

# Challenges and Opportunities in Promoting VGGT to Secure Tenure Rights of Family Farmers



ISSUE PAPER  
**ASK. ANALYZE. ADVOCATE. ACT!**



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**M**a Win of a small village in Myanmar is anxious. An officer of the Forest Department has asked her and co-villagers to move out of the village, based on a piece of paper saying that the 700-acre land where they were staying, has been granted to the wife of a high ranking officer. Since 2000, she and co-villagers have been growing beans, lemons, pineapples, papaya and vegetables. From the nearby forests they have extracted fuel wood, medicinal plants and bamboo shoots. The villagers have long ago understood that the land was unclassified public forest. But now the officer said that the land had been reclassified as a wasteland and thus could be given to a private individual. If they leave, where will they go? Will her family survive? Today, some of the village leaders will be filing a complaint to the President. Will the President listen to their complaint? Will they be granted the right to stay in the village?

### CONTEXT OF THE VGGT IN ASIA

The eradication of hunger and poverty, and the sustainable use of the environment, depend largely on how people, communities and others gain access to and control of natural resources, especially land, fisheries and forests. These provide for their food, shelter and livelihoods, particularly for the rural poor. Tenure systems face increasing stress as the world's growing population requires food security, and as environmental degradation and climate change reduce the availability of land, fisheries and forests (FAO, 2012).

Societies and States define and regulate how people, communities and others gain access to natural resources, through tenure systems, whether through formal or informal arrangements. The rules of tenure determine who can use which resources, for how long, and under what conditions.

The governance of tenure is crucial in ensuring that vulnerable people and communities have adequate and secure access to these resources in the midst of the growing commercial demand for control and use of these resources.

Among other things, responsible tenure governance makes access to land, fisheries and forests more equitable, protects people from arbitrary loss of tenure rights, and helps ensure that disputes are resolved before these escalate into conflict. Weak governance, on the other hand, can lead to tenure conflicts that in turn result to worsened hunger and poverty or the loss of lives from violent conflict over these resources.



It is in this context of a growing demand for a more responsible governance of tenure that in 2012, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of the Food and Agriculture Organization approved the **Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forests and Fisheries in the context of Food Security**, or more commonly called the VGGT. The VGGT is the result of a three-year negotiation process that featured broad consultation and participation by 96 national governments, more than 25 civil society organizations, the private sector, nonprofits and farmers' organizations.

The VGGT sets out principles and internationally accepted standards and practices for systems that deal with the rights to use, manage, and control land, fisheries and forests. When implemented properly, the VGGT can help a country achieve food security and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods and sustainable social and economic development.

A secured right to land, fisheries and forestry resources is a basic need and demand of smallholders and producers, particularly in Asia, which is home to 75% of the world's family farming households. In a region where many still face problems of landlessness, continuous displacement and stronger threats of land grabbing and conversion of resources to non-agriculture uses, the VGGT presents a powerful instrument whereby farmers, civil society groups, governments can assess tenure governance, identify improvements and apply them.

The VGGT's major weakness, however, is it is a voluntary instrument and not legally binding. It does not replace existing national or international laws, commitments, treaties or agreements. But still, the VGGT is useful in providing guidance for national policies and legislation in many countries.

A strong push at the country level is therefore imperative for the guidelines to be recognized, adapted and effectively implemented by national governments. Small-scale farmers, fisher folk, women and other poor rural sectors must be made aware of the VGGT so that they can exercise their claim-making efforts and engage their governments to adapt them.

In 2014-2015, the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) implemented a project entitled “Popularizing the VGGT Among Small Scale Farmers Organizations, Relevant National Government and Inter-governmental Organizations” with the support of the International Land Coalition (ILC). The project aimed to (1) deepen the understanding and appreciation of VGGT by farmer leaders and key government officials at national level amidst their current conditions and struggles on land issues; and (2) support and facilitate implementation of land tenure assessment and action plans particularly those concerning large-scale land investment at the country and regional levels.

Through this Project, AFA conducted three pilot country studies conducted by AFA member farmer organizations: in Bangladesh, led by Kendrio Krishok Moitree (KKM); in Kyrgyzstan, led by Union of Water User Association Kyrgyzstan (UWUA); and in Cambodia, led by Farmer and Nature Net (FNN) and Farmer and Water Net (FWN). Local and national consultations were done in these three countries, involving 139 participants (with 42 women), with representatives from small-scale producers, non-government organizations, relevant national government agencies and intergovernmental organizations. In these national consultations, a draft policy paper comparing the VGGT provisions with relevant national laws were presented for further validation. A set of key policy recommendations and action points were then set out.

AFA also conducted a regional sharing workshop among AFA members and key partners in August 2015 to share and learn from the existing initiatives on popularizing VGGT and to draw some lessons learned and key action points for further promoting the VGGT in the Asian region. The workshop was participated by 42 participants, with 16 women.

This issue paper highlights the experience, challenges and opportunities in popularizing VGGT. It also puts forward some concrete recommendations on how to adopt VGGT principles

and provisions in a country’s legal framework to secure tenure rights for family farmers.

## CURRENT ASIAN POLICY ENVIRONMENT ON LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE VIS-À-VIS VGGT

The VGGT consists of seven parts. **Part 1** relates the context and process behind the formulation of the VGGT. **Part 2** defines a set of guiding principles on responsible tenure governance; the rights and responsibilities related to tenure; the policy, legal and organizational frameworks on tenure, and the delivery of services. **Part 3** imparts legal recognition and allocation of tenure rights and duties of indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems, as well as of informal tenure rights and those owned and controlled by the public sector. **Part 4** deals with transfers and other changes to tenure rights and duties through markets, investments, land consolidation, restitution, redistributive reforms and expropriation and compensation. **Part 5** elaborates on administration of tenure to include records, valuation, taxation, regulated spatial planning, and resolution of disputes over tenure rights and transboundary matters. Part 6 responds to climate change and emergencies, including displacement and tenure conflicts arising. Part 7 recommends how different stakeholders can promote, implement, monitor and evaluate the VGGT.

Comparing these guidelines with current policies and programs of various Asian countries, the three country studies as well as the inputs from the regional workshop depict major problematic areas in terms of responsible governance of resource tenure.

UWUA (Kyrgystan), FNN/FWN (Cambodia) and KKM (Bangladesh) report that agriculture contributes an average of 20% to their country’s Gross Domestic Product. Over 60% of their labor force is into agriculture. Ensuring responsible governance and equitable land and resource tenure is, thus, critical to achieve poverty reduction for majority of these populations.

In general, significant laws and policies are already in place, which propagate tenure security of smallholders and promote the principles espoused by the VGGT. However, violations and bottlenecks in the implementation of these policies abound, not just in the pilot countries, but in other Asian countries as well. The following table enumerates some of these policies as well as gaps, which may not comply with the VGGT principles:

Country	Some Policies/ Programs/Plans	VGGT Compliance	Policy and/or Implementation Gaps with VGGT
BANGLADESH	<b>National Land Use Policy</b> (2001), which ensures food security and commits to forest conservation	VGGT Sec. 20 on Regulated Spatial Planning to reconcile and harmonize different objectives of the use of land, fisheries and forests	<p>Refutes VGGT Sec. 12 that obliges the State, investors and transnational corporations not to violate human and legitimate tenure rights in relation to investments on mining, urbanization and environmental and development projects.</p> <p>Over 80,000 hectares of arable lands decrease annually and are converted to other uses. An example is the government approval of the Rampal Power Plant in 2013, which is just 14 kms away from the Sunderbans mangrove forest. It violates the condition that such projects should be 25 km away from an ecologically sensitive area.</p> <p>Meanwhile The Phulbari coal mining plant project, which will acquire large tracts of land up to 135 square kilometers for open-pit mining, will threaten food security and may physically and economically displace around 220,000 farmers and indigenous peoples.</p>
	<b>Agricultural Khas Land Management and Settlement Policy</b> (1997) <b>Land Reform Policy</b> (1972)	VGGT Sec. 15, Redistributive Reforms should guarantee equal access of men and women to land, fisheries, forests	Only 11.5% of agricultural khas land (State-owned) had been distributed; 68.8% of rural households still landless. Much political will is needed.
	<b>Forest Policy</b> (1994), <b>Programs on Social Forestry, National Parks, Eco-parks, Strip Plantations, Agro-forestry</b>	VGGT Sec. 9	<p>Counters VGGT guideline for the State to recognize, respect and protect the Customary tenure rights of people to land, fisheries and forests</p> <p>Forest Department (FD) officials have accused the indigenous peoples of illegal logging activities in reforestation project areas. Land tenancy disputes between the FD and the IPs are still unresolved.</p> <p>For the Forestry Programs, there is still low recognition of tenure rights of people in forest reserves as well as slow restoration of rights of those alienated due to these programs.</p>
	<b>Access to water policies</b> <b>National Water Policy</b> (1999, 2013) <b>Jalmahal</b> (water bodies) <b>Management Policy</b> (2009)	VGGT Sec. 9 to protect customary tenure rights of “other communities” (including fisher folk)	<p>Declares water bodies as State territory but does not protect from private ownership or lease</p> <p>To lease out public water bodies to marginalized genuine fisher folk groups registered with the local Social Welfare Department or Cooperatives Department (CD); registration with the CD to protect customary tenure rights of “other communities” is difficult and costly for extremely poor fisher folk communities, thus, impeding VGGT Sec. 9 (to ensure fisher folk access to resources)</p>
	<b>Development Plans</b> <b>Country Investment Plan</b> (2011-2015) <b>Vision 2021: 6th and 7th Five Year Plan</b> (2010-2020)	VGGT Sec. 12 that recommends investment models do not result in large-scale transfer of tenure rights to investors	CIP (Country Investment Plan) promotes economic growth over implementation of redistributive policies. Investment sources do not give an assurance that large-scale investments will respect the tenure rights of smallholder producers and will support the investments of smallholders.

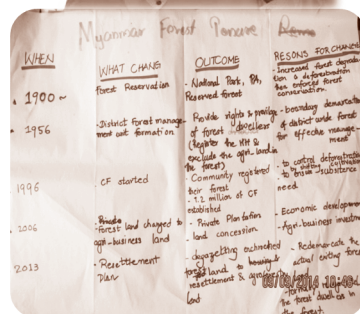
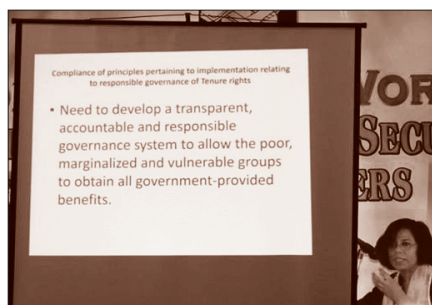
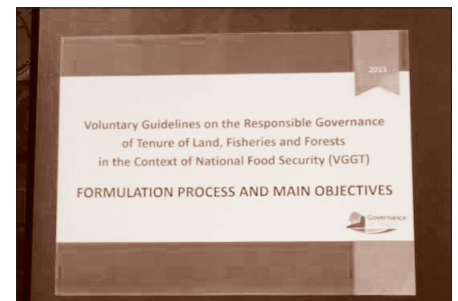
	<b>Indigenous Peoples Policies</b> <b>Chhto Nagpur Tenancy Act (1908)</b> <b>State Acquisition and Tenancy Act (1950)</b>	VGGT Sec. 9 on the State's obligation to protect the tenure rights of IPs thru recognizing customary tenure rights, traditional systems and institutions and ancestral lands	Both laws do not permit the transfer of lands from 'tribal' to 'non-tribal' people in the plains and required the permission of the District Commissioner to transfer land.
	<b>Women's Rights to Land</b>	No separate law	Inheritance law, social practices and patriarchy deny women the right to own land.
CAMBODIA	<b>Land Law (2001)</b>	VGGT Sec. 3B Rule of law	A Royal Kram dated 3 August 2006 allows the government to transform any state public land to state private land, contrary to the provisions of the Land Law.
	<b>Social Land Concession (SLC)</b> under the <b>Land Law</b> and <b>Sub-decree 2003, No. 19</b>	VGGT Sec. 3B Transparency, and Sec. 8.7 on the publication of policies covering the allocation of tenure rights  Sec. 14.4 on provision of support services	Potential beneficiaries of SLCs are rarely informed of the decision-making process, thus they are deprived of the opportunity to be awarded SLCs.  New settlements often lack infrastructures like schools and health centers, access to water is limited or non-existent, and a number of SLC sites are located in remote areas without access to roads and markets
	<b>Economic Land Concession</b>	VGGT Sec. 3B Accountability and Sec. 12.1 regarding responsible investments	There is no mechanism to ensure that grantees of ELCs do not violate the law or the conditions of their concession.
KYRGYSTAN	<b>Land Code (1999)</b>	VGGT Sec. 3 General Principles  VGGT Sec. 3B.4. Gender Equality, Sec. 4.4 on gender sensitivity, and other provisions on gender  Sec. 14.4 on provision of support services	The VGGT is humanitarian-oriented, while the Land Code and other government rules and regulations regarding land are technical-oriented. This may be due to Kyrgystan being a country in transition, especially with regard to land tenure governance.  Conflicts inevitably arise, especially in mining areas, as settlers' or inhabitants' concerns are poorly (or not at all) taken into account in cases of land transfer.  The law does not duly protect the rights of women with no economic status in the family; it does not guarantee that decisions on division of land parcels will be free of gender stereotypes and discrimination.  Beneficiaries of land transfer eventually experience poor productivity due to lack of support services post-transfer.
	<b>Civil Code (1997)</b>	VGGT Sec. 3B Gender Equality	While the Civil Code is, by its provisions, gender-neutral, local practice, where men are considered heads of households, complicates transactions involving land, especially when the husband works abroad.
	<b>Law on Agricultural Land Management (2001)</b>	VGGT Sec. 3B Gender Equality in relation to Sec. 6.1 on ensuring capacities of implementing agencies	While the law is, by its provisions, gender-neutral, the provisions enforcing women's rights have not yet received enough practical evidence of application due to lack of clearly defined criteria on divisibility of land/share and lack of approved procedures or mechanisms on land shares allotment

## CRITICAL FINDINGS AS IDENTIFIED BY AFA MEMBERS IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES

1. Absence of an enabling framework in new democracies that supports tenure rights of smallholders in land, forests and fisheries (Nepal, Myanmar, Kyrgystan). Asia's newly democratized countries in the last 15 years may still lack an overall policy framework to guide the governance of tenure of land, forests and fisheries. Nepal and Myanmar are still both in the process of crafting and finalizing their constitutions post-independence. Nepali farmers groups recognize the importance of ensuring that their constitution is consistent with the VGGT principles to address landlessness and other poor farmer's issues. Meanwhile, the Philippines still has no national framework for land use planning and management to help define guidelines in determining protection, production, infrastructure and settlement areas across the country.
2. Overlapping laws, rules and regulations due to confused development priorities (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Kyrgystan, Philippines, Cambodia). Conflicting claims over land between smallholders and business interests are escalating across the Asian region. The most contested conflict ensues from preference of States on investments for development over safeguarding environmental conservation, agriculture and fisheries for food security. In Bangladesh, the Country Investment Plan and National Food Policy Plan of Action failed to formulate and implement a comprehensive strategy on food security and

development and did not ensure tenure rights of smallholder producers and other vulnerable groups. In the Philippines, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) implements opposing programs on environment conservation and protected areas as well as regulating mining and other extractive activities. These opposing programs of various government agencies are happening also in Cambodia and Kyrgystan.

3. Conflicting land and resource claims between poor rural sectors (i.e., farmers vs. IPs, forest dwellers vs. IPs, etc.). There are overlapping tenure policies and instruments in certain areas in the Philippines and Indonesia. Some land reform areas are found within identified ancestral domain claims or titles. There are farming communities, displaced due to conversion of agricultural lands to commercial uses, who resort to occupying forestlands, which are either managed by indigenous peoples or forest stewards. No clear mechanisms have been established to resolve these conflicting claims.
4. Strong resistance of legislators, private companies in putting responsible governance on land tenure systems in place (Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh). Lawmakers with vested interests over land, forests and fisheries will naturally resist the passage of more pro-poor farmer laws. Private companies may also oppose policies that regulate or tend to control their lease and use of these resources. In Davao province, Philippines, banana growers launched a massive media campaign against the Agriculture Ventures Agreement bill.



5. Land administration and land use need to be seriously and immediately addressed. Land administration systems in Asian countries are riddled with corruption, red tape and overlapping tenure instruments, along with conflicting agencies mandated to distribute different ownership titles/ entitlements. This results in conflicting claims, which may lead to violence and displacement of equally poor communities. Meanwhile, large-scale land acquisitions or investments have increased for plantation-type agriculture with bananas, biofuels, pineapple, sugar. Land redistribution of these lands to smallholder producers and ensuring agricultural lands for food security are, thus, heavily threatened.
6. Policies for women's tenure security are scarce in Asia. Women do about 80% of agricultural activity in Asia; yet, they are not commonly entitled to property rights or services related to these. Hence, it is only fair that safeguards are put in place to protect women through policies, gender sensitive public services and infrastructure.



7. Need to review and revamp land and resource governance structures. It is a trend in these Asian countries for leaders of the bureaucracy to belong to the elite and influential in society. Thus, their vested interests affect their governance decisions. Moreover, current government offices concerned with governance of land, fisheries and forests do not have a common framework on how to redistribute these or manage their sustainable use. Programs and institutions do not comply with the VGGT objectives as they do not recognize or have little respect for the tenure rights of various sectors. Government bureaucracies are also reportedly withholding information about land distribution and ownership programs from their constituents.



### RELEVANCE OF THE VGGT TO ASIA'S SMALL SCALE FAMILY FARMERS

It is noteworthy that these voluntary guidelines recognize that ensuring responsible governance of tenure over land, fisheries and forests is central in realizing human rights, food security, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, and social and economic growth (FAO, 2012).

While it is not a legally binding instrument, AFA members and partners confirmed the importance of the VGGT in their struggle for tenure security during a regional workshop held last August 2015. They see the VGGT as a fresh approach to call on governments to make and implement pro-poor land policies, especially for land redistribution and management.

AFA farmer leaders from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal and the Philippines related how the rights of numerous women and men farmers and indigenous peoples are violated by commercial land grabbers in the name of plantation agriculture, deforestation and mining for most part. The Phulbari coal mining project in Bangladesh; "land grabbing" by Cambodian government of land in the name of economic land concessions (ELCs); disputes encountered by Mongolian farmers in pasture lands; an entire island in the Philippine archipelago being mined for nickel.

"The VGGT can help us shake government into recognizing the landless as citizens of Nepal and stop denying their existence," declared the farmer leaders of the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF) and the Central Tea Cooperative Federation Ltd

(CTCF). The Nepali farmers intend to use the VGGT to raise awareness among government officials and farmers alike about principles for establishing tenure rights.

Meanwhile, farmer leaders from AFA members in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam emphasized the value of the VGGT in promoting food sovereignty or the right of countries and communities to have access and control over land, water, forests and other resources and their ability to decide on its use and management.

The Guidelines are also viewed by AFA members in Mongolia and Vietnam as supporting their economic development as smallholders without compromising national, even regional, food security.

### CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING THE VGGT

With the Guidelines being voluntary and relatively new, much work is needed to popularize their adoption as policies or programs to help secure and protect the tenure rights of farmers, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, rural women and other poor rural groups. As such, AFA recognizes that international standards such as the VGGT can help



governments establish better land policies founded on social reform and justice. Some challenges that need to be overcome for their promotion are as follows:

1. **Low awareness about VGGT among policy makers, natural resource managers, and farmers' groups.** After agricultural attaches approved the VGGT in May 2012, the discussion was not brought back to their respective home countries. Farmers' organizations like AFA and non-government organizations like ANGO and RECOFTC are taking up the huge task of engaging governments and other stakeholders, especially

farmers groups, to discuss and use the VGGT to review existing land and resource policies and programs.

2. **Not yet formally launched or supported by governments; hence, VGGT adoption is not prioritized and budgeted.** Perhaps due to the lack of awareness on the Guidelines, government agencies responsible for resource governance are slow to launch a nationwide program to raise awareness on the importance of achieving these Guidelines for food security and sustainable livelihoods.
3. **Governments may be reluctant to use the VGGT as an assessment tool due to potential of revealing information about the real status of land ownership and tenure.** Farmers from Cambodia, Bangladesh and Nepal expressed this reservation. They say that grassroots groups are more often kept in the dark by their governments about their rights and entitlements, even their roles and responsibilities, over land and other natural resources. For example, in Cambodia, the government reports on economic land concessions is observed to be different from what has been actually taken away from small Khmer farmers. In the Philippines, there is a weak policy framework for proactive disclosure or access to information on land tenure, particularly in relation to markets, investments, taxation and valuation.
4. **Government "turfing" over their respective jurisdictions.** A trend in many bureaucracies is how different agencies dealing with land use and administration, land reform, forestry, fisheries and agriculture tend to be "territorial" over their area of jurisdiction. There is, thus, a tendency to avoid joint discussions where their performance might be assessed. Discussions on the VGGT involving different government agencies at different levels should, therefore, be carefully planned.
5. **Illiteracy and low education of farmers; No translated versions yet of the VGGT.** Simple yet effective information dissemination materials need to be developed to reach even the illiterate and non-English speaking audiences. Hence, government /intergovernmental support is needed for the translation of the VGGT.
6. **How to bring the VGGT to remote rural areas,** such as mountains, coastlines and other hard-to-reach places. Farmer leaders from some countries (Cambodia, Vietnam, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal) expressed concern over



how they can reach the rural poor in far flung provinces and villages, especially those found in mountains and without good road networks.

7. Other new challenges to land governance, like restitution of land rights, post-climate disasters and responsible agriculture investments, should also be addressed so as not to deprive poor rural sectors of their rights and access to land and natural resources.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN PROMOTING THE VGGT

Nevertheless, several opportunities were also identified to promote the Guidelines, as follows:

1. **VGGT is new; hence, there is interest.** VGGT provides a renewed platform for assessing existing laws and programs and possible revision. Seeing a new perspective in reviving the discussions around governance of tenure, CSOs and development partners have begun organizing consultations, workshops and dialogues with government officials and lawmakers since the approval of the VGGT. The target is for more decision-makers to know about these international Guidelines and to discuss the land and resource issues of poor stakeholders towards positive resolution.
2. **Align land and resource policies in formulation or under review with the VGGT principles.** Across the region, policy reviews are taking place, which the AFA farmers' organizations are engaging. Nepal is

in the process of crafting a new Constitution. Myanmar's Land Use Policy draft is under review while Kyrgyzstan's Agriculture and Forest policy is for revision. The passage of a National Land Use Act is being pushed in the Philippines. Indonesia is lobbying for the implementation of the certification for communal lands and the joint regulation of four ministries on land distribution and conflict resolution.

3. **Intergovernmental and development partners' support for VGGT promotion.** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is currently working with the governments of Pakistan, Mongolia, Nepal and Myanmar in the conduct of national multi stakeholder awareness raising workshops. In Nepal, practitioners have been involved in developing software for land administration, which is compliant with the VGGT plans. In Myanmar, training materials were developed and used to increase the use of the VGGT by CSOs. Other development partners like the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur International Zusammenarbeit (GiZ) supported the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC) in the Philippines to produce three policy studies and conduct regional and national workshops on the VGGT. The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC) have conducted training activities on "Strengthening Forest Tenure Systems and Governance" among community forest user groups in Asia. The International Land Coalition is committed to support efforts to popularize the



VGGT.

4. **Commitment of national leaders and organizations in raising awareness and realizing the VGGT.** For the Philippines, a multi-stakeholder technical working group (TWG) was formed for the initial information campaign on VGGT. This TWG, with the involvement of some allies from the government, co-organized four multi-stakeholder consultations with other CSOs, academe and development partners. CSOs and experts drafted the three policy studies presented during the consultations on the review of selected land laws and governance of tenure, the proposed National Land Use Act and the Principles of Responsible Agricultural Investments. In Mongolia, a national working group involving different stakeholders from government, academics and CSOs was formed to pursue the planned VGGT trainings and consultations.
5. **More open and transparent governments.** Cambodian and Indonesian AFA members report how some government offices have become more open to dialogues with CSOs. Cambodian officials have already committed to participate in VGGT popularization, together with CSOs and FAO.
6. **Forthcoming elections for potential change in politics favorable to tenure rights of smallholders.** National and local elections are



approaching for Myanmar, Cambodia, Mongolia, and the Philippines. This is a powerful opportunity for smallholders to put more responsible officials in position who will ensure that pro-poor policies are passed and programs are implemented. The VGGT principles can be used to measure the commitment of candidates towards responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests.

7. **Strong civil society movements willing to advocate VGGT principles.** Preliminary work in raising awareness on the VGGT was done by CSOs in Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Myanmar among others. Initial documents like policy briefs and recommendations and sectoral consultations were done. Farmer organizations are particularly keen on learning how they can maximize the Guidelines in assessing policies and implementation of programs for governance of resources.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS BY AFA MEMBERS**

1. Development of popular materials and policy studies for multi-stakeholders. Translation and dissemination of the VGGT to local languages is a top priority of AFA members in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam. In-depth policy studies of related



VGGT principles to draw out recommendations for ongoing policy reviews can also be done to support grassroots positions. VGGT principles on large-scale investments on resources vis-à-vis secure tenure rights of farmers, fishers, rural women and indigenous peoples can be one important policy area for further study.

2. Continue and broaden national, sub-regional, grassroots and multi-stakeholder engagements on the VGGT. Farmers groups can use the VGGT as a new entry point for engagement and discussion with their governments and even the private sector. Some activities that could be undertaken are:
  - a. Monitoring of joint commitments agreed upon at the end of these meetings/ consultations to improve tenure security of smallholders and compliance of policies to the VGGT
  - b. Integrating VGGT principles in current policies through lobbying



- c. Doing joint awareness programs on the VGGT with government
  - d. Possible creation of VGGT technical working groups in each country
  - e. Ensuring grassroots and CSO participation in government VGGT processes
3. Conduct capacity-building workshops among smallholder and multi-sectoral groups. Training activities can be designed by theme (e.g., VGGT principles on agrarian reform, environmental conservation, governance of water and the commons, customary tenure, investments in agriculture, mining, logging, etc.). Organizing multi-sectoral trainings (e.g., combined farmers, farmworkers, IPs, pastoralists, fisher folk, women, among others) for a richer discussion on crosscutting tenure issues and concerns would produce a more holistic analysis and recommendations on governance of land and resources.

4. Intensive information dissemination.
  - a. Data gathering and preparing case studies of smallholders affected by or successful experiences in overcoming poor governance of tenure can be exchanged across the country and the region as well.
  - b. Use of mainstream media and social media in disseminating information and experiences related to governance of land, fisheries and forests. Media briefings should also be done to explain the context of the VGGT and its relevance to achieving secure tenure rights of smallholders.
  - c. Developing monitoring and assessment tools for grassroots organizations to check compliance of governments to the VGGT.
5. Continue to organize VGGT compliance campaigns at local, country and regional levels. While this may require substantial funds, multi-stakeholder partnerships can be seen as a worthwhile investment to sustain the dialogue between governments and the concerned sectors affected by poor resource governance. Development partners, especially the FAO and IFAD can help facilitate the linkages between government ministries and grassroots groups where partnerships are difficult to forge. #

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