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of the United Nations

# FAO support of multi-stakeholder platforms on land tenure governance

*Innovative practices from the field and building on experience*



*Second version*





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*Pastoralists in the steppes of Mongolia undergoing Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) training using Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) materials translated into Mongolian.*



Woman leading a public gathering on VGGT interventions at a community level, where communities gathered to share their challenges relating to tenure governance within the context of the VGGT in the village of Wami Sokoine, United Republic of Tanzania.



Mayouka Camera, community leader, being interviewed during a VGGT training session organized by the national MSP as part of the preparation of the États généraux du foncier in Mamou, Guinea.

## Land words matter

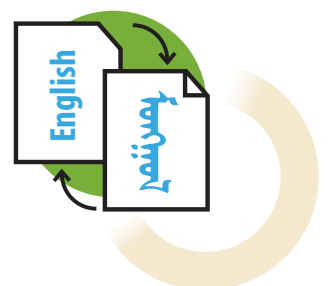
“We organized a full day workshop with the MSP members just to translate the word ‘tenure’ into Mongolian. At the end of the workshop, we agreed to adopt the word *edelber*. Now, the word *edelber*, meaning tenure, is used throughout all of Mongolia. Since then, the VGGT have been translated into Mongolian and disseminated to MSP members to strengthen their capacities on land tenure and enable them to participate in our land reform process.”

**Narangerel Yansanjav**

*Executive director of People Centered Conservation (PCC), Mongolia*



Narangerel Yansanjav (left) during a series of trainings on VGGT for multiple stakeholders, with over 30 land experts representing government, non-government organizations, the private sector and academia gathering to define “tenure” in Mongolian language in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.



As part of the efforts to find sustainable solutions to complex land tenure issues, multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) create an inclusive forum where actors can discuss problems and propose solutions to improve governance of tenure and provide better access to natural resources.

Many of today's tenure-related challenges are cross-cutting and affect several sectors and groups within society. Consequently, decision-making must identify shared needs behind different perspectives. The strength of MSPs lies in the ability of stakeholders to develop commonalities as well as strategies to bring about change.

The COVID-19 pandemic – with wide-ranging consequences for health, livelihoods and food security particularly affecting the most vulnerable segments of the population – is a reminder that successful development initiatives must foster coherent and sustainable solutions and not just one-off and short-term remedies.

Revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development is one of the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. MSPs devise legitimate solutions to land-related issues and are instrumental to contribute to SDG 17 as well as the following SDGs:



**Target 1.4:** Ownership and control over land



**Target 2.3:** Small scale food producers



**Target 5.A:** Women's equal rights to economic resources



Youth members of the Office of Disaster Management of Santa Marta (OGRICC) planting seedlings on Tree Sowing Day in the NNP of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia.

Since 2013, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has supported the capacity development of national stakeholders in the process of setting up and sustaining 30 MSPs as inclusive spaces for land tenure governance in 15 countries: one at regional level, 14 at national level and 15 at local level.

Most recently, MSPs have also been used as an inclusive space to address broader development goals and themes, including combatting climate change, environmental conservation as well as the impact the health crisis has on the challenge to secure tenure rights. With these parameters

## MSPs: A definition of partnerships

Building on the definition suggested by the UN Secretary-General (UN, 2003), the UN General Assembly (UNGA, 2015) defines partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits”.

“In South Africa, the MSP was central in the catalyzation of CSO participation in the COVID-19 emergency interventions set up by the government, such as the Solidarity Fund, which included food relief (parcels) and support to small farms and households. The empirical experience of successes and failures is helping policy dialogue regarding support to small farmers in the MSP.”

**Laurel Oettle - South Africa**

*Director of the NGO, Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA)*

in mind, MSPs are increasingly recognized as an efficient and inclusive model to build long-term solutions to improve tenure and food security.

It is only with the cooperation of various actors, from policymakers to civil society, from academia to the private sector, that present and future development needs can be met and the Sustainable Development Goals achieved.

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) is the first global reference guide to improve the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests. It was developed between 2009 and 2012 based on consensus and the broad participation of a wide range of stakeholders

including government, civil society, the private sector and academia. FAO has assisted countries in implementing the VGGT, including those that decided to establish MSPs following this recommendation in the VGGT (paragraph 26.2):

“States are encouraged to set up multi-stakeholder platforms and frameworks at local, national and regional levels or use such existing platforms and frameworks to collaborate on the implementation of these Guidelines; to monitor and evaluate the implementation in their jurisdictions; and to evaluate the impact on improved governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests, and on improving food security and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, and sustainable development.”



*Central elements of a successful MSP*

# SURVEY ON FAO SUPPORT OF MSPs

This brochure is the result of a comprehensive online survey conducted from April to June 2020, with 62 replies gathered from 14 countries. The survey's main objectives were to:

- give the direct users of the platforms an opportunity to share views and expectations regarding MSPs;
- reach a deeper understanding of MSPs, including links to ongoing tenure reform processes;
- expand and share knowledge regarding key results, challenges and innovations of MSPs.

Since 2013, FAO-supported MSPs have thrived thanks to funding from a broad range of donors, including Belgium, France, Italy, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union.



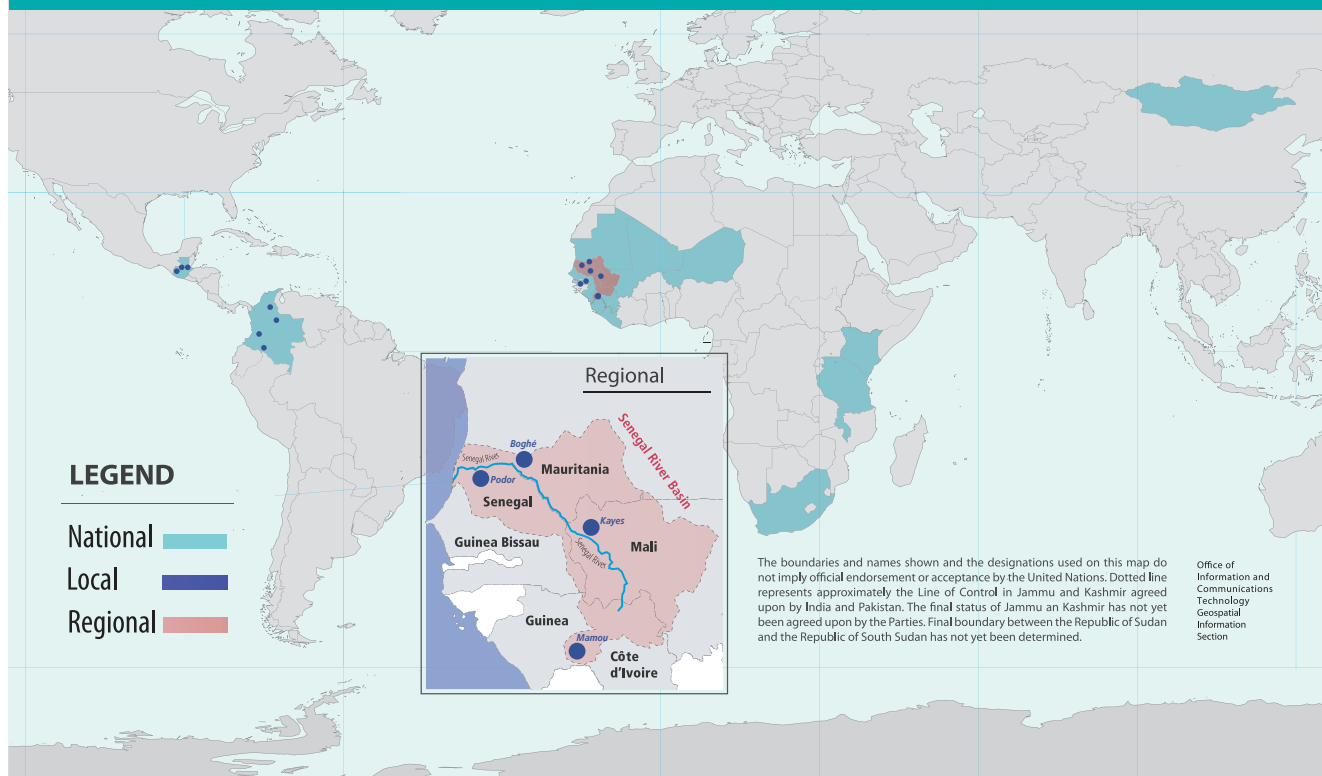
*Awareness-raising meeting to support the capacities of the local population to formalize their land titles with the main objective of securing their tenure rights in the village of Mboro, Senegal.*

## Key messages from the survey

MSPs are fundamental to:

- foster multi-stakeholder and inter-sectoral coordination around land tenure processes;
- build buy-in from the government and other key actors to improve governance of tenure;
- influence the national land agenda and foster participatory tenure reform processes;
- facilitate continuous learning and strengthen capacities of those most affected by food insecurity to engage in tenure dialogues;
- develop innovative approaches, tools and mechanisms at regional, national and local level to improve governance of tenure.

## FAO has supported 30 MSPs since 2013



Source: UN. 2020. Map of the World [online], modified by Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP). [Cited 1 January 2021]. [un.org/geospatial/file/3420/download?token=bZe9T8I9](https://un.org/geospatial/file/3420/download?token=bZe9T8I9)

## FAO has supported 30 MSPs in 15 countries

### 14 National MSPs

- Sierra Leone
- Liberia
- Mongolia
- Kenya
- United Republic of Tanzania
- Malawi
- South Africa
- Niger
- Senegal
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Guinea
- Guinea Bissau
- Guatemala

### 15 Local MSPs

- Senegal: Podor, Matam, Niayes, Medina Yoro Foula, Ziguinchor
- Mali: Kayes
- Mauritania: Boghé
- Guinea: Mamou
- Colombia: Cocuy, Catatumbo Bari, Nevado del Huila, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
- Guatemala: Ixil, Sepur Zarco, Alta Verapaz

### 1 Regional MSP

- Senegal River Basin:
  - Mauritania
  - Mali
  - Guinea
  - Senegal





## Broad participation

One of the key characteristics of MSPs is the broad participation of diverse groups of stakeholders engaged in finding common solutions to tenure related challenges. The respondents of the survey underlined that the strength and legitimacy of an MSP stems from its diversity, i.e. the involvement of women, youth groups, farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk. Without the input of these smallholders, an MSP is not considered democratic or diverse. For an MSP to be thoroughly representative it should consist of at least three stakeholder groups/sectors such as governments, ministries and agencies, Civil Society Organization (CSOs)/Non-

Governmental Organization (NGOs), academia, local authorities, private sector, professionals, notaries, etc.

In most cases, MSPs supported by FAO are comprised of five or more separate stakeholder groups, comprising three to eleven different ministries/entities/branches of governments.

The survey, conducted by FAO, on the composition of the MSPs shows that platforms are composed of a broad range of actors with different roles in addressing land tenure questions.



Members of the national multi-stakeholder platform on VGGT during a workshop to strengthen capacity of relevant institutions to help resolve land-related conflicts at district and village levels in United Republic of Tanzania.

*The strength and legitimacy of an MSP stems from its diversity, i.e. the involvement of women, youth groups, farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk.*

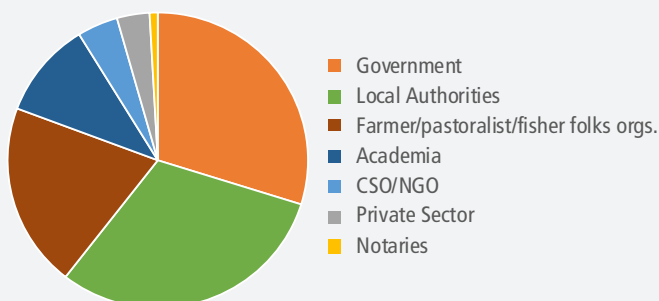


# Framework for accountability and transparency

Another common characteristic of MSPs is how they foster accountability and national ownership. For instance, to improve dialogue on tenure governance in Senegal, national stakeholders have been collaborating since 2014 in an MSP involving more than 100 stakeholders including traditional leaders, representatives from national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, academia and international development partners. This MSP convenes periodically to present recommendations related to tenure

governance priorities for the land, fisheries and forestry sectors, as well as to discuss the way forward to implement the VGGT in Senegal and agree on actions. The MSP allows a broad range of stakeholders to openly suggest solutions to improve the governance of land, fisheries and forest resources. In Senegal, as well as in other countries, for example Mali, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, and Niger, MSPs have established a steering committee to deal with day-to-day matters. In Senegal, the steering committee has developed a manual that defines roles and

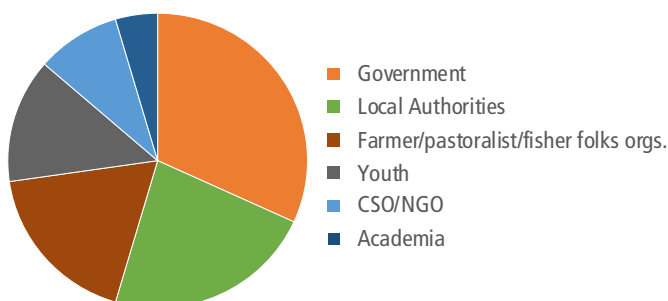
Mongolia National MSP



## National MSPs

Gather diverse stakeholders to improve governance of tenure at national level. Platforms are linked and contribute to the national land agenda.

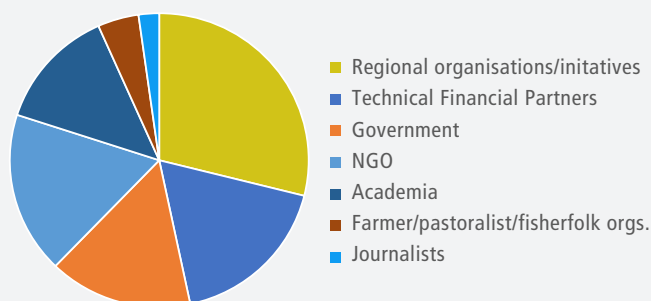
Colombia - Local MSP - Huila



## Local MSPs

Allow stakeholders from the same administrative area to discuss issues specific to their territory and find innovative solutions to enhance local land tenure.

Senegal River Basin Regional MSP



## Regional MSP

Convene representatives from different countries plus regional organizations and networks to build policies across country borders, unifying regional land tenure.

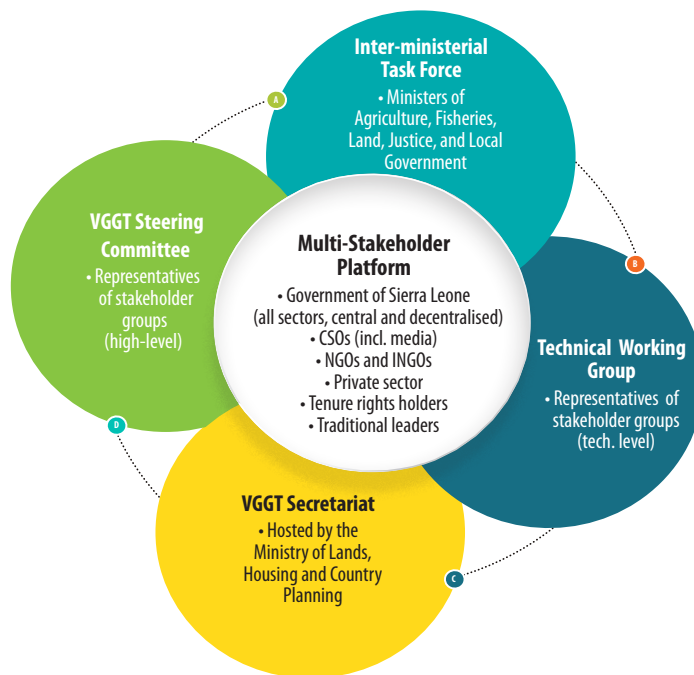
*These pie charts present examples of the broad composition of three MSPs supported by FAO on three continents: One at national level, one at local level and one at regional level. Since it is possible to belong to more than one stakeholder group and since there is a variety of ways in which stakeholders define themselves in different countries, the stakeholder categories should not be seen as mutually exclusive.*

responsibilities of platform members. The manual serves as a guide for the coordination between different structures of the multi-actor mechanism, as well as responsibilities in terms of financial management.

During periodic meetings, stakeholders report back to the national MSP so that all members may review the year's progress and achievements, fostering accountability, transparency and participatory decision-making.

## An institutional framework for action and ownership

In Sierra Leone, stakeholders created an institutional framework, which clearly defines the mandates, roles and responsibilities of each actor. The framework consists of a Multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group, a Steering Committee and an Inter-Ministerial Task Force composed of six key ministries. The Technical Working Group follows up on stakeholder commitment and monitors the implementation of recommendations, the Steering Committee liaises with the government and the Inter-Ministerial Task Force (IMTF) establishes high-level political support for implementation of the VGGT.



VGGT Institutional Framework in Sierra Leone

## Multi-actor and multi-sector approach

One common feature of MSPs is the multi-actor and multi-sector approach, with strong engagement from the government, including the involvement of key ministries to address land tenure issues. In most countries, the multi-actor and multi-sector design represents a shift from traditional ways of doing business in government. For the first time, relevant ministries now meet on a regular basis to discuss tenure governance issues. Previously, in many countries, government agencies suffered from being silo-driven, with little consultation between colleagues, resulting in inefficient data gathering, partial vision of the issues and difficulties in making decisions clear to all concerned parties and broadly acceptable.

For instance, in Sierra Leone, by applying the VGGT within the MSP, the Inter-Ministerial

Task Force (IMTF) saw the benefits of addressing tenure governance across sectors, increasing collaboration and resulting in improved information sharing and project coordination.

To further enhance strong ownership of all stakeholders in the MSP supported processes, in some countries representatives of civil society, traditional chiefs and academia have constituted separate working groups for specific stakeholder groups to take the time to agree on their proposals, for instance regarding the formulation of land policies.

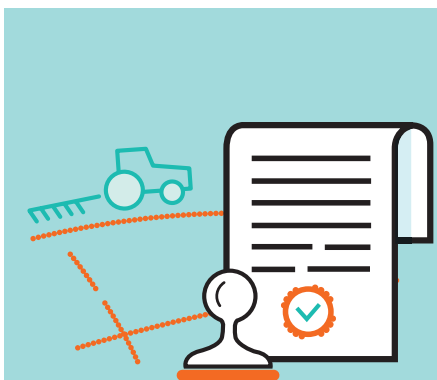
Lastly, an important factor behind the effective operation of an MSP has, in some countries, been the establishment of a Secretariat and coordinated VGGT implementation. In the example of Sierra Leone, the MSP is hosted by

the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning. The VGGT Secretariat was established as a response to the need for a physical space for people to meet face-to-face and share information on VGGT related matters, as well as a centre for coordination of VGGT activities

in country. In this case, a key element for success was the political commitment from the government, in particular the pivotal role played by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning by hosting the VGGT Secretariat.



Local MSP supporting preparation of États généraux du foncier (a multi-stakeholder forum on land tenure) in Mamou, Guinea.



Local MSP debating national reform process during meeting of Senegal River Basin platform in Podor, Senegal.

## No “one size fits all”

There is no “one size fits all” in the establishment of an MSP. All platforms will be different depending on the composition of the stakeholders and specific country parameters. For instance, in some countries, like Niger, the national multi-stakeholder committee is established by a ministerial decree. This gives the platform a high and formal profile and in practice means that the organization of meetings requires official invitations signed within the ministry in charge. In other countries the MSP is

not established by a government decree, making the MSP less formalized but in some situations more flexible. In most cases the MSP is presided by the government (often co-chaired by civil society) and based on common principles and a collective workplan. Despite the different set-up and degree of institutionalization of the MSPs, a common feature that remains is the principles of participation, collaboration and transparency.

# CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL LAND AGENDAS

MSPs create a problem-solving mechanism, providing legitimate answers and sustainable solutions to overriding issues. They can resolve roadblocks stemming from lack of buy-in at multiple levels, creating grass-root answers by improving access to natural resources.

MSPs supported by FAO are contributing to shaping the National Land Agenda, including policy, legal and institutional reforms. Specifically, the MSP supported initiatives including policy preparation, review of legal frameworks and procedure improvement. In line with the principles of the VGGT, the MSPs contribute to building a participatory approach and a holistic vision to settle tenure issues in contested regions.

The leverage of an MSP depends on its specific objectives and the political context. However, the contributions and desired changes are in most cases, as encouraged by the VGGT, directed to improve the tenure situation for the most marginalized groups of society, those who are often most impacted by food and tenure insecurity.

In Sierra Leone, MSP members took an active role in the preparation of the land policy document including the full set of VGGT principles. These principles provided a basis to review the land policy, ensuring that the new policy recognizes and respects tenure rights, safeguards and protects against threats, promotes the employment of legitimate tenure rights while providing access

to justice and preventing disputes, conflicts and corruption. These principles are all core elements designed to ensure public participation, visibility, accountability and transparency. The members of the national MSP also contributed to the design of an implementation plan for the land policy, based on a participatory approach with extensive consultation amongst local authorities and civil society. The MSP brought together almost 300 stakeholders including government officials, parliamentarians, CSOs, academia, the private sector, traditional authorities, religious leaders, landholding families, the media and development partners to discuss the National Land Policy implementation to promote secure tenure rights in the light of the VGGT.

In Niger, the national multi-stakeholder committee was established by ministerial decree to lead the preparation of the *États généraux du foncier rural* under the aegis of the President of the Republic. This resulted in a four-day high-level multi-stakeholder forum with more than 300 participants from the entire country, ending in an agreement to prepare a national land policy. The members of the multi-stakeholder committee played the leading role in the drafting of the new land policy document, with strong reference to the VGGT and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G). One of the key achievements of the new land policy is the strong integration of women's land rights, including the promotion of the issuance of land ownership



Members of the national MSP during a Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls workshop in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

deeds to the most vulnerable. Another significant measure is that a minimum of 30 percent of the land plots developed for irrigation by state and local authorities will be granted to women, young people and those with disabilities.

Finally, the members of the multi-stakeholder committee in Niger prepared a detailed action plan for the application of the land policy, including the design of a land observatory as a key mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of implementation.



Amadou Hallilou, Vice-President of the national multi-stakeholder committee, interviewed by national journalists in Niger.

In Malawi, the national MSP has helped to provide policy direction of the Urban Policy, Housing Policy and Land Use Policy and ten land laws enacted in 2016. Moreover, the implementation of the Customary Land Act is being guided by the VGGT and F&G.

In South Africa, the MSP was set up after a workshop to enhance VGGT implementation, based on the need to establish an inclusive multi-stakeholder structure that could serve as a catalyst to integrate VGGT principles in the land reform process. Since then, the MSP played a key role in the dialogue between the government and other stakeholders while framing a new Land Governance and Agrarian Reform legislation and policy environment.

In Mali, the MSP played an important role in the preparation and adoption of the new Agricultural Land Law (*Loi sur le Foncier Agricole*), passed in April 2017, which was influenced by the VGGT. For example, Article 13 of the law requires the involvement of state and local authorities to ensure equitable access to agricultural land for small-scale and commercial farmers. It also stipulates that at least 15 percent of developed land is allocated to women and youth organizations situated in the concerned area.

Another example where MSPs have served as a space to integrate VGGT principles in the national legal framework is Mongolia. Here the national MSP addressed the securing of legitimate tenure rights for herders on pastureland in a draft law. Local stakeholders, and in particular numerous herders, were directly involved in a consultative and innovative land reform process. Over 850 participants from all provinces of Mongolia came together in the Ulaanbaatar Parliament to discuss the regulatory environment for rangeland use and protection.

In Guatemala, members of the national MSP and local MSPs gathered to propose amendments to be included in the *Ley de dialogo* (Dialogue Law), and to discuss the inclusion of the VGGT in national agriculture policy.

In Mali, the local MSP in Kayes was used to guarantee inclusive participation in the *Loi d'orientation Agricole* (Agricultural Orientation Law) and the *Loi foncière Agricole* (Agricultural Land Law).

In Senegal and in Guinea the local MSPs contribute to the national land agenda. In Podor, Senegal, the members of local MSPs have been providing input to national land tenure policy-making, and in Mamou, Guinea members of the local MSP have engaged in the preparation of the *États généraux du foncier* aiming to build a shared and holistic vision around the national tenure reform process.

The above-mentioned examples show the critical contribution MSPs have when they are linked with ongoing tenure processes. MSPs introduce holistic approaches into the national land agenda. Without the MSPs in place it is expected to see more fragmentation in reflection and decision-making and gaps in coordination. The MSPs help to build links and joint actions around coherent policies, laws and frameworks, procedures cutting across the land, forestry and fisheries sectors.

“In Malawi, one of the main innovations of the MSP has been the multi-sectoral approach to ensuring land reforms are holistic and wide-reaching.”

**Yvonne Mmangisa**

FAO-Malawi

# INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TENURE ISSUES

Today MSPs are playing a substantial role in providing answers and sustainable solutions to overriding tenure related issues. The following examples will demonstrate how innovative

approaches are being explored within MSPs, which increasingly have become multi-layered initiatives to improve governance of tenure.

## MSPs at multiple levels

The VGGT (para 26.2) encourage the set-up of multi-stakeholder platforms and frameworks at local, national and regional levels to improve and monitor responsible governance of tenure.

During the first years of VGGT implementation (2013-2018), MSPs linked to land tenure were mainly established at the national level. More recently (from 2018 onwards), this new multi-actor governance model has been replicated in several countries at the local level, as a solution to local struggles with tenure problems to secure their livelihoods. It is precisely at this level where decisions to improve governance of tenure often need to be taken to improve the daily lives of peoples in rural and urban areas.

Whereas the characteristics and objectives of national and local level MSPs as an inclusive space to find common solutions to complex tenure issues are the same, the results at local level are often more “hands on”. National level MSPs normally focus on building inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues and contributing to national tenure reform processes, while the results at the local level aim mainly to

solve specific problems faced by people in a local area and context. A few examples worth mentioning are the training of paralegal experts to resolve local land disputes and facilitation of land titling as well as the development of local land charters in Senegal, and the creation of village land commissions (*Commissions foncières villageoises*) as an instrument for local populations in the management of land in the Kayes region in Mali. While local MSPs mainly focus on solving tenure issues at the local level, these local level experiences can provide input on the land agenda at national level. Such is the case in Guinea where members of the local platform are actively engaging in the process of preparing the *États généraux du foncier*, a multi-stakeholder forum to take stock of the national land tenure challenges and stimulate concerted actions to address them.



Local platforms prepared their own guides on free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in Boghé, Mauritania, in Kayes, Mali and in Podor, Senegal,

Boghé platform members in Mauritania being interviewed by local radio after preparing a field guide to use free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in a local context.

Members of local MSPs have also benefited from VGGT capacity development training on specific topics, such as conflict prevention, improving governance of pastoral lands and the concept of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to empower local actors to improve responsible governance of tenure in a local context. In Mali, Mauritania and Senegal members of local platforms have trained to develop and test new tools, according to needs on the ground, such as techniques for conflict prevention.

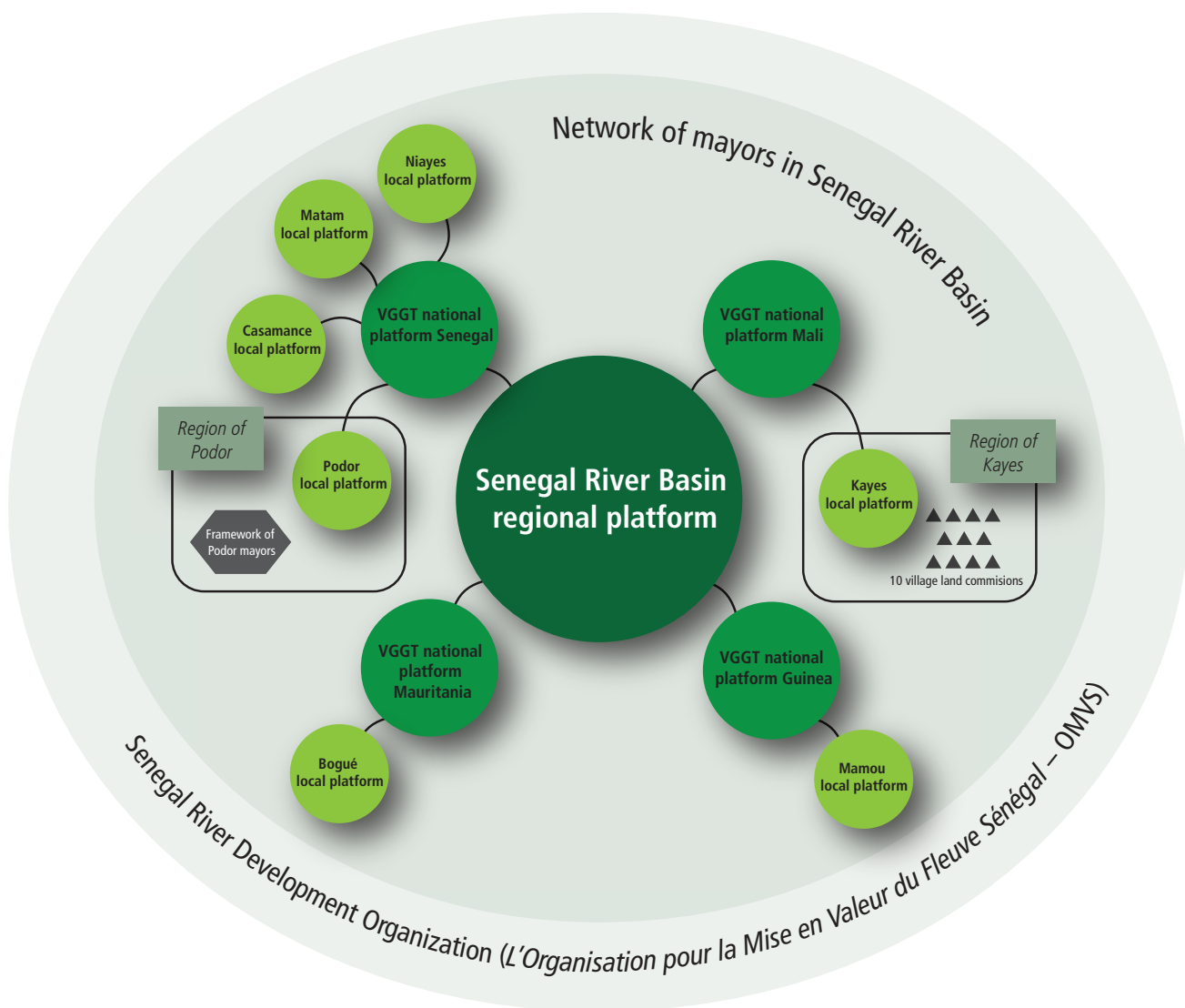
The survey results showed that MSPs provide a meeting space for local stakeholders to create an environment built on trust, nurturing confidence between the actors, urging community members, such as farmers, to collaborate with state authorities and tribunals.

Another innovation in the field of MSPs is the establishment of a regional platform on joint actions and reflections around land tenure and

an equitable sharing of resources in the Senegal River Basin (SRB). This platform engages a diversity of stakeholders from four countries (Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Guinea), and includes civil society organizations, parliamentarians, representatives of local communities as well as regional institutions and networks such as the Senegal River Basin Development Organization. This approach created a “community of practice” (see below), where governmental and non-governmental actors at different levels learn from each other’s experience to improve tenure governance.

The SRB regional platform is an example of building a holistic approach to undertake concrete tenure actions. The regional land policy in the Senegal River Basin is an example of innovation resulting in the formulation of a cross-border land policy document supporting the improvement of legal land frameworks in the countries involved.

### Regional community of practice





## Bringing women's rights to the national agenda



Women's initiative to discuss the land policy draft and the SDG 5.a.2 indicator on women's access to land in Niamey, Niger.

MSPs are a unique forum that enables women to engage in discussions about improving governance of tenure. While women are the primary contributors to national food and agricultural production, in many countries, women remain excluded from decision-making processes affecting their access to and control of land and livelihoods. MSPs contribute to empowering women to have an active role in decision-making processes while improving women's access to land.

In some countries the multi-stakeholder nature of MSPs has helped to change the government's perception of the role of women in improving governance of tenure. For instance, government officials in Niger stated that before the multi-stakeholder committee came together, they were not aware of the role that women's organizations could play in discussions on the tenure reform process, with women practically absent from this debate. In Niger, VGGT trainings for members of the national multi-stakeholder committee made women more aware of and confident in speaking about their rights. As a result of the active role women started to play in the tenure debate and women's organizations became member of the multi-stakeholder committee in charge of preparing the land policy. This example shows how an MSP can help women's empowerment and increase awareness about the role and responsibilities women have in improving governance of tenure.

To further strengthen the participation of women in the preparation of the land policy in Niger, a women's group on land was also established,

allowing women representatives to prepare themselves to engage in national meetings. In Niger, members of the national multi-stakeholder committee in charge of preparing the land policy also engaged in the evaluation of the country's progress on SDG indicator 5.a.2 "women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control of land". This innovative way of using the MSP as a multi-stakeholder forum to openly discuss the challenges to secure women's land rights has contributed to the monitoring of land-related targets under the SDG.

"Women are now recognized as key actors in finding sustainable solutions. Women's organizations now engage in policy-making processes concerning land and have ensured integration of women's land rights in the new land policy."

**Fatimatou Djibo Moumouni**

*The Democratic Women's Assembly of Niger*

The positive impact of inter-regional exchanges on women's empowerment was also present in Sierra Leone:

Samuel Mabikke with FAO Sierra Leone stated, "It is worth mentioning that the North of Sierra Leone is a male-dominated community, especially concerning land tenure. During the land reform process, a national MSP brought the



Distribution of maps during a workshop on women's customary land rights in Sierra Leone.

traditional authorities from the North to meet with those from the South. In the South, you will find female paramount chiefs, so learning from the South has helped stakeholders learn about cross-fitting, where traditional authorities can demonstrate that in the South, women can also be paramount chiefs, a custom we can apply to transfer leadership to women in the North.”

Through MSP meetings and training, women increased their knowledge of their land rights and how to campaign for these rights:

“As women, we are now empowered to defend our rights in a way that will not challenge our brothers and husbands. We are all one family and should stay a family, but we must not be disadvantaged”, as mentioned by Yabum Posseh (Tension) Kamara, Town Chief, Mange Bureh chiefdom, Sierra Leone.

In Mali, the local MSP in Kayes actively contributed to the enforcement of the Agricultural Land Law (*Loi Foncière Agricole*), which states that 15 percent of land developed for agricultural purpose must be allocated to women and youth organizations located in the region. Moreover, Decree N°2018-0333/P-RM states that each village land commission (*Commissions Foncière – COFO*), established by law to ensure improved land governance, should include at least one woman.

In Guatemala, capacity building for women was further developed by providing training courses on human rights, to ensure women had a better knowledge of national and international legal frameworks. This breakthrough initiative has



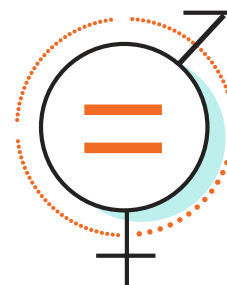
Local stakeholder at an MSP workshop during small group exercises in Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala.

given women the opportunity to apply land tenure principles to provide food security for their families and to protect their underlying rights regarding access to natural resources.

Magali Cano, General Coordinator of the NGO, *Campaña Guatemala sin Hambre* stated, “In Guatemala, it is women who provide food for their children, so it was important for them to be trained on the human rights measures set up by the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); they now have a legitimate claim to their rights for food security”.



Training session of members of the local platform in Kayes, Mali.



## *Finding local solutions to resolve land related conflicts*

MSPs supported by FAO are playing a pivotal role in conflict prevention and mediation.

In many countries, particularly in the Sahel region, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers – amongst community members due to the lack of access to land and natural resources – are threatening food security. MSPs are viable mechanisms for local solutions to enhance peace and mitigate conflicts.

In Mali, the MSP in Kayes fosters dialogue and trust building between different stakeholder groups, e.g. pastoralists and farmers may reach an agreement on issues such as mobility and corridors. The local MSP supported the establishment of village land commissions (COFOs) in initial land rulings (e.g. a case will be brought to the tribunal only if it cannot be solved by the COFO). This has also been used to change local judges' approach to land tenure conflicts, raising the level of trust between local communities and official legal institutions.

In Senegal, the local MSP in Podor has built strategies and mechanisms to reduce conflicts among community members. For instance, the local MSP supported the setup of a land conflict management committee composed of mayors willing to gather and advise community members on conflict solving.

In Niger, the national multi-stakeholder committee was used as a platform to advocate for the establishment of transboundary committees to manage governance of pastoral lands and avoid conflicts at local level:

Amadou Halilou, President of ROPEN/Vice-President of multi-stakeholder committee on land policy in Niger stated, “The activities organized by the national committee contributed to the successful advocacy for the establishment of the Transboundary Committee at National level (CNT). The VGGT related activities to improve governance of pastoral lands also helped to build a capacity development programme for local transhumance committees on how to prevent conflicts of access to natural resources”.



*Members of national multi-stakeholder committee in Niger engaging in exchange visit with local authorities in Nigeria to build dialogue and peaceful solutions to transhumance issues in the Sahel.*

Klemen Gamboa, FAO coordinator in Guatemala said, “In Guatemala, MSPs create a safe haven of dialogue which can help stakeholders solve conflicts on land tenure as well as social and environmental issues”.

In Colombia, the ongoing armed conflict, which lasted over 50 years, has displaced more than seven million people and disrupted local access to land, even in natural protected areas. Moreover, deforestation and the encroachment of agriculture on protected areas such as national natural parks (NNP) traditionally inhabited by indigenous people have created an overlap of natural resources and livelihoods. To resolve the conflicts caused by this situation, four local MSPs were created in four NNPs, facilitating dialogue between local communities (farmers, indigenous people), local authorities and the government.

“We are applying intercultural solutions to resolve conflicting situations between different communities which live in protected areas and the government. The MSP helps us find medium-term solutions that can satisfy communities, and in doing so we are building a political environment where we can solve conflicts in the long term”, said Maria-Alejandra Chaux-Echeverri, Senior Natural Resources Officer, FAO Colombia.

## Strengthening capacities of change agents

Through MSPs, the capacities of “change agents” – including decision-makers, traditional chiefs, paralegal experts, local religious leaders and women’s leaders – are being strengthened to promote sustainable changes in policies, legislation, administration rules, institutional structures, procedures and concrete practices to make a significant difference in people’s lives while providing secure access to land and other natural resources.

In a series of countries where FAO has supported MSPs, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mongolia, Colombia, and South Africa, Learning Programmes have been developed to strengthen the capacities of platform members. These learning materials were adapted to national needs and the local contexts through needs assessments. The tailored trainings helped to identify and create opportunities for the wide range of “change agents” to leverage a positive change to improve governance of tenure. The trainings also had a positive effect on increased motivation, partnerships and sustainability.

For instance, in Niger, traditional chiefs – thanks to tailored VGGT trainings provided in the framework of the national multi-stakeholder committee in charge of preparing the national land policy – now play an active role in improving governance of tenure in Niger. They are also mobilizing other local authorities such as prefects in this process:

“Traditional chiefs in Niger are proud of playing an active role in the national committee in charge of preparing the land policy. The chiefs will be amongst the first to implement this policy on the ground”, mentioned Amirou Albade, General Secretary of the Association of Traditional Chiefs Niger (ACTN).

Another example of how MSPs are playing a central role in strengthening the capacities of change agents is in Senegal, where some paralegals have been trained to apply their knowledge to make a concrete change on the ground by helping community members to obtain land titles.

In Sierra Leone, Open Tenure/SOLA mapping technologies were introduced through an MSP to create survey plans of existing individual parcels to validate cadastral maps and documentation



Participants at a mapping training testing out Open Tenure software on their Android tablets in Port Loko, Sierra Leone.

of rights over family and community lands. More than 260 youth members from 13 rural communities were trained as “para-surveyors” on the use of Open Tenure technology in the mapping of family and community boundaries. MSP members may now train new “para-surveyors” to map family and community land boundaries, in the creation of cadastral maps and in recording rights over those lands.

In Sierra Leone, through a consultative and consensus-building process, the establishment of village land committees has been made possible with the help of locally trained paralegal assistants. They have been trained by the legal CSOs of FAO partners and have also participated in the formal process of community by-laws on land, forests, wetlands and grazing lands (i.e. shared resources).



Traditional chiefs – members of the Niger national MSP – actively engaging in the preparation of the national land policy in Dooso, Niger.

In Colombia, local MSPs have been set up in protected areas such as National Natural Parks to integrate small holders and indigenous people living inside these areas to biodiversity protection processes. Among the members of the MSP are conservation specialists, such as parks representatives, who can orientate stakeholders and strengthen their capacities with hands-on practice to better manage land and forest and preserve biodiversity. In three of the parks, voluntary conservation agreements have been signed between park representatives, local authorities who provide funding, training and

technical support, and inhabitants, who engage in preserving specific areas and resources.

Thanks to the strengthening of capacities on biodiversity conservation of the inhabitants, through the MSPs, they now became change agents of these areas. In the National Park in El Cocuy, Colombia, the local stakeholders now have a forum where they can express their needs, allowing them to discuss solutions with specialists engaged in conservation and local authorities as well as receive training to better preserve natural resources.

## Field case study: El Cocuy National Park, Colombia

“I started in 2017 as Head of Protected Areas of the National Natural Park in El Cocuy, Colombia, a park with 20 mountain peaks covered with perennial snow, some over 5 300 meters above sea level. The park had been closed for over a year because farmers and indigenous communities were in conflict with state authorities and ecotourism service providers over natural resources management, making park environmental management strategies impossible.

“One of my first tasks was to promote a forum where community organizations and democratically elected social leaders could represent their whole community in the dialogue among each other and with the state and park authorities. Having FAO as a neutral third-party mediator between the communities and state institutions helped to minimize tensions and generated greater trust, allowing for the implementation of strategies inspired by the VGGT, in turn helping to manage socio-ecosystem conflicts.

“Thanks to these strategies, agreements have been established between the communities and the authorities, allowing the NNP team to reach out to strategic ecosystems, which were previously off limits due to on-going conflicts. Since then, we have been able to reopen access to the El Cocuy National Park to the general



Gathering of local stakeholders at MSP workshop on knowledge exchange in El Cocuy NNP, Fortul, Colombia.

public and we are actively collaborating with communities to preserve biodiversity.

“The MSP dialogue between social leaders assisted in the creation of autonomous groups (*espacios autónomos - reuniones solo de líderes campesinos*), which foster new solutions to be proposed to local authorities. We have improved the relationship between social leaders and communities in protected areas where MSPs have been established.”

### **Octavio Segundo Eraso Paguay**

*Chief of El Cocuy National Natural Park, Colombia*

## Monitoring improved governance of tenure

As the MSPs are becoming more consolidated over time the platforms are increasingly playing a role in the monitoring and evaluation of improved governance of tenure. In this regard, new initiatives are born, ranging from follow-up and implementation of VGGT principles, preparation of land observatories and indicators for monitoring of the implementation of land policies, oversight of land registration processes and utilisation of the MSP to oversee tenure projects in the field.

In Niger and Senegal, members of the MSP suggested the establishment of national land observatories to monitor the ongoing national land reform processes and, more generally, the state of land governance in the country. Land observatories are perceived as a tool to orient and monitor frameworks and policies in place to improve tenure governance. In Niger and Senegal, FAO supported the preparation of a feasibility study, with the objective to analyse the needs and viability of a land observatory in the respective country contexts. The studies were based on participatory methodology with a consultation process to ensure the viewpoints of different key stakeholders were taken into account.

In Niger, the multi-stakeholder committee was used as the inclusive fora to discuss the results of the feasibility study during a national validation workshop. In this country there is a broad consensus among stakeholders that the observatory should be multi-stakeholder by nature and a key instrument for monitoring the implementation of the national land policy. The land observatory should be based on VGGT principles, easily measurable indicators and recognized for playing a significant role in producing new knowledge to guide the national tenure reform process.

In Senegal, the MSP is at the core of ongoing plans to build a monitoring and evaluation system for tenure governance. This is a process involving several members of the platform and of its COPIL (steering committee). The indicators prepared for the global land index (LANDex), with financial and technical support from the International Land Coalition (ILC), may contribute to the evaluation tasks of the planned land observatory and help monitor how the VGGT are implemented in Senegal.

In addition, other initiatives under the aegis of MSPs reveal an interest in improving mechanisms

for monitoring and evaluation of responsible governance of tenure:

In Sierra Leone, a road map was developed to monitor the implementation of the National Land Policy and VGGT across all relevant sectors .

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the platform members have discussed how to build a framework and indicators for monitoring and evaluation of government initiatives to improve governance of tenure based on the VGGT in the respective sectors.

In Kenya, the national MSP is conducting an ongoing process of monitoring the community land recognition, protection and registration of rights and the land records digitalization process.

In Malawi, the national MSP is being used to monitor the land registration process in the field and up-to-date information is being shared with the members of the MSP on a regular basis.

These different initiatives may subsequently be scaled-up and shared with other MPSs seeking to build effective, inclusive and sustainable systems for monitoring and evaluation of improved tenure governance, as recommended by the VGGT (paragraph 26.2).



*Communities and local government leaders discussing the application of the VGGT towards resolving land disputes through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in Lubungo village, Mvomero District, Morogoro Region, United Republic of Tanzania.*



MSPs create an inclusive forum for dialogue and consensus building, identifying sustainable solutions for improved governance of tenure and developing an inclusive dialogue. However, an MSP is not a simple model that can easily be replicated. The design of an MSP depends on the

national land tenure agenda and the willingness, interest and motivation of concerned partners. In addition, the inclusive nature of MSPs requires continuous effort of all parties and more importantly, minimal financial resources are needed for full functionality of an MSP.

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## *Consensus building, trust and strong commitment*

Even as MSPs help bring a diversity of parties together, building consensus among stakeholders remains a challenge. Governance of tenure, – including access to natural resources – remains a sensitive issue in most countries, often strongly linked to political interests. Consequently, MSPs must build common ground and trust among different actors, at times with conflicting interests.

Trust building is a delicate process which requires time and mediation. FAO is recognized for playing an important role as a “neutral convener” by bringing different stakeholders together. For instance, in South Africa, FAO’s support to the establishment of an MSP has been highly appreciated by the national stakeholders and the MSP was instrumental in building trust between

civil society actors and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

While an MSP can propose sustainable solutions to tenure issues, the political environment may not be stable. MSPs may be embedded in a political environment where ministerial shufflings are frequent. New focal points from ministries may be reluctant to apply the inclusive governance model of an MSP, requiring awareness raising and trust building to ensure political commitment from the government. As an attempt to address this challenge, civil society organizations will sometimes vice-chair the MSP, helping to ensure a degree of continuity of planned activities.

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## *Engaging the private sector*

Whereas the inclusive nature of MSPs may build stakeholder commitment, one group often remains less represented: the private sector. The business sector and investors may be less motivated to engage if they are not made aware of concrete benefits. Moreover, the private sector often invests under tight timeframes, requiring engagement in long discussions on tenure issues. These lengthy negotiations often frustrate investors, making it challenging to sustain their involvement. MSPs must constantly seek to find common areas of interest and incentives for all stakeholders.

Sierra Leone is a specific example of how an MSP can successfully involve the private sector. Throughout the MSP meetings, the private sector played an active role, participating in meetings

and trainings while piloting the new Agribusiness Investment Approval Process (AIAP). Their key motivation was putting in practice the VGGT and Responsible Agricultural Investments (RAI) principles to provide a harmonious environment with host communities, with some private investors becoming a model for implementing VGGT principles. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in investor-community conflicts over land. The private sector’s presence in the MSP allows them to submit their concerns and recommendations directly to the Inter-Ministerial Task Force (IMTF) and ensure that their recommendations are included in the MSP Communique to the IMTF, resulting in feedback from the government’s cabinet.

## Sustainability and partnership building

Another main challenge for MSPs lies in building sustainability beyond the timeline of projects, at times shorter than required for in-country land tenure governance processes. It is therefore important to build partnerships around MSPs and related land agendas at all levels to ensure continuity of actions when one partner's support ceases due to lack of resources.

“The MSP overseeing the tenure reform process is a high-level structure that needs constant support beyond the bound of relying on existing projects”, stated Yvonne Mmangisa, FAO-Malawi.

To address this challenge, MSP members can build a strategy for the government to reinforce its commitment to the MSP through financial support. Niger is one such example, supporting the 2020 action plan of the national multi-stakeholder committee included in the annual budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. This result demonstrates viability and political buy-in, including strong national ownership.

Nonetheless, in most countries MSPs remain a “new mechanism”, highly dependent on the support of financial and technical partners. It is therefore important that technical and financial partners build synergies and collaborations. This is demonstrated in Mongolia and Senegal where FAO works closely with the International Land Coalition (ILC) and other partners.

Demba Sow, National VGGT Coordinator in Senegal mentioned, “In Senegal, the dynamics surrounding the MSPs have generated interest amongst new partners such as the International Land Coalition and the World Bank, who now intend on co-designing projects to improve governance of tenure.”

To increase coordination and synergy building, FAO is playing an active role in establishing or strengthening local “donor working groups on land” to coordinate land tenure related activities in close collaboration with MSP members. In Niger, Senegal and Mauritania, groups of partners meet regularly to build concerted actions regarding land. In some countries, FAO's presence mobilizes partners to support inclusive multi-stakeholder processes aimed at improving governance of tenure. This tenure improvement has been the case in Niger:

“FAO, through its technical and financial support – but also its capacity to bring other partners on board – has played an important role in the success of the participatory processes leading to the land policy in Niger”, said Dr Abouba Saidou Former Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Niger.

In Niger, 14 different technical and financial partners support the MSPs, while FAO – together with GIZ and the European Union – is playing a central role in coordinating these efforts. This collaboration among partners helps to build long lasting solutions to improve governance of tenure.

In some cases, partners are complementing each other in supporting different types of multi-stakeholder platforms and linkages. As explained in “Broad Participation”, an MSP is composed of at least three different stakeholder groups and encourages diversity in membership to foster cross-pollination of different views and options. However, the composition of an MSP depends on the national (or local) land agenda and on the interest and motivations of members.

Since 2012, FAO has focused on providing support to capacity building of the most vulnerable to engage in land tenure debates at national and local level regarding power imbalance among



*Fatimatou Djibo Moumouni, women's leader and active member of the multi-stakeholder committee in charge of preparing the land policy, during an interview by female journalists during the preparation of the États généraux du foncier in Niger.*



different stakeholders. Strong linkages and strategic articulation must be built between CSOs and policies where decisions on land tenure issues are made. Existing civil society multi-stakeholder platforms can be an important base to build broader and more inclusive MSPs. In Mali, the initial platform was exclusively for CSOs, however, due to the evolution of the agenda (preparation of new agricultural land law), governmental bodies were included; today the MSP is a broad multi-stakeholder platform playing an active role in influencing the land reform agenda. South Africa and Niger are other examples of countries where linking different spaces have had

a positive outcome. In both cases, CSOs now have unprecedented opportunities to engage in forums where policies are made.

As different MSPs are rising on the global landscape, FAO is strengthening its collaboration with partners, alliances and networks to share experiences and knowledge while building synergies around the support of MSPs and related tenure activities. FAO's engagement in the Land collaborative, coordinated by ILC, Welthungerhilfe and Collaborating for Resilience (CoRe), is an example of a broader international community of practice to support MSPs.

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## *Looking forward*

The survey – carried out by FAO across 30 multi-stakeholder platforms in 15 countries – shows how MSPs have contributed to improve governance of tenure. Being perceived as a neutral facilitator and providing technical support as well as capacity development, FAO has assisted a broad range of actors to engage in tenure debates. MSP members request support to consolidate ongoing efforts to build inclusive processes and durable solutions to promote tenure rights.

MSP members who wish to use the platform as a space for action and learning may request training to address specific issues, such as women's access to land and evaluation for improved governance of tenure.

In countries, where MSPs oversee national reform processes and where improved tenure policies are now in place, national stakeholders need to support the next steps towards implementation to make concrete change on the ground.

With the wealth of experience and good practices from successful MSPs spreading to more countries, platform members have become increasingly interested in knowledge sharing to learn from other stakeholders.

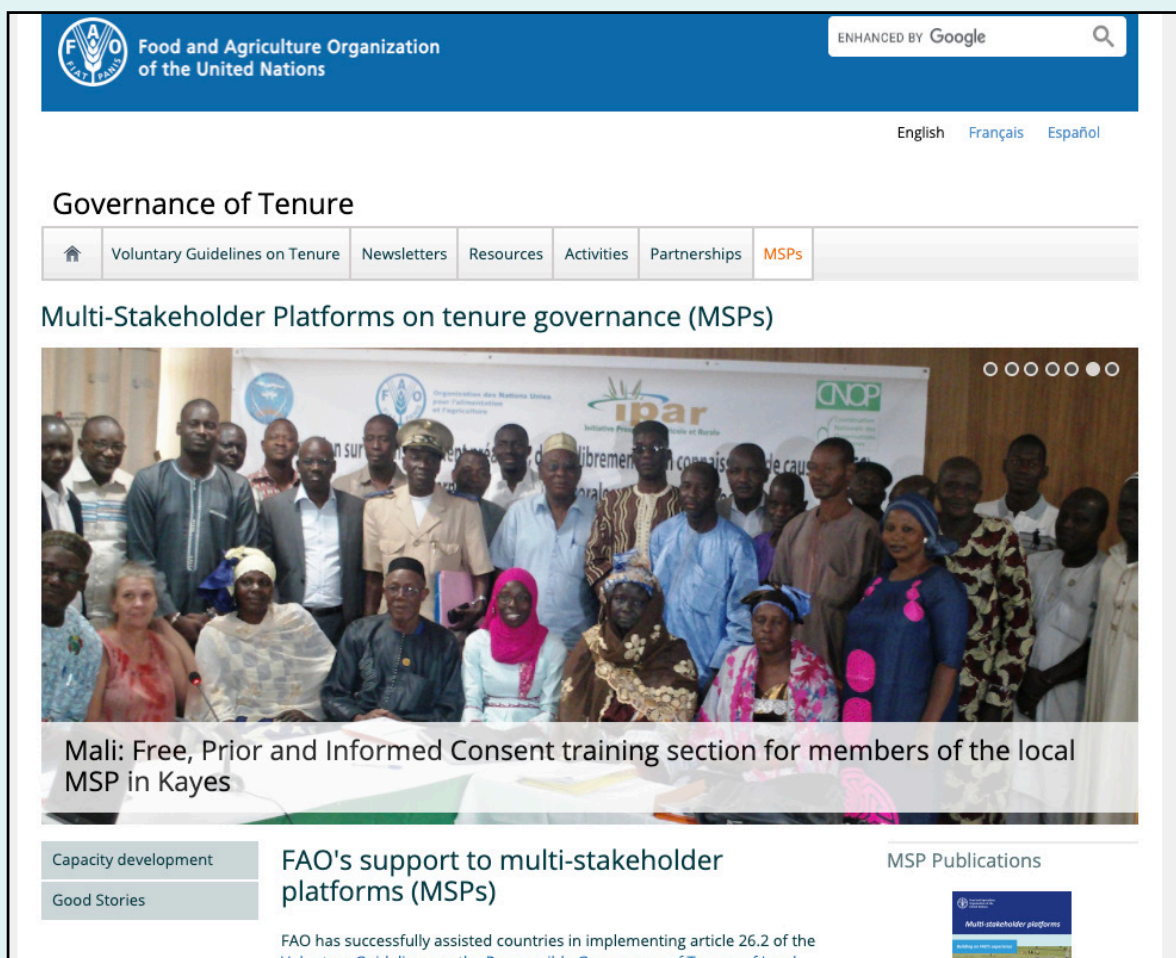
Lastly, MSP members have underlined the need to build partnerships and mobilize resources, thereby ensuring sustainability for long lasting impacts to improve governance of tenure.

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## *Lessons learned*

- MSPs have a significant foundation and impact when linked to a well-defined national land agenda.
- MSPs develop forward-thinking practices to improve governance of tenure at multiple levels.
- Building a trusting environment around the MSPs takes time but remains a main element to gain support from all key stakeholders.
- The diversity of government representatives in an MSP ensures a better inter-sectoral approach, while the VGGT can provide capacity development at national, local and regional level.
- FAO should maintain the role as a neutral and entrusted partner to help build confidence and buy-in from governments and other stakeholders.
- FAO adds value to MSPs by supporting multi-stakeholder processes, sharing its technical experience on land issues and designing of capacity development materials relevant to MSPs.

# MSP website: A hub for learning and knowledge sharing for improved governance of tenure



The screenshot shows the FAO website's 'Governance of Tenure' section. At the top, there is the FAO logo and the text 'Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations'. A search bar indicates 'ENHANCED BY Google'. Navigation links for 'English', 'Français', and 'Español' are visible. Below the 'Governance of Tenure' heading is a menu with options: 'Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure', 'Newsletters', 'Resources', 'Activities', 'Partnerships', and 'MSPs'. The main content area is titled 'Multi-Stakeholder Platforms on tenure governance (MSPs)' and features a large photograph of a group of people at a training session. Below the photo, the text reads: 'Mali: Free, Prior and Informed Consent training section for members of the local MSP in Kayes'. To the left of the photo are two buttons: 'Capacity development' and 'Good Stories'. To the right is a section for 'MSP Publications' with a thumbnail for 'Multi-stakeholder platforms'. At the bottom, a text box states: 'FAO has successfully assisted countries in implementing article 26.2 of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land'.

FAO's website on MSPs is a hub for knowledge sharing and learning regarding MSPs and improved governance of tenure. This site promotes the sharing of:

- publications and new knowledge on MSPs;
- capacity development materials and tools such as field guides, e-learning courses and other learning tools for MSP members and
- MSP stories, experiences and good practices.

Link to the MSP space on the FAO Governance of Tenure Website:  
<http://www.fao.org/tenure/msps/en/>





**Dabaly, Senegal:**

Women watering a plantation with water drawn from their cistern

Working for  #ZeroHunger

