

Why We Need a Human Rights & Land Navigator: The Global Context

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#rights4land



The increasing demand for land will have a significant impact on land tenure across the globe. For example, cities are growing, climate net-zero policies are likely to result in afforestation measures, and population growth and changing consumption patterns will lead to more demand for agricultural land. In this future of increased competition over land, legitimate tenure rights of vulnerable communities need protection. The call for responsible land governance is, therefore, more urgent than ever before.

In 2012, governments adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) to safeguard the legitimate tenure rights of all, with particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized land users. Human Rights are the foundation of these guidelines. However, application of the VGGT has remained slow and those that would most benefit from these provisions often lack the knowledge and means to demand their land rights and push for responsible land governance.

As the world celebrates the 10th anniversary of the VGGT, it is therefore appropriate to recall the human rights foundations of the VGGT, and especially the commitment that states have made to progressively realize these rights. It is time that land and human rights organizations join forces to advance the VGGT application and secure tenure rights for vulnerable land users. To effectively hold States accountable for applying the VGGT, land and human rights actors need to better understand the links between the VGGT and human rights. This is why the Human Rights & Land Navigator was developed.

INTRODUCING THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND LAND NAVIGATOR

The Human Rights & Land Navigator is an online database that provides a systematic overview of the linkages between the VGGT and international human rights standards. It was developed by TMG Research gGmbH, in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Malawi Human Rights Commission.

For the first time, we have a comprehensive tool that clearly links each paragraph of the VGGT to binding human rights standards and the human rights instruments and articles, in which these rights are enshrined. This tool includes the following human rights instruments:

- Core international human rights treaties, such as the UN Covenants on civil and political rights and on social, economic and cultural rights.
- Relevant UN Declarations, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in the rural areas; and
- Relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, for example, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
- Other UN standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights



WHO IS THE NAVIGATOR DESIGNED FOR AND HOW CAN IT BE USED?

The Navigator allows land rights advocates, human rights experts, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society and research organizations to understand how human rights are related to specific land issues. This can inform policy advocacy for improved protection of land rights or help prepare litigation in land, property and natural resource related cases.

National Human Rights Institutions can use the Navigator as a support tool when investigating land-related conflicts. In the case of infringements of women's inheritance rights, for example, the Navigator highlights applicable VGGT sections and corresponding human rights instruments. This provides the basis for reporting on and defending women's rights infringements with reference to binding obligations for protecting them. The Navigator also offers a starting point for civic action in support of women's land rights by civil society actors.

Civil society organizations and National Human Rights Institutions are important allies in advocating for responsible governance of tenure of land and support reporting on land-related human rights in human rights monitoring mechanisms. This can be a powerful lever to hold governments accountable for safeguarding the legitimate tenure rights of all citizens, as part of their overarching human rights obligations.

WHAT NEXT? HOW CAN THE NAVIGATOR SUPPORT BROADER GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS?

TMG and its partners are currently working to complement the Human Rights and Land Navigator with monitoring tools that provide actors in different national and sub-national contexts with a more detailed overview of the state of VGGT implementation. This can help accelerate implementation of the VGGT by increasing public engagement at different levels. We are currently working on an indicator framework for VGGT monitoring which will be published in 2022. We have also embarked on a project – in partnership with the Kenya Land Alliance – to develop a community-level reporting tool to support monitoring of violations of women's land tenure rights. Together, the different tools will improve monitoring of land governance and contribute to holding governments accountable for respecting and protecting legitimate tenure rights.





KEY MESSAGES

- **The increasing demand for land will have a significant impact on land tenure across the globe.** For example, cities are growing, climate net-zero policies are likely to result in afforestation measures, and population growth and changing consumption patterns will lead to more demand for agricultural land. In this future of increased competition over land, legitimate tenure rights of vulnerable communities need urgent protection.
- **The VGGT protect legitimate tenure rights of vulnerable people.** Ten years after their adoption, new commitment is needed to apply them at the necessary scale.
- **Human Rights are the foundation of the VGGT.** States have obligations to progressively realise these rights. The application of the VGGT benefits from building on State's obligations to realize human rights. Human rights actors can hold States accountable to demand progress in applying the VGGT at the national level.
- **The Human Rights and Land Navigator shows how each paragraph of the voluntary guidelines is connected to binding human rights standards.** For the first time, the Human Rights and Land Navigator systematically maps the linkages between binding human rights standards and the paragraphs of the VGGT.
- **The Human Rights and Land Navigator unpacks National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) and the human rights monitoring mechanisms are a powerful lever to support the application of the VGGT at national level.** Civil society organizations and other human rights actors are important allies in advocating for responsible governance of tenure of land and to support monitoring by NHRIs.

More information

[The Human Rights and Land Navigator
Explainer Film](#)

[Human Rights and Land Working Paper
Methodological Note](#)

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The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihood initiatives, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UN Environment and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter Members: CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, EcoAgriculture Partners, EFI, Evergreen Agriculture, FAO, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, ILRI, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, RRI, SAN, TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, UNCCD, UN Environment Programme, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen Research, WFO, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, WRI, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative

TMG Think Tank for Sustainability

The global community has made major strides in setting goals to limit global warming, and achieve sustainable development for all. However, action on these goals is insufficient and questions remain on how to achieve them. Together with our global and local partners, we conduct action-oriented research and initiate social innovations to deliver on these goals. Thereby we contribute to change processes that strengthen governance for sustainability. TMG Research gGmbH is an international not-for-profit think tank headquartered in Berlin, Germany, with an African regional office in Nairobi, Kenya.

Funding partners



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