

# A Guide to Stand By

## The People's Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests is a useful tool for civil society organizations

The crucial role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (henceforth “the Guidelines”) is the first global exhaustive tool on the tenure of natural resources developed through an inclusive process.

This process involved a series of consultations and negotiations at different levels, with the full and effective participation of a vast array of relevant actors, among which was the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). Through the civil society mechanism (CSM), this autonomous and self-organized global platform brought forward the points of view, experiences, voices and proposals of more than 800 international, regional and national organizations of small-scale food producers and rural workers, and grassroot social movements, men and women.

When the Guidelines were endorsed by the reformed United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS)—the main international and intergovernmental platform dealing with food security and nutrition—in May 2012, the IPC celebrated the achievement of this milestone consensus. In fact, with a holistic and participatory approach and the recognition of legitimate tenure rights, including customary, collective, informal tenure rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, among others, the Guidelines should serve as a reference and provide guidance to improve the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests. Firmly grounded in human rights

and calling for their respect when addressing tenure issues, and seeking to improve gender equality among all actors, they are key to improving the lives of millions of people all over the world.

The Guidelines are a point of departure, not one of arrival, and their promotion and implementation relies on concerted action by all actors. Whilst governments hold primary responsibility, the proactive support of other actors is key to ensure a significantly positive impact in the field. In this sense, CSOs, and especially those who are most

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affected by hunger and malnutrition, those who are marginalized and those who are excluded from land, and the small-scale producers who are the major investors in food security and nutrition and produce more than 80 per cent of the world's food and who advocate for food sovereignty, have a crucial role to play.

### Dialogue

These actors can, and must, participate actively in different kinds of activities and in every stage of the implementation of the Guidelines, from raising awareness and capacity building, to starting a dialogue with other actors, policymaking for the management of national resources and evaluation or conflicts resolution. They are also an essential protagonist in monitoring the

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implementation of the Guidelines and their impact in their territories.

In order to allow these key actors to take ownership of the Guidelines and be the front-and-centre in the different processes, the IPC identified the central need to make the highly technical contents of that instrument accessible and understandable for all, by translating the language of the Guidelines into theirs, and adapting them to the reality on the ground. Thus, as one of the first steps forward in the implementation of the Guidelines, the Land and Territory Working Group of the IPC elaborated the People's Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests: A guide for promotion, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, issued in June 2016.

This pedagogical and didactic guide is the result of a collective and participatory effort, by and for CSOs, to disseminate and raise awareness on the contents of the Guidelines and translate their principles into concrete action at the field level.

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It aims to provide practical guidance to peasant, fishing and pastoralist organizations, indigenous peoples, the landless, women and youth, and civil society as a whole, to understand and use the Guidelines in their struggles.

The content of this manual is organized in three chapters. The first one summarizes the debates and process that led to the Guidelines, and offers an overview of its history and context while recognizing the need for a framework for the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests. In addition, it answers questions such as “Are the Guidelines voluntary or binding?”, “What do the Guidelines cover?” and “What link can we draw between the Guidelines, human rights and the

eradication of hunger?”. Finally, it addresses the role of state and non-state actors, including CSOs and business enterprises, in governance of tenure.

The second chapter gives a brief but representative overview of nine conflict situations or cases. They do not refer to a specific country or case, but are based on a synthesis of different real-life situations that repeatedly occur in different regions and constituencies across the planet. These cases present different interacting actors, different types and elements of conflict, as well as sociopolitical features of different territories. Each community or CSO using the manual should be able to find similarities with the reality experienced in their territory, and thus come up with their own assessment of the tenure governance issues they face by using the Guidelines. The User Guide provided in the Manual, which systematises the Guidelines' paragraphs according to different topics of interest to civil society, facilitates the analysis of these situations by relating them directly to the content of the Guidelines. The best way to approach and take ownership of this User Guide and, through it, of the Guidelines, is through practice.

Lastly, the third chapter presents a practical guide on how to implement the Guidelines by providing different tools and strategies. The examples developed in this chapter are mostly based on experiences from different organizations and communities. They are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to spark questions and generate concrete proposals by including the Guidelines into our struggles, according to the realities on the ground in different places.

### **Translations**

At the moment, the manual is available in five languages: Spanish, English, French, Brazilian Portuguese and Arabic. Many CSOs and those who have already started training and working with the Manual have identified the need to have it translated into different local languages, in order to ensure a broader

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A guide for promotion, implementation,  
monitoring and evaluation



dissemination and understanding of this tool and, through it, of the Guidelines. We strongly encourage them to do so, and other actors to support this initiative.

Based on a popular education approach and on the realities and experiences of local communities and CSOs, the People's Manual has been also designed as a training tool on the content and relevance of the Guidelines for civil society and grassroots organizations and communities. It has already been used in raising awareness and capacity-building activities in over 20 countries around the world, with the participation of representatives of different constituencies.

By helping people understand the critical relevance of the Guidelines for their livelihoods and for asserting their legitimate tenure rights through these workshops, the Manual has also been a source of inspiration for

the elaboration of concrete strategies based on that instrument.

This manual is a starting point, to trigger a multiplier effect in people taking ownership of the Guidelines, generating dialogue and debate among different population groups and governments and demanding its implementation and compliance in the governance of tenure and the respect of human rights. Increasing numbers of CSOs are committed to their implementation, and have launched powerful initiatives to raise awareness and defend people's tenure rights in all continents. The work on the ground will continue, as will the struggles of our peoples. 🌱

### For more



[foodsovereignty.org/peoplesmanual/](http://foodsovereignty.org/peoplesmanual/)  
**The People's Manual on the  
Guidelines on Governance of  
Land, Fisheries and Forests:  
A Guide for Promotion,  
Implementation, Monitoring and  
Evaluation**

[fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/](http://fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/)  
**Voluntary Guidelines on the  
Responsible Governance of  
Tenure of Land, Fisheries and  
Forests in the Context of National  
Food Security (VGGT)**