



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

## South Africa

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.



# South Africa

South Africa has a complex history of tenure. From early on in its colonial history up through the apartheid regime, a large part of the population had lost possession of their lands. The effects of this are still evident today with 87% of the land owned by a small minority. With the adoption of the VGGT in 2012, however, South Africa has worked to incorporate many of the VGGT principles in its legal framework, calling upon the State to develop laws and policies in support of a rights-based tenure system.

The land and fisheries sectors and tenure systems are closely linked. There are many cross-cutting issues in terms of tenure rights, with a significant proportion of fishing communities subsisting also on land-based activities, including farming and forestry.

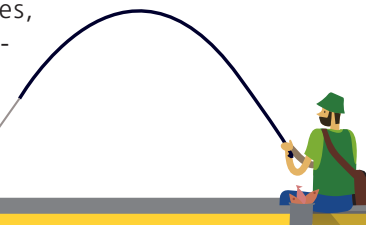
In June 2012, in line with the principles of the VGGT, the South African government endorsed a new national Small-Scale Fishery Policy (SSF policy). This policy was also influenced by the development process of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 2014, which built strongly on the VGGT, contributing to the empowerment of the small-scale fisheries sector.

In March 2015 the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries released draft regulations for small-scale fisheries, providing the criteria to implement the policy. This regulation presents important challenges and implications related to pre-existing tenure rights, such as customary rights, and requirements for constituting cooperatives.


## Partnering with civil society

Building on the momentum of the SSF policy and the SSF Guidelines, the project in South Africa was tailored to specifically focus on the fisheries sector, working with Civil Society to adapt the Learning Guide to consider both the national legal context and the specific thematic content related to tenure and fisheries.

With this focus, FAO partnered with **Masifundise Development Trust**, a national organization that works closely with small fishing communities, and is active in policy advocacy for those communities. With their specific



© **Masifundise Development Trust**. Established in 1980 and based in Cape Town, Masifundise Development Trust facilitates the mobilization and organization of fishing communities at grassroots level to increase the capacities of these communities to actively engage in political and economic decision-making processes. The organization lobbies for and advocates coherent governmental policies that build on principles of social and economic justice. The capacity development activities of Masifundise Development Trust and the numerous community workshops led to the constitution of a grassroots movement called Coastal Links, established in 2003 as a vehicle for small-scale fishers to secure their livelihoods and overall human rights.



knowledge and widespread network of community-based organizations, the project activities were adapted and formulated to deal with the specificities of small-scale fisheries and the details of the local legal processes with regard to tenure security in the small-scale fisheries sector.

## Activities in the country

The project organized a total of four capacity development workshops: one at national level in 2015 in Cape Town, and three provincial workshops in 2016.

These workshops successfully *trained* and *sensitized* a total of 159 people, including representatives of fishing and farming communities, and other CSOs, as well as members of the Department of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests and the Department of Investments and Trade. Provincial workshops were held in English with translation available into local languages (i.e. Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans), allowing for participants to fully interact and contribute to the discussions, and increasing the opportunity for further dissemination of information at community and grassroots levels.

In support of the activities, MASIFUNDISE also produced a dedicated Newsletter for the event as well as other information material in local languages.

## Links with other VGGT initiatives

The results of the project have shown positive impact in CSO participation in other VGGT projects and initiatives (both directly and indirectly connected) which were taking place in the country.

In December 2014, prior to the implementation of this project, an Awareness-Raising Workshop was held as part of the VGGT implementation in South Africa. In this workshop, over

## ACTIVITIES

- ① **National-level Capacity Development Workshop, held in Cape Town.**
- ③ **Province-level Capacity Development Workshops, taking place in:**
  - Cape Town for the Western and Northern Cape Provinces.
  - Port Elizabeth for the Eastern Cape.
  - Richards Bay for the KwaZulu Natal.



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50 participants from various sectors, including CSOs, reviewed the VGGT principles and engaged in a stock-taking exercise identifying country-specific priorities. A roadmap was developed to mainstream the VGGT and build a multi-stakeholder platform for implementation. Many of the CSO participants then attended workshops, which further trained and built capacities to be able to meaningfully engage in such a platform. This also contributed to a capacity assessment exercise undertaken in a national workshop held in Cape Town in May 2016. A third national workshop was held on 5-6 February 2017 during which an Interim Secretariat was put in place to support the work in creating a national Multi-stakeholder platform.

The *Learning Programme on Gender-Responsible Governance of Tenure* was another initiative which stemmed from FAO's overall VGGT programme, aimed at providing guidance for a better application of the VGGT principle of gender equality. The project included an online workshop, a face-to-face workshop and a post-workshop online mentoring period. This Learning Programme was rolled out successfully from September to November 2015. At least nine CSO representatives went on to attend workshops organized under the project. The *International Development Research Centre* (IDRC) funded an action research project to show how the VGGT can be used to protect the tenure rights of fisher people living within or adjacent to Marine Protected Areas in South Africa. This project was also implemented by Masifundise in collaboration with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS). The research started from the case of the Arniston

community in the Western Cape. Some community members had participated in the provincial capacity development training organized within the framework of the project, acquiring thereby crucial knowledge to be applied in the IDRC analysis, which is included in an IDRC research project entitled, "Bottom-up accountability initiatives in Large scale Land Acquisition."

## Main areas of impact

Along with the strong links with other VGGT initiatives, the concrete capacity development given through this project has positively impacted a number of areas within civil society's work on tenure issues at country level, in particular: building stronger CSO and cross-sectoral networks; finding cross-sectoral synergies; further disseminating information to grassroots level; and identifying links to key national policies.

### Strengthening CSO networks

Through the workshops, CSOs were able to consolidate networks—and in some cases develop new ones—connecting various sectors of civil society (especially between the fisheries and land sectors) as well as other actors (e.g. ministries, academia, etc.). Through these networks, CSOs were able to strengthen their participation, involvement and contribution to national tenure policy processes and increase knowledge, participation and tenure security, in particular at local levels.

The national workshop brought together people from fisheries and land sectors, building solidarity among them, recognizing the similarities in the challenges faced and highlighting the cross-cutting nature of the two sectors. This dialogue gave birth to a joint declaration with a strong call to strengthen local organizations to take a joint action on tenure issues.

Academia also played a strong role, in particular the University of Cape Town and the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS). Their active participation raised the level of knowledge and expertise being shared at the workshops and fostered a process of peer learning. Through this knowledge sharing, participants were better able to understand and analyse the current national legal system and see ways in which the VGGT could be applied in their local communities.

The strong cross-sector links that came out of the workshops, in particular between the land and fisheries sectors, influenced other countries to develop similar workshops and trainings, bringing together the VGGT and SSF Guidelines, finding synergies and building on these cross-cutting themes.

### Reaching grassroots level

The provincial workshops allowed for specific local experiences and issues to be presented and discussed, helping participants to better advocate for their tenure rights when engaging with provincial decision-makers, community members and the media.

# South Africa

During these workshops, decisions were taken to organize local community-level meetings to further raise awareness on the VGGT, exchange information and experiences on implementation, as well as keep the discussion on VGGT implementation going with other stakeholders, in particular with local authorities. Promoting cross-sectoral and multistakeholder events would also further the discussions and ensure the same level of information across sectors.

In addition, the importance of ensuring the involvement of youth was emphasized, with one of the provinces proposing the formation of a local activist's forum.

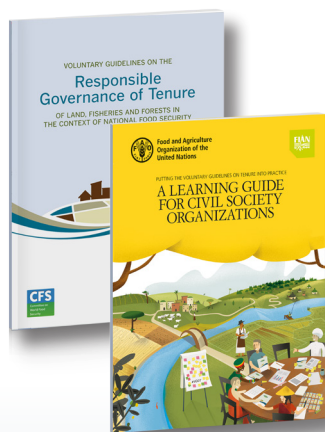
## Links to national policies

When the SSF Policy was drafted, many CSOs were involved in the joint national drafting team. Many of the same CSOs participated in the trainings held in 2015-2016, further developing their skills to participate in similar law reform processes. In particular, the provincial workshops helped CSOs formulate specific amendments to the law reforming the Marine Protected Areas. To increase tenure rights awareness at policy level and better defend those rights, the participants quoted specific aspects of the guidelines in letters directed to the authorities, asking for redress on current tenure arrangements.

By strengthening their knowledge on VGGT, CSOs are able to more effectively participate in multistakeholder dialogue. Some trained CSOs are now part of a Steering Committee created during the third national VGGT workshop, held in Durban in February 2017, during which a roadmap was developed to address capacity needs and build on results of previous workshops and learning programmes. The Committee is also tasked with establishing a national multistakeholder platform to implement this roadmap.

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Strong *collaborative partnership* with Masifundise and their extensive network.
- ✓ *Involvement of academia* raised the level of knowledge and encouraged peer learning.
- ✓ Translation/Interpretation into *local languages* during provincial workshops.
- ✓ Importance of availability of *materials and documents* in local languages for further dissemination.
- ✓ Need for establishing a *monitoring and advocating mechanism* to ensure effective implementation of SSF policy, in line with VGGT and other international guidelines.



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

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