and encouraging countries to make commitments and to hold them to account.
- Another approach to take is organizing meetings with high-level political champions from governments and international organizations willing to take leadership on tenure security, to further

develop a framework for action that outlines the key interventions that need to happen for change to take place.

- Successful movements in other sectors mobilized and organized themselves to sustain their own global agendas; there are several elements to learn from them about how to mobilize global momentum, attention, funding and political action. In many cases, they were able to develop a very clear and compelling narrative or message.
- Proper financing is necessary to make reforms for the recognition of all legitimate tenure rights, so more thinking is due about how to mobilize more resources at all levels to support communities and their bottom-up efforts to protect their rights, and also to support national level reforms in line with the VGGT.
- Often the language used in the land sector is quite technical, quite complicated. It must be simplified not just for politicians to convey an easier message, but for the public to be more aware of what a movement for tenure security is about.
- The use of human rights tracking tools is important to monitor civil society actors' programming and how functional the legislative and policy frameworks are, but also to see how this translates to actual actions on the ground so as to build power that the communities themselves are able to push for land reforms, in line with human rights obligations that the State has.
- More consideration needs to be placed on the structural and institutional inability to recognize the growing landlessness and homelessness and especially in the context of Indigenous Peoples, nomads, fisherfolks, pastoral communities, single women, etc.
- Demand more recognition of the power of land and agrarian reforms as a community-based answer against the climate crisis and hunger. The growing rural population is witnessing the climate crisis, which is affecting a large number of people and their livelihoods. We must strengthen the voices of the people who are facing the landlessness, they need to be empowered on the land rights movement.
- Access to information is highlighted as a fundamental human right, crucial for good land governance and access to essential services, yet, land data consistently ranks low on global indices, indicating a lack of openness.
- There is a growing demand for sophisticated technologies and capacities to manage digital data. Investment in open data systems and infrastructure is crucial. Engaging all stakeholders in the global land debate around data is necessary, ensuring inclusive and ethical use of data for the public good.
- The recently established global land observatory (GLO) aims to produce and collect data so that it can be reported on. There is a growing number of governments who could champion this initiative. Data on how individual member states are performing against their own commitments, and where there's a way to track that and hold everyone to account.
- Pastoralists are still being ignored despite technical guides, politically not strong as a source of livelihood either. Fisherfolk also being left out even in events like this one there is not representations. The aim should be to amplify the voices of the poor and landless for land and

agrarian reforms. The unified messaging needs to encourage a proposed ministerial forum on land reforms, to understand, to recognize, to accept and start acting on better frameworks and go beyond the VGGT and SDG targets.

Panelists

Ward Anseeuw is the recently appointed Land Tenure Lead at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Ward served as Senior Technical Specialist at the International Land Coalition until recently, where he was seconded as a research fellow at the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD).

Chris Penrose-Buckley is the Senior Land Policy Lead for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom. Chris is an agriculture and rural development specialist with more than 20 years of experience in smallholder agriculture, market development and natural resource management in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Annette Mbogoh is the Executive Director of the Kituo cha Sheria- Legal Advice Centre. Annette has been an advocate of the High Court of Kenya for more than 15 years. Annette also serves as Chair of the Land State and Non-State Actors (LSNSA) network in Kenya.

Ramesh Sharma is the National Coordinator of Ekta Parishad, a mass-based peoples' movement for land rights with an active membership of 250,000 landless poor. Today, he represents the Struggles for Land Forum, which unites major farmers' organizations from 4 continents.

Laura Meggiolaro is the Managing Director of the Land Portal Foundation. She is a specialist in communication, information and knowledge management for development with a passion for Open Data. Over the last 18 years she has been responsible for initiating, managing and leading a range of data, information and knowledge initiatives focused on land rights.

The event was moderated by **Gemma Betsema**, Senior Programme Advisor for LAND-at-scale, the main Dutch land governance programme, at the Netherlands Enterprise and Development Agency (RVO) and she also currently serves as Chair of the Global Donor Working Group on Land (GDWGL).