

## Land Portal synthesis report of online discussion

Title of discussion	<b>HOW CAN THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES BE DISSEMINATED AND MADE EFFECTIVE?</b>
Objective of discussion	<p>The online Land Portal discussion was launched on November 5, to share experiences on:</p> <p><i>HOW To Disseminate:</i> How can the VG be disseminated? Share with us concrete examples on how these types of voluntary tools can be promoted.</p> <p><i>HOW To Make Effective:</i> How can we make these types of voluntary tools work? Share with us your experiences concerning multi-stakeholder platforms at national level which are contributing to widen the engagement on land-tenure processes.</p>
Participants	<p>Maurizio Navarra, GM, Italy; Jean-Maurice Durand, IFAD, Italy; Elisa Distefano, IFAD, Italy; Paolo Groppo, FAO, Italy; Fernando Eguren, CEPES, Peru; Suzanne Verhoog, University Amsterdam, Holland; Antonella Cordone, IFAD, Italy; Faburama Fofama, IFSN, Gambia; Charl de Villiers , Certified Environmental Assessment Practitioner, South Africa; Poul Wisborg , researcher, Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway; Claudia Cárcamo, Directora Fundación Cosecha Sostenible, Honduras; Alberta Guerra, ActionAid, Italy; Alexander Sagaydak. Discussion facilitator: Francesca Carpano, IFAD</p> <p><b>We thank all participants for their valuable contribution.</b></p>

In general terms, it has been underlined that although the VGs are a voluntary tool, they represent an important recognition of rights and duties: in fact **the word “voluntary” should not discourage us!** Other not binding instruments, like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) or the voluntary guidelines on the right to food are now fully recognized at national and international levels and used for the elaboration of policies and legal frameworks and texts. A second general comment refers to the fact that the VGs are seen as an effective tool to prevent the land grabbing phenomena and/or to contribute to solve conflicts over land.

More specifically, the dissemination of the VGs is seen as the very first step to ensure that local and national land tenure governance systems **respond to the needs of the rural communities** for their livelihoods: national Governments, land officials, local authorities, should acknowledge the VGs principles and standards and be trained in order to refer to best practices that are adapted at the local and national context and may ensure secure tenure rights to land for the most vulnerable.

On **HOW TO DISSEMINATE**, the first step is to make the VGs known by the very different stakeholders and several are the levels that should be taken into account when thinking about dissemination:

- a) the international level, mainly driven by the institutions, such as UN, multi, bi-lateral etc., that are promoting the guidelines;

- b) the regional and sub-regional level, represented by regional organizations, lobby groups, regional economic communities etc.; and
- c) the national level: whenever country X endorses the guidelines, it decides to disseminate them using the most appropriate media.

The **political endorsement** is the first key issue the international community needs to face when communicating the VGs. In the last 15 years, the tenure issues have been acquiring more and more attention and we should take advantage of this positive dynamism. Capacity building resources provided to farmers' organizations, pastoralists organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations etc. are crucial to the dissemination: with the support of FAO, IFAD and other organizations those constituencies can organize policy dialogues with governments and have the Guidelines known at local and community level.

At **international level**, a good starting point could be to put in place an information campaign on the Voluntary Guidelines and make them a must to be present in key international meetings so to make them broadly known. This campaign would strengthen people's ability to understand the role and importance of the VGs, and various mass media channels, such as radio, TV, Internet, newspapers and etc., could be used for it.

At **country level**, possible means for dissemination are proposed such as distribute the guidelines to all concerned Ministries in developing countries; community radio (FM Stations) panel discussion; regional farmers' consultative meetings; farmers newsletters; media (electronic and print, emails, text messages, etc.) campaign; training of policy makers. Course curriculum focused on the VGs could also be introduced in schools and universities.

**NGOs and CSOs** can help raising awareness on the VGs in their work with marginalized communities, first of all by providing them with supporting material to help comprehension of this complex legal instrument. Then, by supporting them in claiming for their legitimate rights to be respected and protected by the state. Last but not least, to advocate for setting up a national multistakeholder platform to assess the state of tenure against the VGs standards and identify areas that need to reform. In order to do this, NGOs and CSOs, both at international, regional and national level, should be involved in any initiative supported by the Rome-based agencies aimed at raising awareness of the VGs, in order to ensure the inclusiveness of the discussion from the onset.

CSO should target governments for info, ask them how they intend to implement the VGs they endorsed and put pressure for the concrete adoption of the VGs: they in fact should not necessarily wait for governments to initiate the process to implement the VGs, as in some cases, the government officials may be neither conversant with the content nor the value of the provisions of the VGs for their land tenure governance systems.

Finally, **the VGs should be accessible to all**: as previously mentioned, they are a complex instrument and therefore they should be made more user-friendly, more accessible in terms of length and language – without losing their fundamental spirit and nuanced to local contexts. Shorter versions of the VGs could be useful – as already prepared by FAO - more action oriented, at various geographical levels and possibly issue-specific. They should be properly translated into local languages, as it was successfully

done for the UNDRIP which has been voluntarily translated by various institutions in some 50 indigenous peoples languages.

On **HOW TO MAKE THE VGs EFFECTIVE**, the most effective way to implement the Voluntary Guidelines and make them effective is to have the people and constituencies whose rights are protected in the guidelines to disseminate and lobbying with their governments to have them adopted. Having a deliberate, funded programme of implementation would be an extremely operative way.

One of the first steps of the process of implementation should be an **assessment of the current situation** at country level, aiming in particular understanding what aspects of the VGs are already included in the institutional and legal frameworks and what aspects would need to be strengthened. In fact, at national level, two main situations may occur: (i) when a land reform is planned or already under design; or, (ii) when land reforms have been already completed or are not envisaged. According to the situation, the implementation strategy would be significantly different. In the first case the VGs should be used as a reference for the elaboration of the new legal corpus and their principles promoted through the policy dialogue. In the second phase, the process should concentrate on taking into consideration the principles of the VGs in the implementation modalities (elaboration of decrees, dissemination of participatory practices, advocacy, etc.). These are long term processes, which should also include the private sector. Pilot projects focused on implementation of the VGs should be initiated in different countries and lessons learned deriving from them should be scrutinized and replicated in other places.

Then, there is the need to strengthen civil society groups in **advocacy works**: it is important for civil society organisations to get first-hand information on how land ownership and control is being practiced and applied at various community and family levels. Applying the tools in diverse situation would require deeper understanding of the cultural practices relating to land in order to avoid tension within the community. Once civil society organisations are equipped with the right type of advocacy skills, the discussion on voluntary guidelines at any platform will work effectively and efficiently.

The **engagement of government** sectors responsible for land management and control is central as the Government has a prime role in protecting and guiding the use of land in any country and therefore it will be the interest of the government to ensure proper and peaceful administration and management of land. Engaging government authorities in advancing the tools will help make the tool work better.

### *For further information*

Further references	Land Portal thematic page on the Voluntary Guidelines at <a href="http://www.landportal.info/topic/voluntary-guidelines">www.landportal.info/topic/voluntary-guidelines</a>
	Land Portal discussion page on the Voluntary Guidelines at <a href="http://www.landportal.info/resource/global/how-can-voluntary-guidelines-be-disseminated-and-made-effective">www.landportal.info/resource/global/how-can-voluntary-guidelines-be-disseminated-and-made-effective</a>
	FAO Voluntary Guidelines page at <a href="http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/">www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/</a>