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Organization of the  
United Nations

Cluster evaluation of two  
projects contributing  
to the second phase of the  
FAO programme  
"Supporting the  
Implementation of the  
Voluntary Guidelines on the  
Responsible Governance of  
Tenure of Land, Fisheries and  
Forests"



**Cluster evaluation of two projects  
contributing to the second phase of the  
FAO programme "Supporting the  
Implementation of the Voluntary  
Guidelines on the Responsible  
Governance of Tenure of Land,  
Fisheries and Forests"**

**Project codes: GCP/GLO/347/MUL and  
GCP/INT/328/UK**

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## Abstract

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) are a global set of principles and internationally accepted standards of practice for the responsible governance of tenure, aimed at contributing to the eradication of poverty and hunger for all.

The evaluation covers two global projects contributing to the second phase of the programme “Supporting the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” (VGGT programme). It focused on a select number of country- and regional-level activities undertaken between July 2016 and June 2021.

Recognizing the existence of different models, approaches and systems of governance of tenure under national and regional regimes, the VGGT offer multiple ways to approach different realities surrounding the politically sensitive nature of land tenure issues. The VGGT have proven able to penetrate complex land reform challenges at different levels: at regional level (by engaging the Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) of the Horn of Africa and West Africa in the design of legal and policy support initiatives for member states); at national level (working through multi-stakeholder platforms in an effort to generate consensus on priorities for sectoral reform (for example, in the Niger, Senegal and Myanmar); and subnational level (involving traditional authorities, municipalities and local producers in policy dialogue and multisectoral exchanges (for instance, in Colombia, Namibia, the Niger, Senegal and Viet Nam).

The results show significant achievements in awareness-raising and capacity development, policy dialogue, policy influence and legal and policy reform processes. FAO demonstrates a competitive advantage in areas of capacity development, in specialized technical support (such as legal advice), in actor coordination and multisector dialogue facilitation. At regional and continental levels, the VGGT have been integrated into several instruments, linking local and national tenure agendas with relevant broader frameworks. At global level, FAO has continued to play a significant role in global dialogue, particularly through the development and distribution of VGGT technical materials as public goods for capacity development interventions.

The evaluation emphasizes the need to invest in political economy analysis at country level and to strengthen the integration of current VGGT land-related work with other areas, such as fisheries, forestry and conflict management, where relevant, and with related FAO and external actors. Increased attention could be paid to identifying ways to further strengthen linkages between capacity development and multisectoral dialogue on the one hand, and decision-making processes on the other, and to engaging more systematically at grassroots level through pilot initiatives. The evaluation emphasizes the key contribution of Country Offices to achieving programme results.



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## Abbreviations and acronyms

|          |                                                                                                                                      |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ALPC     | African Land Policy Centre                                                                                                           |
| ASEAN    | Association of Southeast Asian Nations                                                                                               |
| AUC      | African Union Commission                                                                                                             |
| CFS      | Committee on World Food Security                                                                                                     |
| CILSS    | Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel                                                                                           |
| CISDOMA  | Consultative Institute for Socio-Economic Development of Rural and Mountainous Areas/Land Alliance                                   |
| ECOWAS   | Economic Community of West African States                                                                                            |
| FAO      | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations                                                                              |
| F&G      | Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa                                                                                    |
| FIG      | International Federation of Surveyors                                                                                                |
| FIRST    | Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme                                          |
| GEF-SLM  | Global Environment Facility Sustainable Land Management                                                                              |
| GIZ      | Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit                                                                                       |
| IGAD     | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                                                                                           |
| IPSARD   | Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development                                                               |
| LANDA    | Land Alliance                                                                                                                        |
| MRLG     | Mekong Region Land Governance                                                                                                        |
| NGO      | non-governmental organization                                                                                                        |
| OECD DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee                                            |
| PDET     | Development Programme with a Territorial Focus (Colombia)                                                                            |
| RAI      | Responsible Agriculture Investment                                                                                                   |
| USAID    | United States Agency for International Development                                                                                   |
| VGGT     | Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security |

## Executive summary

1. This evaluation was commissioned with the overall aim of: i) providing a comprehensive account of two global projects contributing to the second phase of the programme “Supporting the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” (VGGT programme); and ii) drawing lessons to inform future interventions in the area of governance of tenure. It was conducted by an independent team of experts coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Office of Evaluation (OED).
2. The evaluation covered a select number of country- and regional-level activities undertaken within the scope of projects GCP/GLO/347/MUL (phase II) and GCP/INT/328/UK between July 2016 and June 2021. It focused on overall programme intervention logic, processes and results, the strength of FAO’s proposition and on learning “how change happened”. Regional and thematic dimensions of the work were assessed in four particular areas: i) support for the African Union Agenda on Land through an integrated approach to the application of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G) to influence policy change; ii) mainstreaming the VGGT to improve governance of pastoral lands in the Sahel; iii) the recognition and protection of customary tenure systems and land-based investments in the Mekong Region; and iv) detailed studies on Chinese land-based investments in the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique. Five in-depth case studies were conducted in Colombia, Namibia, the Niger, Myanmar and Viet Nam.
3. VGGT work was found to be extremely relevant to the food systems and agricultural transformation agenda, to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the narrative of the FAO Strategic Framework, as it focuses on strengthening governance of tenure as a means to eradicating hunger and poverty, supporting sustainable development and enhancing the environment. The latter could be strengthened by complementing the current approach with broader political economy analyses aimed at better understanding the political space surrounding governance of tenure in different socioeconomic contexts. Few activities were found in the areas of fisheries and forestry, agropastoral conflict and land-based investments, something that could be explored further in future.
4. Coherence was pursued effectively at regional level through the integrated implementation of the VGGT with other relevant instruments, by partnering with regional-level institutions and through consistent lesson sharing between countries. Country-level coherence could be enhanced by strengthening integration with other players operating in the same space. The projects were found to be consistent with human rights thinking and to promote gender and inclusion in both their design and implementation.
5. At country level, building on the foundations laid in phase I, the projects achieved significant results in terms of awareness raising and capacity development (through successful training and learning programmes), promoting policy dialogue (particularly through the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms) and, to a lesser extent, influencing legal and policy reform processes, partly due to their lengthy and complex nature. FAO demonstrated a competitive advantage in areas of capacity development, specialized technical support (such as legal advice), actor coordination and multisectoral dialogue facilitation. At regional and continental levels, the VGGT were integrated into

several legal and policy instruments, linking local and national tenure agendas with relevant broader institutional frameworks. FAO continued to play a significant role in global dialogue, particularly through the development and distribution of VGGT technical materials as public goods for capacity development interventions.

6. The aforementioned results were achieved thanks to an effective and efficient programme delivery model. The projects operated primarily through a centralized model, with a full technical team based at FAO headquarters, travelling frequently to programme countries. This type of support, however, presented challenges in terms of securing opportunities to fully engage with the national agenda and enhancing the local ownership of results. These challenges were less evident in countries where processes were driven and owned by Country Offices, such as Colombia and the Niger.
7. At the global level, elements of sustainability were found in the way in which the VGGT appeared to be fully integrated into the land tenure narrative both within and outside FAO, where the VGGT and related materials have become a public good and a benchmark for standard setting. At country level, while positive results have been achieved in terms of strengthening national capacity and enhancing multi-stakeholder dialogue through multi-stakeholder platforms, changes cannot yet be deemed sustainable (they are not completely independent of FAO support). Challenges remain in terms of fully institutionalizing capacity within governments, expanding the breadth of strategic partnerships and sustaining engagement through multi-stakeholder platforms.

## **Recommendations**

8. Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, the Evaluation Team recommends the following to the FAO Land Tenure Team:
  - i. Pursue greater integration with the areas of forestry and fisheries, conflict management and land-based investment. Resources allowing, the team should invest in political economy analysis with a view to identifying both openings for and obstacles to land governance reform and use such evidence to inform country-level intervention strategies.
  - ii. Identify ways to better integrate its work at national level with that of other actors and FAO projects, and tie in more closely with national agendas and roadmaps where they exist.
  - iii. Identify ways to link capacity development work and multisectoral dialogue more directly to decision-making processes and to engage more systematically at grassroots level through the direct support of pilots.
  - iv. Consider ways to strengthen Country Office engagement and leadership in the rollout of project interventions and in the overall promotion of the tenure agenda. It should redefine the current programmatic approach in light of project funding realities.
  - v. Develop a comprehensive knowledge management system to ensure the systematic documentation of information and greater cross-country learning, with particular emphasis on eastern and western Africa.
  - vi. Adopt a more systematic approach to capacity development and a more strategic approach to partnership development.



# 1. Introduction

1. This report presents the main results of the evaluation of two global projects contributing to the second phase of the programme “Supporting the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” (VGGT Programme) implemented from October 2016 to December 2021. The projects are:
  - i. GCP/GLO/347/MUL Phase II, implemented from October 2016 to December 2021. The project was funded through a multi-donor trust fund and had a total budget of USD 15 192 607 for the two phases. Phase II, covered by the evaluation, was primarily supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which provided USD 4 647 000, and Italy, which provided USD 1 600 000;<sup>1</sup> and
  - ii. GCP/INT/328/UK, funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with a total budget of around USD 3.5 million, implemented from March 2018 to March 2021.
2. The evaluation was conducted from July 2021 to December 2021.

## 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation and intended users

3. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to provide a comprehensive account of the two projects within the scope of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) programme and draw lessons to inform future interventions in the area of governance of tenure.
4. The main internal potential users of this evaluation are the project team, management of the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, and other technical units at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) headquarters and in decentralized offices involved in the programme. Other intended users are: resource partners, particularly those funding the two projects, as well as other donors who could use the evaluation findings to inform investment decisions and other forms of technical cooperation in similar areas; counterparts in participating countries, such as governmental actors and research institutions, as well as other governmental stakeholders who could use the evaluation findings for future planning and collaboration with FAO in relation to VGGT implementation; and potential new stakeholders identified through this evaluation.

## 1.2 Scope and objective of the evaluation

5. The evaluation covered a select number of country-level and regional-level activities undertaken as part of the two projects under evaluation. Activities assessed include: awareness raising; capacity development; multi-stakeholder processes and platforms; and policy advice and other forms of support to promote responsible, integrated and inclusive governance of tenure at global, national and local levels.
6. As this is a cluster evaluation of two projects in the context of a large umbrella programme evaluation, the exercise did not constitute a rigorous evaluation of individual activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The first phase was funded by Italy, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Belgium, France and Sweden. The evaluation also covers some activities started in phase I that continued into phase II.

Rather, it focused on the overall programme intervention logic, relevant processes and results, the strength of FAO's proposition and the emergence of key learnings with regard to "how change happened". The evaluation also sought to identify implementation challenges that might have affected the achievement of outcomes, for example, contextual and systemic factors embedded in policy and/or institutional processes and issues related to organizational set-up and internal governance. Geographically, the evaluation examined the implementation of interventions at global, regional and country levels.

7. The regional and thematic dimensions of FAO's work were assessed in four areas:
  - i. pan-Africa – mainstreaming the VGGT through the integrated implementation of the African Union/United Nations Economic Commission for Africa/African Development Bank Africa Land Policy Centre Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G) and the VGGT;
  - ii. pastoralism in the Sahel – mainstreaming the VGGT in processes related to improving the governance of pastoral lands in the Sahel region;
  - iii. Mekong Region – mainstreaming the VGGT in processes related to the recognition and protection of customary tenure systems (particularly in Myanmar) and land-based investments (particularly in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam); and
  - iv. Chinese land-based investments – detailed studies of Chinese investments in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as a follow-up to the Chinese investments in Africa study of Phase I.
8. In all four areas, the evaluation aimed to unpack the regional/thematic approach and assess the benefit of cross-country learning and the extent to which such learning changed at both country and regional levels.
9. The objectives of the evaluation were to: i) assess the second phase of the VGGT implementation programme (two projects) against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee's (OECD DAC) revised evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability; ii) articulate the strengths of the VGGT implementation strategy (including its theory of change); and iii) identify challenges and document practices and lessons that could inform similar projects and the continuation of the VGGT programme into a possible third phase.
10. The evaluation addressed five core questions related to the OECD DAC evaluation criteria:
  - i. the relevance of the VGGT projects to the current development context at global, regional and country levels;
  - ii. the coherence between the VGGT projects and other players and initiatives in the area of governance of tenure;
  - iii. the effectiveness of VGGT implementation;
  - iv. the efficiency of VGGT operating model and implementation modalities; and
  - v. the sustainability and likelihood of lasting change in relation to the results achieved through the VGGT projects.

11. Particular emphasis was placed on those aspects identified in previous evaluations as requiring greater attention, such as the localization of support, changes in institutional and operational frameworks, FAO's strategic positioning and the key role played by voluntary instruments in the promotion and advancement of governance of tenure. The full list of evaluation questions is provided in Appendix 2.

### 1.3 Methodology

12. The review took a collaborative and participatory approach throughout the evaluation process. In answering the evaluation questions, the Evaluation Team relied on multiple sources of primary and secondary data and used a mixed-methods approach for data analysis, triangulation and validation.
13. To overcome challenges arising from the fact that achievements at country level were often the result of support provided by many different projects – and the consequent difficulty in isolating specific changes and attributing them to a single contributor – as well as the fact that many of the results achieved were beyond the scope of what was planned in the projects' logframes, the Evaluation Team used outcome harvesting as its main approach. Outcome harvesting is an evaluation methodology aimed at collecting ("harvesting") evidence on what has changed, then working backwards to determine whether and how an intervention has contributed to those changes (for more on outcome harvesting, see BetterEvaluation, 2021). It defines outcomes as changes in actions, relationships, policies and practices of one or more social actors influenced by an intervention. Mindful of the fact that both projects under evaluation qualify outcome-level changes as "improved frameworks for regulating the tenure of land, fisheries and forests", the evaluation placed particular emphasis on assessing changes at the level of legal, policy and institutional frameworks during the harvesting of outcomes. Outcomes were initially harvested through desk review and subsequently validated through interviews, workshops and surveys.
14. Data collection methods comprised: a desk review of relevant documentation; interviews with key internal and external stakeholders (a total of 114); a focus group discussion with the project team; one country-level workshop; and two surveys (one regional and one country level). A breakdown of respondents divided by country and category is provided in Appendix 1.
15. The analysis focused primarily on assessing the contribution to outcomes. In particular, the evaluation assessed FAO's influence on the outcomes achieved, identified challenges and constraints, and mapped future opportunities for the continuation of the programme.
16. To assess outcomes at country level, in-depth case studies were conducted in a purposeful sample of five countries: Colombia, Namibia, the Niger, Myanmar<sup>2</sup> and Viet Nam. These countries were selected in consultation with the VGGT project team at FAO headquarters, taking into account regional representation and certain countries not already addressed by other recent evaluations. As the VGGT project team adopted a programmatic approach in

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<sup>2</sup> All activities assessed by the evaluation in relation to Myanmar were carried out before 2021. Due to the change in government, views were mainly assessed by the Evaluation Team indirectly through third parties and reports, that is, from workshops, meetings and study tours. For a relatively complex project that ran throughout Phase I and Phase II of the VGGT project, the number of interviewees available was relatively low.

some cases at country level, in those instances, the evaluation took into account all outcomes triggered by the FAO VGGT programme, independent of the source of funding.

17. For country case studies, the following data collection methodologies were used:
  - i. Colombia: desk review, interviews with the project team and key internal and external stakeholders;
  - ii. Namibia: desk review, survey, interviews with the project team and key internal and external stakeholders;
  - iii. the Niger: desk review, country-level workshop, interviews with the project team and key internal and external stakeholders;
  - iv. Myanmar: desk review, interviews with the project team and key internal and external stakeholders; and
  - v. Viet Nam: desk review, interviews with the project team and key internal and external stakeholders.
18. Data collection related to the regional/thematic areas (pan-Africa, pastoralism, the Mekong Region and Chinese land-based investments) was based on a desk review, interviews with key informants and a survey relating to the e-learning course on pastoralism.

## **1.4 Limitations**

19. The main limitations of this exercise were those related to the circumstances surrounding COVID-19, which turned the evaluation into an exclusively remote task. This affected access to and, on occasion, the quality of information collected. Difficulties in accessing stakeholders in remote rural areas limited the Evaluation Team's capacity to take their perspectives fully into consideration. These challenges were compounded by the risk of overloading FAO personnel and other stakeholders already under pressure to manage change within the new ways of working and deliver projects and programmes on the ground. However, the evaluation reached data saturation and the variety of sources allowed for an adequate level of triangulation.
20. The evaluation covered only a select number of country-level and regional-level activities undertaken during phase II of the VGGT programme. Consequently, only a limited number of thematic areas were assessed.
21. Language presented a challenge in Myanmar, Viet Nam and Colombia. The evaluation availed of translators for these countries.

## **1.5 Structure of the report**

22. This report is divided into six sections. After the Introduction, Section 2 provides the background and context of the projects. Section 3 presents the main findings grouped by evaluation question and Section 4 provides conclusions and recommendations.
23. The report is accompanied by the following Appendices:
  - i. Appendix 1: Stakeholder breakdown
  - ii. Appendix 2: Evaluation matrix

## **2. Background and context of the project**

### **2.1 Context of the project**

24. The VGGT are an international framework document (voluntary in nature) promoting secure tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests as a means of eradicating hunger and poverty, supporting sustainable development and enhancing the environment.
25. Following the endorsement of the VGGT by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in May 2012, FAO, in collaboration with its partners, established an umbrella programme to support their implementation. The first phase covered 2012–2016 and aimed to improve frameworks for regulating the tenure of land, fisheries and forests by promoting five mutually supportive outputs that encompassed FAO's comparative advantage: i) awareness raising, ii) capacity development, iii) country support, iv) partnerships and v) monitoring (VGGT I). An evaluation conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) in 2017 showed that VGGT I had achieved remarkable results, particularly in terms of awareness raising and capacity development. Nevertheless, it also pointed out certain areas for improvement, such as strengthening institutional and operational frameworks and enhancing local-level support.
26. Building on the lessons learned during the first phase, Phase II of the umbrella programme (VGGT II, July 2016–June 2021) focused on two main outputs:
  - i. at global level, enhancing processes to improve governance of tenure by establishing collaborative partnerships, promoting global dialogue, monitoring the take-up of the VGGT, and developing, distributing and promoting VGGT technical materials for capacity development; and
  - ii. at country and regional levels, enhancing capacity to implement the VGGT to achieve concrete results in relevant policies, legal frameworks and institutional and administrative arrangements. Activities included awareness raising, capacity development, technical support, partnerships and monitoring.
27. As an umbrella programme (PGM/MUL/2016-2020/VG), VGGT II served as a framework for all FAO activities aimed at supporting the implementation of the VGGT during this period. Two global projects were the major contributors to the implementation of VGGT II – GCP/GLO/347/MUL and GCP/INT/328/UK – and these are the subject of this evaluation.
28. Under GCP/GLO/347/MUL, support was provided to: Cambodia, Colombia, Guinea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Myanmar, Namibia, the Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, Viet Nam, the Mekong Region and the Sahel region of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Under GCP/INT/328/UK, support was provided to: Colombia, China, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania. The support in some countries complemented ongoing VGGT projects.



### 3. Evaluation findings

*Evaluation question 1. Relevance of the projects to the global development agenda and the actual needs of participating countries*

**Finding 1.** VGGT work is extremely relevant to food systems, the agricultural transformation agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and FAO's Strategic Framework narrative, as it focuses on strengthening governance of tenure as a means of eradicating hunger and poverty, supporting sustainable development and enhancing the environment. The VGGT have been shown to penetrate complex land reform challenges at different levels. However, the programme's relevance to the actual needs of participating countries is uneven, based on the two projects under evaluation, due to the varying nature of the support and the fact that it is not always sufficiently complemented by political economy analysis.

29. Promoting secure tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests as a means of eradicating hunger and poverty is a central element of the global sustainable development agenda. Following endorsement by the CFS in 2021, VGGT implementation has been encouraged by the G20 group of nations, Rio+ 20, the United Nations General Assembly and the Francophone Assembly of Parliamentarians, among others. This ascribes the VGGT the highest level of legitimacy in global, regional and national frameworks.
30. The VGGT remained highly relevant in phase II of implementation and in the face of new and emerging development challenges, such as climate change, conflict and fragility, inequality and marginalization and, more recently, COVID-19. These challenges have further emphasized the importance of addressing governance of tenure as a prerequisite to adequately understanding vulnerability and issues related to access to natural and financial resources, markets and other services, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with the areas of responsible agricultural/land-based investment. This has been recognized by regional and global actors at different levels, including the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development.
31. VGGT work has been particularly relevant in the context of four specific areas of intervention:
  - i. pan-Africa, where it helped to support the African Union Agenda on Land, including national aspirations, through the integrated application of the VGGT and F&G with a view to influencing policy change;
  - ii. pastoralism in the Sahel, where it promoted the use of the VGGT and F&G in developing policies, strategies and programmes to address issues related to pastoralism, with particular emphasis on agropastoral conflict;
  - iii. the Mekong Region, where it facilitated the mainstreaming of the VGGT and the sharing of experiences and lessons learned across countries through a transversal approach that was aligned with the land tenure activities of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG) project, based in Vientiane in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and executed jointly by Land Equity International and *Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques* (GRET); and
  - iv. Chinese land-based investments, where it aimed to understand tenure governance processes to support responsible agricultural investments through the analysis of

extraterritorial investments in agricultural land by Chinese entities in the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique.

32. In all of the above, VGGT relevance was highlighted by the fact that work was effectively integrated into existing initiatives and institutional frameworks in an attempt to strengthen and enhance technical capacity and inform regional-level tenure agendas.
33. At national level, work was particularly relevant in that it focused on strengthening the capacity of various actors with a view to creating "agents of change" able to influence reform processes to improve legal, policy and institutional frameworks. In Colombia, for example, the project's relevance to the local context was underscored by the fact that interventions enabled local actors to formalize 29 public law entities in the municipality of San Juan de Cesar (La Guajira) and helped the national parks authorities to manage conflict more effectively at a time when this aspect was highly relevant to the national agenda, through the creation of management committees.
34. In Viet Nam, the project sought to address land accumulation and concentration issues at a time when the country was seeing increased liberalization of the sector. The project's analysis of the 2013 Land Law's compliance with the VGGT, therefore, came at a very appropriate time and was extremely relevant, in that it led to proposed amendments to the law, which are currently under consideration. In Viet Nam, as part of its work to integrate the VGGT into the revision of the 2013 Land Law, the project enhanced stakeholder awareness of the VGGT principles and practices and how they apply to land governance through two workshops at regional level and four at local level.
35. The blended learning programme "Safeguarding Land Tenure Rights in the Context of Agricultural Investments" was delivered initially to representatives of the Government of Viet Nam. It was then adapted and contextualized in a second rollout to target regional and local-level authorities and tailored to be more context-specific, for example, through the use of more localized terminology and language. While the VGGT are relevant to Viet Nam's work to improve land governance, they are still quite new to stakeholders in the country. More investments will have to be made to ensure that VGGT principles and practices are integrated into the country's land governance systems.
36. In the Niger, consensus was built among different stakeholders on key areas related to better tenure, putting land governance high on the government's agenda. Through the work of a multi-stakeholder technical committee, a new Land Policy and an Action Plan were developed and formally adopted in September 2021.
37. As the Evaluation Team understands it, beneficiary countries were selected on the basis of two (at times coinciding) main factors: i) success with an earlier FAO-supported project (such as the Niger and Colombia) and ii) a strong demonstrated interest on the part of the government when it came to land reform processes (for example, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Niger, Namibia, Kenya, Senegal, Malawi, Myanmar and Viet Nam). Thus, projects responded to opportunities emerging from earlier interventions or from engagements with land governance-mandated institutions.
38. The actual selection of areas of support (including policy reforms) was underpinned by an analysis of the complex dynamics within domestic legal, policy and institutional settings, which enabled the identification of optimal areas to drive inclusive governance of tenure. In Myanmar, for example, the project was demand driven, in that it responded to direct

- requests from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (FAO's main counterpart) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. It was informed by a close assessment of the political economy analysis carried out by the MRLG project and a country assessment by FAO.
39. Due to budget constraints, work carried out by phase II of the VGGT project in Myanmar continued to prioritize support for policy and research, with a focus on two themes: customary tenure and responsible land-based investments. While the project helped to raise awareness of VGGT principles and practices among various policymakers, the extent of its direct impact on policy and law-making in these areas cannot be confidently verified, given the plethora of local actors actively working to advance these issues and the fact that the country is still in the early stages of making substantial improvements in these areas.
  40. FAO's progress on land governance more broadly in Myanmar resulted in the government requesting more support from the Organization to design its new Land Law and to pilot various VGGT-compliant land governance practices on the ground. This was in line with FAO's 2016 country assessment, which highlighted, for example, the need to directly support the piloting of VGGT-compliant land governance practices (such as supporting ethnic minorities in securing customary tenure and streamlining land administration). This new initiative, supported by the European Commission, was put on hold because of the change in government.
  41. In the Niger, the intervention was a continuation of a previous initiative, which aimed to create strong multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance confidence among actors as a first step in addressing legal, policy and institutional constraints. The second phase, therefore, focused very much on the objectives of the first.
  42. The current approach delivered valuable results in several capacity development and legal and policy reform areas. However, these could have been strengthened by taking a comprehensive approach to tenure system reform involving an in-depth analysis of the context and underpinning political economy to ensure maximum benefit from project interventions, as well as capitalizing on synergies with the work of others. This would have comprised an assessment of existing social, political, administrative and economic structures and power dynamics and of their impact on land and tenure security for smallholders, with particular emphasis on aspects of social inclusion and environmental sustainability.
  43. The evaluation found evidence of this type of political economy analysis in the study on land tenure and pastoralism in ECOWAS and the Sahel, undertaken in the context of the FAO–Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) partnership and in a national study on land tenure in Senegal. It should be noted that this type of in-depth analysis is often difficult to finance, as donors do not always support it.
  44. Recognizing the existence of different models, approaches and systems of governance of tenure under national and regional regimes, the VGGT offer multiple entry points to approach different realities surrounding the politically sensitive nature of land tenure issues. The VGGT have been shown to penetrate complex land reform challenges at different levels: at regional level (by engaging the Regional Economic Commissions [RECs] of the Horn of Africa and West Africa in the design of legal and policy support for member states); at national level (working through multi-stakeholder platforms in an effort to

generate consensus on priorities for sector reform (as in the Niger and Senegal); and at subnational level (involving traditional authorities, municipalities and local producers in policy dialogue and multi-stakeholder exchanges (as in Colombia, Namibia, the Niger, Senegal and Viet Nam).

45. The projects were able to adapt to changing circumstances in different countries. In the Niger, for instance, the context changed from when the programme was originally formulated, especially towards the end of the project, due to the political transition following the presidential election. With a whole new political class in place, the expectation was that there would be challenges in finalizing the previously agreed draft Land Policy. However, due to the excellent work carried out by FAO on consensus building and inclusive dialogue, it was possible to proceed with policy approval despite the political transition.
46. Similarly, in Namibia, circumstances changed over time, in that the majority of parliamentarians trained retired shortly afterwards. However, the decision they had made to identify ways of reaching out to local authorities and communities was pursued through the support of FAO, which led to: i) awareness raising and sensitization being carried out at community level and ii) land tenure governance training becoming part of the orientation pack for incoming parliamentarians.
47. One other example comes from Colombia, where heavy mobility restrictions introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated previous levels of insecurity around the countryside and made access to different stakeholders more difficult. The project, however, adapted its method of operation and, through the use of remote communication, was able to reach an even larger number of actors than before.

**Finding 2.** The primary focus of VGGT II projects has been on land, with few activities in the areas of fisheries and forestry and relatively limited attention to agropastoral conflict (in Africa) or engagement with the private sector in land-based investments. This has resulted in missed opportunities to strengthen the programme's relevance and strategic positioning at both regional and country levels.

48. While the areas of fisheries and forestry are both addressed by the VGGT (document), the Evaluation Team found little evidence of related investments on the ground in the context of the two projects being evaluated. While those two sectors appear to be represented in dialogue and information-sharing platforms (including the internal VGGT Task Force), they are less visible in the context of supported capacity development activities and policy reform processes, despite increased demand for the inclusion of these areas, as had arisen in previous evaluations. An exception can be found in the Mekong Region, where the work addressed forest landscapes and activities centred on the competition for land between agriculture (including aquaculture) and forestry. In addition, in Cambodia, attention was paid to integrating the work with that of inland fisheries, due to its important role in the pursuit of a balance diet.
49. Many of the national-level workshops aimed at sensitizing the government to the VGGT were cross-ministerial and involved civil society organizations and academia. The follow-up, however, often only involved individual ministries. One example was a Myanmar study trip to Viet Nam, comprising representatives of three main ministries. In the follow-up, they briefed their colleagues in separate meetings and came together for further discussions on the lessons learned in Viet Nam and their possible use in the National Land Law drafting process, but without formal follow-up at the institutional level.

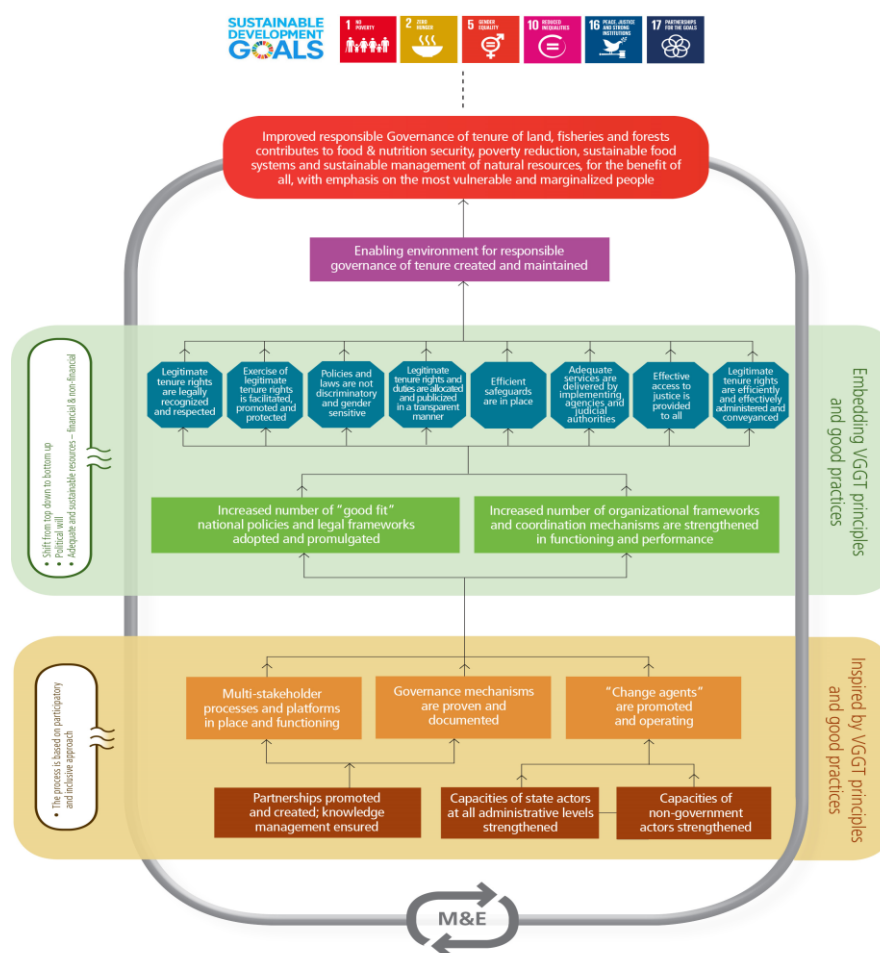
50. Greater integration of the three sectors is also required in the context of the new food systems transformation agenda, which calls for integrated cross-sectoral approaches to the sustainable management of natural resources as a way to enhance ecosystems resilience.
51. The VGGT projects recognized the increasing challenges faced by traditional pastoralist communities in the Sahel, resulting from the decreased availability of grazing lands and water resources due to several factors, such as increasing drought, population pressure and overgrazing. These factors have, over time, contributed to the loss of productive land for both grazing and crop production purposes, resulting in an increase in farmer-herder conflicts between pastoralists and sedentary population groups, often revolving around land use. The lack of recognition of land tenure rights and unequal access to land and other natural resources lie at the heart of these conflicts.
52. The Evaluation Team noted several activities initiated during this project phase, or carried out as a continuation of the previous phase, that focused specifically on pastoralism in Africa, including farmer-herder conflict, especially the capacity building and learning side. While acknowledging the intensive work of the project team on agropastoral issues and on agropastoral conflict, in particular, the findings of the Evaluation Team suggest that limited investment has gone into closer linkages with decision-making processes in terms of cross-border transhumance at the national and regional levels to inform conflict resolution (with the exception of the Niger, where the engagement has been particularly active). This is an area that was not foreseen in the scope of the two projects under evaluation and one requiring both partner and donor attention.
53. Work was undertaken to promote sustainable and inclusive land-based investment, in line with both the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) and VGGT principles and practices (namely, research on the nature of Chinese land-based investments in agriculture in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania and work carried out in the Mekong Region, including a learning programme on safeguarding tenure rights in the context of agricultural investments rolled out in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam).
54. In Myanmar a dedicated workshop had already been held in 2016 to ensure direct engagement with private investors and financial institutions. Their availability was, however, often limited to just one day, making it difficult to engage them in activities that spanned longer than that. One other example is the Niger, where multi-stakeholder platforms made a significant impact in linking government and civil society. However, when it came to the private sector, only small fuelwood companies were involved, with no engagement on the part of private investors and/or large companies. This finding is, of course, limited to the activities reviewed within the scope of this evaluation.

**Finding 3.** The programme's theory of change presents an interesting trajectory, moving from skills and knowledge to agency to improved frameworks and, eventually, to a more conducive enabling environment for the achievement of food security and poverty reduction. Some gaps, however, were noted in the way that the diagram sets out the move from one step to another in the proposed pathway of change.

55. The VGGT theory of change was developed in 2018, well into the rollout of phase II, as a way of setting out the programme's pathway of change towards the achievement of the main outcomes. The pathway represented in Figure 1 identifies the establishment of multi-stakeholder processes, governance mechanisms and change agents as key

foundations for fully initiating the change process, underpinned by a strong component of capacity development at different levels. Having these mechanisms in place, according to the theory of change, leads to legal, policy and institutional frameworks being adopted, resulting in the exercise of legitimate tenure rights, the presence of adequate safeguards to protect rights holders and the provision of services, including access to justice. This, in turn, results in the strengthening of the enabling environment with a view to making it conducive to reaching the overarching programme goal of improved, responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests as a contribution to food security and nutrition, poverty reduction and the sustainable management of natural resources. This logic is backed by a series of assumptions relating to areas such as partnerships, knowledge management, participatory and inclusive processes and VGGT compliance.

56. While the expected trajectory of change is clear in the diagram, as are the steps leading up to the main outcomes, the evaluation found two main shortfalls or missing “bridges”:
- i. One is between the first set of outcomes (“multi-stakeholder processes and platforms in place”, “governance mechanisms proven and documented” and “change agents promoted and operating”) and the second set of outcomes (“increased number of good fit national policies and legal frameworks adopted” and “increased number of organizational frameworks and coordination mechanisms strengthened”), whereby there would appear to be an assumption about the former automatically leading to the latter (particularly in regard to formal adoption), with no reference to intermediate political factors over which FAO currently has limited influence. The theory of change does not include “structured engagement with decision-making processes and mechanisms”, which is necessary to progress from strengthening capacity and processes to adopting legal and policy reforms.
  - ii. The other is between the second set of outcomes (“increased number of good fit national policies and legal frameworks adopted” and “increased number of organizational frameworks and coordination mechanisms strengthened”) and the third set of outcomes (“legitimate tenure rights recognized and respected” ... “adequate services delivered”). Also in this case, there is a potential assumption that the adopted policies and legal frameworks will be implemented.
57. The identified outcomes would suggest that the VGGT programme is in a position to influence legal and policy approval, while the evaluation found that FAO influence lies more in strengthening capacity and dialogue and possibly in engaging through technical advice at the legal/policy formulation stage (formal approval remaining a highly political process). Findings have shown that what the VGGT really influence is not the approval/adoption of reform, but rather the nature of the decision-making behind it, in that they make it VGGT compliant.
58. The VGGT play a fundamental role as a contributor to policy change, though more at the level of capacity development and evidence generation (skills and product: capacity of decision-makers and content of legal and policy texts) than of approval and implementation (political process). This type of contribution is, in itself, widely acknowledged as unique.

**Figure 1. VGGT theory of change**

Source: Elaborated by the project team.

### *Evaluation question 2. Coherence between VGGT projects and other players and initiatives in the policy reform space*

**Finding 4.** Coherence was pursued effectively at regional level through the integrated implementation of the VGGT with other relevant instruments, by partnering with regional-level institutions and through consistent lesson-sharing among countries.

59. Over the course of phase II and within the scope of the pan-Africa component, efforts were made to ensure the coordination of activities to support the integrated application of the VGGT and the F&G. This was done in collaboration with the Africa Land Policy Centre (formerly the Land Policy Initiative) and resulted in the establishment of strong linkages with regional and continental institutions, such as the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament, RECs and the Eastern African Parliamentary Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition. This led to a convergence of vision and agendas among different partners and the development of regionally harmonized regulatory frameworks to guide country-level ones – one example being the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Comprehensive Regional Prevention Strategy for the Horn of Africa and another the most recent integration of VGGT thinking into the newly developed African Union Land Governance Strategy.
60. The "pastoralism in the Sahel" component was, from the very beginning, designed as an integral and complementary initiative to current work being carried out by existing regional

initiatives, as well as FAO-supported country projects. Through a strong capacity development component, complementarities were sought with ECOWAS and CILSS interventions in this area, effectively linking regional-, national- and local-level work, mirroring the transboundary nature of the pastoralist challenge.

61. In the Mekong Region, a combination of regional exchanges and targeted country-level support, together with the large-scale documentation and dissemination of practices on the themes of responsible land-based investments and the recognition and protection of customary tenure, guaranteed the successful mainstreaming of the VGGT and the enhancement of cross-country coherence. Lessons from projects across the region have been shared with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for the formulation of its RAI Guidelines, while work is underway to integrate learning into other land governance instruments developed by ASEAN. This has helped to enhance coherence of approach in addressing common governance of tenure challenges in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.
62. In all of the above three instances, the VGGT engaged with a significant number of partners within FAO, at headquarters level (the Animal Production and Health Division, the Trade and Markets Division and the CFS-RAI team), at country level (governments, academia, research institutions and civil society organizations), at regional level (in particular, through the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific) and globally (notably the Africa Land Policy Centre, World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development [USAID]). Interviews showed that the nature of collaboration with regional institutions was excellent, and respondents praised the synergies and mutual benefits.
63. In some instances, the scope and breadth of these projects were somewhat limited compared with their potential. Despite the overlap in thematic priorities (such as RAI and the protection of customary land) between FAO and the MRLG project, and despite FAO joining the MRLG Advisory Board in November 2016, programme alignment at national level was not consistent across the Mekong Region. For example, while MRLG's collaboration with FAO in the Lao People's Democratic Republic on RAI and customary tenure through the subsector working group was substantial, there was minimal collaboration with FAO Viet Nam on these issues.
64. In addition, despite the partnership's original intent to leverage FAO's value of being an intergovernmental agency and MRLG's extensive civil society organization networks, the latter's change in focus from civil society organizations to government may have introduced an element of competition between the two projects in phase II. Under the pan-Africa component of the programme, meanwhile, collaboration between the continental level and the regional level (especially the RECs) could have been enhanced by investing more in learning exchanges between RECs and ECOWAS beyond VGGT participation in the annual project gathering in Addis Ababa.

**Finding 5.** The projects are in line with emerging legal and policy reform agendas on land tenure governance in most country-level initiatives. While coherence between subsectors and in relation to the work of other actors is effectively pursued in some contexts (such as through the national donor working group on land in the Niger and multi-stakeholder dialogue in Viet Nam), it is not given sufficient consideration in others. While good examples of successful collaboration with other initiatives within and outside FAO were noted, the extent to which synergies and complementarities have been sought is somewhat limited compared with potential. The projects are consistent with

human rights thinking and were found to promote gender and inclusion in both their design and implementation.

65. VGGT support is not always accompanied by an approach to capacity development and policy reform that is backed by a comprehensive assessment of the legal, policy and institutional frameworks underpinning particular sectors and subsectors in all countries. Nor is it accompanied by exercises such as compatibility reviews<sup>3</sup> and impact assessments which would, in combination with thorough political economy analysis, enhance the coherence of the proposed intervention (and reform) with the work of other actors, country-level processes and related political dynamics. For instance, limited coherence was observed between VGGT projects and other FAO land governance initiatives carried out in Myanmar, such as the European Union–FAO Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme (FIRST) and the Global Environment Facility Sustainable Land Management (GEF-SLM) project. At times, coherence was also found lacking in the context of the pan-Africa component, where regional work was not always effectively integrated with initiatives at country level.
66. The evaluation found that the extent to which synergies and complementarities with other initiatives were sought was at times below potential. This was the case, for instance, with lessons learned through work with ECOWAS as part of the pastoralism component, which were not shared with other RECs in eastern and central Africa. This was a missed opportunity. In Viet Nam, while there was an active exchange of information with the World Bank project, it was suggested that FAO could in future consider partnering more closely with the Bank to complement its work on land information systems. This suggestion was made with the expectation that FAO could apply its expertise in agricultural land to help the country enhance accountability and transparency in areas such as land leasing between farmers and enterprises.
67. Of particular interest is the feature of action plan development, often included in VGGT capacity development programmes as a way of integrating learning into practical follow-up commitments and roadmaps. These plans are normally developed by training participants and could be used as a policy coherence instrument if systematically aligned with government-level plans and other sector initiatives. This already happens in some countries, such as the Niger and Senegal, but not yet in all.
68. Action plans were developed by all countries that participated in RAI learning programmes (for example, in Myanmar, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam). In Myanmar, the action plans focused mainly on awareness raising within ministries and other governmental agencies and such open discussion was a major step. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, in contrast, the group action plans led to joint actions in the form of the further rollout of the learning programme at local level in the national language. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, this happened under the FMM/GLO/127/MUL project, as well as through the establishment of a RAI multi-stakeholder process under the GCP/INT/920/GER project that acknowledged the basis set by the VGGT work. In Viet Nam, the further rollout of the programme took place

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<sup>3</sup> A sectoral compatibility review involves an analysis of policy coherence aimed at assessing synergies and trade-offs between policies supported, in this case, by FAO and other legal and policy instruments in existence within the same sector and in related sectors.

at local level in the national language, where the links to customary tenure, land accumulation and land concentration were made.

69. Action plans were also developed by participants in the E-learning Programme on the Governance of Pastoral Land; the value and applicability of those will only be confirmed once the plans are integrated into existing country-level strategies or roadmaps. In Colombia, plans were developed as part of the Learning Programme on Land Governance for Women and Men and subsequently implemented by various participants.
70. According to OECD DAC, coherence also requires consistency with international norms and standards, such as human rights conventions. The projects showed consistency with a human rights approach in both their design and implementation. Human rights language was not always chosen as a preferred vehicle for introducing the concepts of equality and inclusivity. In this sense, the VGGT provided an efficient and effective entry point for introducing human rights principles relevant to the governance of tenure without necessarily using language that in some instances could be met with resistance. Of particular relevance are the achievements made by VGGT projects in the areas of participatory processes, women's representation and enhanced accountability.
71. Gender and inclusion are central to both VGGT project design and implementation. Related work focused primarily on awareness raising, capacity development (notably the Learning Programme on Land Governance for Women and Men implemented by FAO Colombia and detailed in the box below) and localized support aimed at enhancing the inclusive and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and land governance. Interesting results were reported in terms of the VGGT informing the strengthening of gender and inclusion at regional level through, for example, the support provided to the National and Regional Women's Rights Agenda developed under the auspices of IGAD.

### **Box 1. Learning Programme on Land Governance for Women and Men, Colombia**

From 2018 to 2020, FAO Colombia implemented the Learning Programme on Land Governance for Women and Men, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, which sought to strengthen the awareness and capacity of different actors working in the land sector (civil society, government, private sector and academia) on the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to land governance and ways to implement it.

- i. 2018: 37 people were certified (37 percent government, 33 percent social, 27 percent international and 2 percent private sector)
- ii. 2019: 36 people were certified (78 percent government, 16 percent social and 6 percent private sector)
- iii. 2020: 27 people were certified (76 percent government, 20 percent social and 4 percent private sector)

The learning programme led to the adoption of individual and collective action plans.

The key results of the learning programme were:

- i. Addressing the need for the programme to feature a greater representation of Colombia's diversity. Subsequent sessions targeted a more heterogeneous group, which facilitated greater understanding of the complexity of tenure relations across the country.
- ii. Individual action plans developed in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 resulted in interesting institutional changes, such as the revitalization of the Gender Committee of the National Land Agency, aimed at integrating greater gender awareness into land administration processes, the inclusion by the Ombudsman's Office of gender guidelines in its projects, as well as the elaboration of recommendations for the Illicit Crops Substitution Programme, aimed at incorporating a gender perspective.
- iii. Collective action plans developed in 2018 and 2019 led to i) a multi-agency virtual forum entitled *Earth in the Hands of Women*, which focused on the VGGT as an instrument to guarantee rural women the rights to tenure of land and its resources, recognizing the problems of access to heritage, ownership and food safety, among others; and ii) a seven-episode radio series called *Women's Land*, broadcast weekly on the National Association of Peasant Users radio station. The contents were based on the learning programme, but the language was adapted for the rural population.
- iv. In a survey of 38 programme participants in 2020, some 94.4 percent considered the programme to have directly or indirectly generated changes in their work practices.

*Evaluation question 3. Effectiveness of the VGGT projects*

72. The focus of phase II was defined in the umbrella document as “achieving country level results while maintaining a global profile in terms of dialogue and the development and dissemination of capacity building materials”. This took place through a multifaceted approach, including activities on awareness raising, capacity building and technical support carried out at national, regional and global levels.

**Finding 6.** At country level, building on the foundations laid in phase I, the projects successfully managed to leverage and sustain previously established engagements to achieve significant results in awareness raising and capacity development at different levels, policy dialogue and, to a lesser extent, influencing legal and policy reform processes.

73. Significant results were achieved in strengthening the awareness and capacity of decision-makers and other stakeholders. Targeted support was provided to actors at different levels with a view to enhancing their role as agents of change in land tenure reform processes. Multi-stakeholder platforms have been particularly successful in mobilizing (at times unprecedented) inclusive dialogue and engagement between government and civil society, representing significant innovation in governance processes introduced by VGGT work. No evidence was found of a similar level of engagement with the private sector.
74. Linkages between these platforms and decision-making processes at national level were not always evident, despite some good examples, for instance, in the Niger and Senegal. Some very solid steps were made in terms of localizing support (an aspect recommended by both the 2017 and the 2021 evaluations, the latter referring to the projects funded by Germany) through the translation of the VGGT into local languages and the development of “popularized versions” of the same aimed at reaching local authorities and communities.
75. Training and learning programmes were found to be of high technical quality, practical in their approach, solutions-oriented, highly inclusive and participatory. They often incorporated mentoring and action-oriented support aimed at the development of clear recommendations and action plans to guide participants in the translation of learning into real change in their sector. While these programmes have proved, in and of themselves, to be expertly developed, adaptable and effective in the eyes of participants (mostly decision-makers), there was little evidence of mechanisms put in place to link them more directly to decision-making processes (such as participation in dialogues, contributions to the drafting of policy and legislative texts or support for institutional reforms). For example, while the Learning Programme on RAI was appreciated by the participants in Myanmar and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and helped to advance discussions on these issues in the respective ministries, the participants were all too junior to make decisions that could substantially change policy and laws governing agricultural investments.
76. The two projects under evaluation shared a common outcome of improved frameworks for regulating the tenure of land, fisheries and forests. Some progress was noted in relation to changes in regulatory frameworks at country level. This was achieved, for example, in the Niger (through the national and regional transhumance committees and Land Policy and Action Plan) and in Colombia (through formalized titles for public law entities in Colombia), as described in the paragraphs below. However, more emphasis could have been placed on identifying clear influencing niches within existing reform processes, beyond capacity building.

77. Many respondents also noted insufficient attention being paid to directly supporting pilots that demonstrated good land governance, in line with the VGGT principles and practices, therefore going beyond policy support and engaging more systematically at grassroots level, working with government and civil society on land management and land-use planning.
78. The VGGT project in Myanmar was not resourced to implement pilots, but it recognized the importance of doing so. This led to the design of a European Commission-supported EUR 5 million project that would further build on the progress made by the VGGT and FIRST projects. The project included pilots in land management and land-use planning, but was put on hold due to the political situation.
79. Another opportunity for a pilot could have arisen in the context of the pastoralism component and in the Niger. The two interventions were conducted at the same time, covering a geographical area marked by the presence of pastoralism as a challenge for land/resources governance. A pilot could have covered action research on conflicts involving pastoralist activities at the local and national levels (the Niger) and across the boundaries of ECOWAS member states. It could have looked at conflict dynamics and management, with a focus on the conditions needed to prevent them efficiently at local, national and international levels. This is an action the team could pursue in future, building synergies with existing FAO projects to address these issues funded by the Peacebuilding Fund.
80. Highlighted below are the key programme achievements by case study country.
81. In Namibia, parliamentarians' awareness and capacity were strengthened in a capacity development workshop held in June 2019, which advised lawmakers and government technical officials of the key principles to be considered in the development and revision of land tenure governance laws, policies and strategies, in line with the resolutions of the Second Land Conference (2018) and the Communal Land Reform Act 5 (2002).
82. The training resulted in a request from the Namibian parliament that FAO focus on developing the capacity of traditional leaders in the administration of communal land (on which the majority of Namibians live) in order to improve the management of natural resources for food security and nutrition. This was achieved by translating the VGGT into two local languages (Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab) with a view to reaching those communities severely affected by land dispossession in colonial times (the Herero, Damara and Nama people). Furthermore, by hiring an external consultant, a popularized/simplified version of the VGGT was developed to serve as a tool for awareness raising and sensitization at community/traditional authority level. This document deals with issues that are particularly relevant in a Namibian context in terms of administering communal land.
83. The timing of the training, however, was not conducive to sustained engagement, as the parliamentary term ended right after the course and most of the parliamentarians involved subsequently retired. Participants found the training extremely relevant and those representatives still in their roles said they used their learning in the areas of recording land rights, land dispute resolution and land acquisition.
84. In the Niger, the development of the *Etats Généraux du Foncier* has placed land governance high on the government's agenda. With FAO support, a strong consensus has been built

- among different stakeholders (government, civil society, traditional authorities, women's associations, local communities, investors and the private sector, universities and research institutions, technical and financial cooperation agencies) on key areas for improved governance of tenure.
85. A new Land Policy and Action Plan were prepared by a multi-stakeholder technical committee, in consultation with stakeholders from the regions, endorsed by the National Committee for the Rural Code in 2020 and adopted in September 2021. The policy, which was developed based upon the principles and recommendations of the VGGT and the F&G – reflected in both process and content – set a precedent for policymaking in the Niger through a whole new approach to governance dialogue.
  86. FAO also supported the implementation of a Law on Pastoralism, as well as the establishment of a national and four regional transhumance committees and a National Partners' Committee on Land Tenure. The effectiveness and efficiency of these committees vary. The regional transhumance committees of Tahoua and Dosso (in the Niger) were found to be highly effective, driving the process that led to transboundary transhumance arrangements with both Nigeria and Benin. Capacity development and cross-country experience sharing were central to all of the above. Outreach to rural communities remained a challenge due to geographical distances, as well as imbalanced sectoral involvement, particularly with regard to the private sector.
  87. In Myanmar, from their introduction in phase I and throughout phase II, several donors, namely USAID, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the European Union and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, supported a range of partners working in the country on using the VGGT in the National Land Use Policy process, in particular, to inform the drafting of an umbrella National Land Law and to identify approaches to resolving complex land governance challenges. FAO, together with these donors, continued to promote the uptake of the VGGT in phase II, especially through learning programmes and technical assistance: i) a learning programme targeting 25 mid-level government officials from ten departments in responsible agriculture investment (RAI); and ii) a study tour to Viet Nam of officials from parliament (the upper and lower houses and various commissions) and three key ministries to understand how Viet Nam was working to integrate the VGGT into its Land Law reform process.
  88. As a result of FAO's broad engagement in supporting land governance reform in Myanmar, a new project design was completed in March 2020, funded by the European Union, entitled Promoting Integrated Land Use Planning and Management in Myanmar. The main implementation challenge was to ensure coherence between the VGGT project and other FAO initiatives conducted in Myanmar, such as FIRST and GEF-SLM, both of which had elements of land tenure in their respective focuses on food security and forestry. While there were attempts to exchange information, participate in each other's activities and share some international consultants, it was felt that the VGGT project was run in parallel with these projects.
  89. In Viet Nam, the VGGT were found to have been disseminated at large and taken up by different government bodies to inform legal reform processes from the national to subnational levels. Before FAO's major work on the VGGT, the guidelines were introduced and disseminated through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Consultative Institute for Socio-Economic Development of Rural and Mountainous

Areas/Land Alliance (CISDOMA/LANDA) and Oxfam, with funding support from MRLG. The guidelines were then translated into Vietnamese in 2016 and used to train NGOs and other stakeholders throughout 2017. The Vietnamese version of the VGGT was officially published by FAO in 2017, with 1 000 copies disseminated among NGO network members, the General Department of Land Administration and the Departments of Natural Resources and Environment in all 63 provinces.

90. In July 2018, FAO held a four-day workshop entitled "Combined Capacity Analysis and Learning Needs Analysis in line with the VGGT Principles and Good Practices". The workshop targeted 75 participants (46.7 percent of them women) from relevant government departments, research institutes, social organizations and the private sector.
91. The uptake of the VGGT into policymaking was furthered by its integration into the process of revising the 2013 Vietnamese Land Law, which started in 2019. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a prolonged evaluation process, no revision to the law was made until June 2022, after phase II had ended. This process was complementary to the rollout of the learning programme to enhance the understanding of RAI among senior authorities from the different ministries involved.
92. Since the learning programme, participants from different ministries have made plans to modify and improve investment in agricultural processes in compliance with the VGGT. For example, one participant from the Department of Crop Cultivation, part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, reported that he was now allowing himself more time for analysis and taking more essential steps before approving land leases. FAO partnered with the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), a Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development think tank, in coordination with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's General Department of Land Administration, for the revision process of the 2013 Land Law, paying specific attention to land accumulation and land concentration.
93. FAO maintained contact with the World Bank throughout the process. Furthermore, social organizations that were part of the MRLG network actively participated in different components of the VGGT programme, as well as in the Myanmar study visit to Viet Nam. While FAO's collaboration with IPSARD was productive, the programme could have had greater direct impact on the country's Land Law process through a formal partnership with the General Department of Land Administration.
94. In Colombia, over the course of a little more than two years (mid-2019 to mid-2021), the project "Supporting Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests" (GCP/GLO/347/MUL) effectively synthesized three streams of work that had been ongoing in FAO Colombia into one coherent programme. The design of activities was based on an analysis and routine monitoring of the peace process. Because of concerns over the severe underdevelopment of and unequal land holdings in the Colombian countryside, the Peace Accord focuses on integrated rural reform, including the development of the most impoverished and conflict-affected rural areas through the introduction of Development Plans with a Territorial Focus (PDETs). The objective of the PDETs, as stated in the Peace Accord, is "to achieve the structural transformation of the countryside and the rural environment and to promote an equitable relationship between rural and urban areas" with a view to improving the quality of life for people living in rural areas. This not only means increased public investment

through the PDETs, but also reduced conflict over land and natural resource use and increased formalization of land tenure for these areas.

95. The project, through its use of the VGGT guidelines, helped to further the commitments made in the Peace Accord. In component 1 of the project, the municipalities of San Juan del Cesar-La Guajira and Puerto Guzman-Putumayo (among remote areas that have been identified for additional development support as part of the Peace Accord) successfully formalized the titles of properties granted by private or public sources for community use (namely education and health facilities), but which had never been formally titled. These properties are considered Public Law Entities. By demonstrating a direct link between tenure security and territorial development, the formalization of these properties allows public resources to be invested in them.
96. Component 2 involved systematic support for the national parks authorities to manage conflicts between communities and the government over contested informal occupation and land use. This included the adoption of the Peruvian model of using “management committees” (comprising government officials and civil society representatives) to resolve conflicts over land through dialogue and negotiation. Already operating in some protected areas, the national parks authorities are working to formalize the use of such committees to manage future conflicts in national parks.
97. In component 3, FAO completed a context analysis to identify entry points for civil society organizations involved in the policy space to advance the goals of integrated rural reform as part of the 2016 Peace Accord. It supported the facilitation of the PDET Table, an informal collective of about 14 NGOs promoting the implementation of one of the government commitments in the Peace Accord – to raise the development level of the least developed and most conflict-affected areas. The Federación Nacional Sindical Unitaria Agropecuaria (FENSUAGRO), a national federation of peasants, trade unionists and producer organizations, was provided with financial and technical support for its multi-year work planning process. It used the VGGT to analyse its priority issues and to derive its vision/mission and ways of operating.
98. From 2018 to 2020, FAO Colombia also implemented the Learning Programme on Land Governance for Women and Men, which sought to increase the understanding of actors in the land sector of the importance of a gender approach to land governance and how to achieve it. This resulted in the certification of 100 participants who, in turn, transformed their learning into individual and collective action plans. For example, the National Agency of Lands reactivated its Gender Committee and incorporated new guidelines into its work.
99. The greatest challenges to future projects are mainly external: violence remains unabated in many parts of the country, despite the 2016 Peace Accord, while space for civil society is limited.

**Finding 7.** Significant results were achieved by integrating the VGGT with other instruments and linking local and national tenure agendas with regional frameworks, drawing on country experience to inform dialogue and reform processes at the regional and continental (in the case of Africa) institutional levels.

100. In the pan-Africa component, the projects adopted an integrated approach to the application of the VGGT and the F&G as a way of supporting the African Union Agenda on Land. The VGGT and F&G were promoted in a number of flagship initiatives, including the

Conference on Land Policy in Africa (in 2017 and 2019), civil society platforms, the Network of Excellence on Land Governance and the Journal on Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences. Tools were prepared for VGGT and F&G contextualization and dissemination to respond to specific tenure governance challenges at country level in the areas of land-based investment, the governance of pastoral lands, land administration and the recognition of customary land rights.

101. The programme also supported the development of a knowledge management platform to promote access to project information and the dissemination of VGGT and F&G capacity development tools and materials. Support was provided to the Pan-African Parliament and to RECs to identify the best ways to use the VGGT and F&G, the Right to Food and RAI principles to achieve food security in the region. Within the context of this component, the Evaluation Team also reviewed the newly drafted African Union Land Governance Strategy and observed that the document had internalized VGGT thinking without direct inputs from the projects. Box 2 provides a brief summary of these findings.

### **Box 2. The African Union Land Governance Strategy**

Within the timeframe of the current evaluation, the African Union Commission (AUC) published the first draft of its Land Governance Strategy. Although this document was not prepared as part of the VGGT support projects and has not yet been published, the Evaluation Team thought it worth examining to see whether or not the process of its preparation and its contents were influenced by the VGGT. The aim was to see whether, within the framework of an autonomous process led by the AUC, the principles conveyed by the VGGT would be taken into account. This could be a useful indicator of the internalization (or otherwise) of the VGGT by African institutions involved in the governance of tenure and in the pan-Africa component of the FAO projects.

The Land Governance Strategy aims to guide AUC coordination and collaboration with other institutions, RECs and member states in achieving the aspirations of the Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa. The document shows that the VGGT have been taken into account in both the development process and the content of the strategy:

- i. In terms of process, the (ongoing) validation of the strategy involves broad consultation with a variety of stakeholders, consistent with the range of stakeholders listed in the VGGT.
- ii. The strategy makes explicit reference to the VGGT as one of the instruments it draws on to provide guidance to African Union member states on how to improve land governance.

Some of the elements of the strategy are also in line with the objectives of the pan-Africa component, including:

- i. the need to build the capacity of all African Union institutions and the RECs to implement the African Union Programme on Land Governance (strategic objective 1 of the AUC Land Governance Strategy). The approach of working through the RECs is a continuation of the approach of the pan-Africa component;
- ii. the need to advocate for the advancement of land policies, laws and administrative systems in the African Union member states (strategic objective 2 of the AUC Land Governance Strategy). This involves adopting a multi-stakeholder platform approach to policy dialogue and land reform processes in the African Union member states and developing regional platforms to enhance partnership in the implementation and monitoring of the strategy; and
- iii. the need to monitor progress at continental, regional and national levels. This is emphasized in the AUC Draft Land Governance Strategy, as it is in the pan-Africa component of the programme.

102. One highlight is the support provided to IGAD: eight member countries are currently undergoing policy review processes, all of them informed by the VGGT, starting with the development of a regional model framework to guide policy reform at country level. In 2018, IGAD developed a Regional Convergence Framework and related business plan and is currently working on a Land Governance Business Plan using the FAO land assessment tool. National women's rights agendas were also developed, which informed the Regional Women's Rights Agenda.

103. Through IGAD's work, there are now gender focal points in national ministries of land linked to countries' ministries of gender – a significant innovation. The focal points have created a Regional Community of Practice on Closing the Gender Gap on Land, which meets monthly to discuss issues in the region, and have started a learning series for civil society

organizations. IGAD has also introduced the VGGT into the Comprehensive Regional Prevention Strategy for the Horn of Africa, aiming, along with other instruments, to mitigate, prevent and manage tenure-related conflict. Support was also provided to the Eastern Africa Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security with the aim of underpinning the creation of national parliamentary alliances and the strengthening and harmonization of legal and policy frameworks at regional, national and subnational levels.

104. Under the pastoralism in the Sahel component, work focused on introducing the VGGT in the pastoralism agenda of regional institutions (primarily ECOWAS and CILSS) with a focus on capacity development, multisectoral dialogue and evidence generation for policy influencing. The component was implemented through a series of partnerships with intergovernmental institutions and civil society networks in the Sahel region. FAO contributed to the enhancement of knowledge on the governance of pastoral land for the representatives of nine countries through a successful learning programme and developed the capacity of actors at regional (in ECOWAS and CILSS), national and local levels.
105. The programme, originally designed to comprise face-to-face sessions and an online course, was rolled out as a virtual learning programme due to COVID-19 restrictions. This involved the redesign of the whole programme, the study of new approaches, methodologies and tools that could suit virtual learning modules (mobile, self-paced learning) and the training of participants in the new technologies. The programme was structured into three phases: an initial study phase, followed by a one-week virtual training session, followed by online mentoring sessions aimed at supporting participants with the development of action plans.
106. Despite the many challenges the organizers faced in having to adapt the programme to a virtual platform and address connectivity problems in different countries, the programme was a success. It resulted in the adoption of individual action plans by all participants, national-level plans in the nine countries and regional recommendations presented to ECOWAS to feed into regional dialogues on the governance of pastoral lands, as well as regional policy and legislative frameworks (including the update of the ECOWAS Regional Guidelines on Access to Land, the development of a Mid-Term Strategy on Livestock and Pastoral Development for the region, and the revision of the Regulatory Framework on Transhumance between ECOWAS countries, authorizing mobility and the use of watering points and pastoral land in line with the VGGT). While the adoption of individual and national-level action plans was a very good result in and of itself, the value and applicability of those plans (particularly the national-level ones) will only be confirmed once the plans are integrated into existing country-level strategies/roadmaps.

### **Box 3. The regional capacity development programme, a promising initiative**

The evaluation conducted a survey of participants in the regional capacity development programme to gather their views on its conduct, relevance and usefulness. Of the 31 people targeted, 21 responded. These included representatives of intergovernmental organizations, national public administrations, civil society and producer associations from nine countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal and Togo). Given the short time between the end of the programme and the evaluation (two months), the survey focused on the programme's potential rather than its impact.

The majority of participants (95 percent) were very satisfied with the objectives and content of the programme, which met their expectations and enabled them to improve their professional skills and knowledge of pastoral land governance. More than three-quarters of the participants have since been in contact with each other through an ad hoc WhatsApp group, thus laying the foundations for an embryonic community of practice on this topic in West Africa.

Participants have started to apply the knowledge they gained from this process and 80 percent of them report having implemented at least one activity from the individual action plan they prepared during the programme. Fifty-two percent indicate having contributed to the implementation of their national action plan. Learning has been used primarily in the areas of communication and information sharing, advocacy and project formulation. Activities related to legal, policy or institutional reform will require long-term processes driven by the state.

107. A new multisectoral approach to inclusive land tenure dialogue was pioneered with the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms. In the Niger, the process was at least as important as the outcomes, and the multi-stakeholder platform, the main tool for managing the process, was a remarkable achievement. It is perceived as a permanent result that will be used for all future land governance processes in the country. Among the concrete results arising from the establishment of a national multi-stakeholder committee in the Niger are the new Rural Land Policy and Action Plan.
108. Knowledge of the challenges faced by pastoralists in West African countries has been further enhanced by a series of studies conducted by the project, or with its support, aimed at giving orientation to policy- and lawmakers at the national and regional levels. While significant results have been achieved through this component, some challenges remain in terms of sustaining engagement in the long term and linking more systematically with non-traditional FAO partners, such as the private sector, parliament and the judiciary, particularly with regard to conflict resolution processes.
109. Work in the Mekong Region (Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam) focused on facilitating the mainstreaming of the VGGT and the sharing of lessons learned across different countries through a transversal approach. This was based on the recognition that, within the Mekong Region, land tenure faces urgent and similar challenges as a result of factors such as climate change, population growth and increasing land-based investment. This component was designed to complement and consolidate the work of the MRLG project.
110. At the regional level, FAO and MRLG strengthened the awareness and capacity of stakeholders from government, civil society, academia and the private sector through the Mekong Region Land Forum in 2018 (in Bangkok) and 2021 (in the countries and online) and through regional forums, such as the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Working Week in Hanoi in 2019 and training workshops organized by the Japan International Cooperation Agency Rural Development Department in 2019, 2020 and 2021, at which FAO held guest lectures. The two agencies also contributed to the development of the ASEAN RAI Guidelines.
111. Most of the work carried out as part of this component took place at national level, followed by exchanges at regional level or between countries, resulting in: i) enhanced awareness and uptake of VGGT through national-level workshops; ii) greater government

- official knowledge of the applicability of VGGT principles and practices to national legislative processes; iii) enhanced knowledge among mid- and senior-level government authorities engaged in the approval and monitoring of land-based investments; and iv) the dissemination of FAO technical guides and other publications across the four countries in English and national languages.
112. Despite the overlap in thematic priorities (RAI and the protection of customary land) between FAO and MRLG, and despite the fact that FAO joined the MRLG Advisory Board in November 2016, programme alignment at the national levels was not consistent. For example, while MRLG's collaboration with FAO work on RAI and customary tenure in the Lao People's Democratic Republic through the subsector working group was more substantial, there was minimal collaboration with FAO Viet Nam on these issues.
  113. The study on Chinese land-based investments in the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique was part of the specific thematic angle covered by VGGT II, which aimed to enhance tenure governance processes to support responsible investments in agricultural land and strengthen associated capacity. Research on the nature of Chinese investments in agriculture in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania was commissioned by FAO and funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development.
  114. The study sought to understand how Chinese investors viewed issues related to RAI, with particular emphasis on aspects of legitimate land tenure, as defined in the VGGT, and how communities viewed Chinese investors operating in their areas. The objective was to use the findings to feed into multi-stakeholder discussions, with a view to increasing the compliance of investments with VGGT standards. The findings show that communities in both countries generally agree that more sustainable and inclusive investments are required, emphasizing the need for these to focus on job creation, open markets and technology transfer.
  115. A common finding in the two countries was that companies, in their effort to build relationships with local leaders and government authorities to secure their investments, often paid insufficient attention to dialogue and relationship building with communities because of cultural differences and language barriers. At the same time, both Mozambique's and the United Republic of Tanzania's land-related legal frameworks were created decades before the adoption of the VGGT, so did not fully align with VGGT principles and good practices. The weakness in the legal frameworks resulted in loopholes that led to conflict between investors and communities, which often prevented investments from moving ahead. In addition, most communities were not well informed about the land leasing process; Chinese investors preferred to lease land and wanted more engagement from the authorities and companies during this process. Since the advent of large-scale land-based investments, both governments have had to deal with an increase in land conflicts between investors and communities.
  116. The research was shared in multi-stakeholder workshops for government, investors and communities, most recently in June 2021. Based on the constructive dialogue initiated by the sharing of the research findings, Tanzanian and Chinese researchers believe that investors are eager to be guided by clearer regulations, as this would make their investments run more smoothly. Companies are also willing to continue the dialogue through the newly established multi-stakeholder dialogue space created by the project. Policy recommendations focused on the need to review and update existing land and other

related laws to align with regional and international standards, such as the VGGT and RAI principles, and also, through this process, to reduce the gender gap in property rights. This research contributed directly to increasing the understanding of the nature of Chinese investments in these two countries, identified areas for improvement in compliance with RAI standards and catalysed a process for continued, constructive dialogue.

**Finding 8.** FAO continued to play a significant role in global dialogue, particularly through the development and distribution of VGGT technical materials as public goods for capacity development interventions. Less evidence was found, however, of processes in support of monitoring VGGT uptake, originally foreseen in the global-level component of the projects.

117. During phase II, a significant amount of technical material (briefs, technical guides, case studies, reports) was developed and widely disseminated. This included Guides on Valuing Land Tenure Rights (2018), on Improving Ways to Record Tenure Rights (2017; translated into Burmese in 2021) and on Creating a System to Record Tenure Rights and First Registration (2016; translated into Burmese in 2021) to name but a few. These guides further enhanced the mainstreaming of the VGGT into the global land tenure agenda and related development investment projects.
118. The mainstreaming of the VGGT is considered, in itself, a major success, in that they changed the way in which the narrative surrounding land tenure issues was framed and how related challenges were understood and addressed. The VGGT are now recognized as a global reference framework. The Evaluation Team remained unclear on the way in which FAO's role in monitoring VGGT uptake was to be rolled out and found no evidence of a structured approach, except for the CFS reporting mechanism.

*Evaluation question 4. Efficiency of the VGGT operating model and implementation modalities*

**Finding 9.** The projects adopted a centralized operating model, with most of the technical team based at FAO headquarters. Thanks to an effective and efficient programme delivery model, significant results were achieved on the ground. However, in some cases, the limited involvement of Country Offices affected the programme's ability to capitalize on its full potential to engage with the national policy agenda and to leverage a wider spectrum of collaborative opportunities.

119. Budget limitations determined that the programme would be centrally coordinated and operated, with a full technical complement based at FAO headquarters, travelling frequently to programme countries. While this method of implementation, observed in Namibia and Myanmar, delivered results and met with the satisfaction of both partners and beneficiaries, it also led to confusion at times between country and headquarters and to limited country team ownership of the VGGT project processes and results.
120. Greater results were noted in countries where processes were driven and owned by Country Offices, such as in Colombia and the Niger. This was further enhanced by the fact that projects were piloted on the ground to directly address land governance challenges.
121. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, which was part and parcel of the rollout of the whole programme and accompanying activities, played an important role, injecting its own funds. Its substantial involvement helped to ensure coherence between the work at headquarters and at regional level.
122. A different method of implementation was used for the pan-Africa component, where a VGGT Land Tenure Officer was seconded to the offices of the African Land Policy Centre

(ALPC) in Addis Ababa to lend technical support and ensure coordination. This strengthened the relationship between FAO and ALPC, facilitated the capacity building of ALPC staff through direct support, enhanced access to information and contacts with African Union and member state officials, and increased FAO's visibility on the ground.

123. The evaluation found that the absence of a continuous country presence at times affected FAO's ability to participate in relevant national discussions and scope out opportunities, including those arising from Country Office-led engagements. This resulted in missed opportunities for the programme to position itself among a broader spectrum of players and to get closer to national agenda priorities and related donor/stakeholder thinking.
124. While decentralization may not be a realistic option for the programme going forward (full skills devolution may not be possible with limited funding), opportunities could be sought to strengthen Country Office involvement and leadership in different aspects of the projects, so as to enhance ownership and localization. In future, FAO could consider foregoing breadth of coverage for depth, in order to ensure that a budget is available to recruit country-level land tenure experts to assist with project implementation and to enhance Country Offices' responsiveness to land tenure issues.

**Finding 10.** While significant results have been achieved, attributing these to specific sources of funding remains a challenge. This is partially down to the nature of VGGT work and the many different projects that have contributed to its achievement. A disconnect was often noted between original project plans (at times complemented by additional concept notes) and the results achieved.

125. While funding methods, delivery mechanisms and allocated resources (human and financial) appear to have been adequate at a first glance, the evaluation found there to be a significant disconnect between the objectives contained in the project documents and results-based frameworks and the results achieved. This does not mean that objectives were not met, but rather that the articulation of these objectives in project documents did not align with the way in which work was carried out. Different documents set out the expected changes (and their measurement) in different ways.
126. The rationale for greater investment being allocated to certain countries and initiatives over others remains unclear. The evaluation found that greater investment did not always imply greater results. A value-for-money assessment was not possible within the scope of this evaluation, but would certainly be a useful exercise for the programme to carry out at this stage of its evolution, to inform both future direction and related investment decisions.
127. With regard to integration within FAO, the evaluation found that the VGGT were fully integrated into all land-related work within the Organization and into the tenure agenda it promotes globally. This is a significant success, which speaks to the broad legitimacy that the VGGT have acquired over the years, becoming the central pillar of the governance of tenure narrative.

**Finding 11.** The programme currently lacks a comprehensive knowledge management system, which affects the VGGT project team's institutional memory, its ability to capture and retain learning, and aspects of communication and visibility within and outside FAO.

128. For projects of such large scale and scope, the evaluation found that, aside from donor reports, which provide a sequential narrative of activities and results, the majority of other

documentation is technical in nature. There are significant gaps in the systematic tracking of process-related information and the institutionalization of the same. Similar limitations were noted in terms of documenting the “storytelling” of why work was successful in a given context and how that experience could be leveraged. Furthermore, the lack of a coordinated and structured approach to relationship management makes it difficult to maintain a clear account of how a particular relationship (partner/donor/other) has evolved, is being maintained and is expected to evolve or deliver results. Most of this information lies with individual project team members alone and not with an institutional project/programme repository.

129. In addition, the evaluation noted a certain lack of uniformity in terms of the information recording methods that exist at present. Most are specific to project team members rather than agreed templates. This results in differing depths of informational coverage for different countries and areas of work, making comparison difficult. This lack of uniformity is also apparent in the way in which the programme describes its work at headquarters and through country-level channels.
130. These gaps in knowledge management affect the programme’s ability to learn from its challenges and successes, to systematize and internalize learning and to contribute to good practice within and outside FAO.

**Table 1. Summary of lessons learned on key enablers and disablers**

| Enabling factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Challenges                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A conducive policy environment, for example, the government being open to receiving technical advice and to engaging in multi-stakeholder policy dialogue (as in Viet Nam, Myanmar, Niger).</li> <li>- Strategic partnerships, for instance: i) that with AGROINFO/IPSARD in Viet Nam – a Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development research institution and thus able to coordinate with key government ministries, such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, other research institutes, civil society, and the private sector; or ii) that with ALPC, as part of the pan-Africa component, whose mandate is to support the implementation of the African Union land policies/strategies in member states, working through RECs.</li> <li>- Engagement of parliamentarians at both national (as in Namibia and Myanmar) and regional/continental levels (for example, the Pan-African Parliament) to leverage their legislative, budgetary and oversight role for the improvement of governance of tenure.</li> <li>- Secondment of FAO personnel to partner offices (for example, the secondment of FAO personnel to ALPC as part of the pan-Africa component).</li> <li>- A strong preparatory phase ahead of project rollouts (as in Myanmar and Niger).</li> <li>- Strong involvement of FAO Country Offices (as in Colombia and Niger).</li> <li>- Strong involvement of FAO regional offices (e.g. in the Mekong Region).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Political circumstances, at times driving government and civil society apart.</li> <li>- Moving from capacity building and information sharing to policy reform requires greater technical and financial investment. There is a need to identify ways to link these interventions more effectively to decision-making processes with a view to achieving changes at the level of the enabling environment through adequate legal, policy and institutional reforms.</li> <li>- Centralized nature of the administrative and financial support observed in Namibia and Myanmar, which sometimes resulted in operational difficulties on the ground, as well as limited ownership of the programme by FAO country teams, which played supporting roles.</li> <li>- Imbalanced involvement of actors, such as the private sector, the judiciary and parliamentarians, in the multi-stakeholder platforms.</li> <li>- Lack of integration with fisheries and forestry in some countries.</li> <li>- Complementarities and synergies with partners at country level were sought, but not always achieved to the greatest extent possible.</li> <li>- Lack of dedicated personnel in some Country Offices, which also affects the possibility of maintaining regular relationships with government ministries.</li> <li>- Pursuing coherence across different initiatives is at times challenging due to different donor priorities and working modalities.</li> </ul> |

| Enabling factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Challenges                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alignment with other donor initiatives, and the existence of a donor platform (for example, Myanmar, Niger and Senegal).</li> <li>- Strong desire expressed by government, local communities, civil society organizations, producer groups and other stakeholders to have a strategic orientation for land governance reform (for example, the Etats Généraux du Foncier for Niger and the Second Land Conference for Namibia, the Myanmar National Land Use Policy process, the Lao People's Democratic Republic Land Law formulation process, and the Viet Nam 2013 Land Law revision).</li> <li>- An active civil society, willing to collaborate with the government on promoting land governance (as in Cambodia, Niger, Myanmar and Viet Nam).</li> <li>- Strong multi-stakeholder platforms, steering the process of multisectoral dialogue on land reform (as in Niger and Senegal).</li> <li>- The perception of FAO as a neutral broker and a key technical facilitator by intergovernmental institutions, Member Nations and civil society.</li> <li>- FAO's approach of supporting partners through the integration of the VGGT into existing processes at country level (avoiding duplication).</li> <li>- Using a regional lens in contexts where the targeted countries face common challenges (as in the Mekong Region and pan-Africa components).</li> <li>- Strong complementarity with other ongoing land governance interventions, though opportunities are not always seized to the greatest extent possible.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of in-depth and timely political economy analysis in some countries, resulting in interventions being sometimes slow to adapt to the most pressing needs in each country context.</li> <li>- Despite the use of regional lenses, the project at times did not capitalize on the comparative advantage of regional partners.</li> <li>- While several capacity building tools have become a mainstay of FAO, for example, RAI training, more localization of the same could strengthen uptake (as in the aforementioned examples of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam).</li> </ul> |

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team.

### *Evaluation question 5. Sustainability of VGGT approach and the likelihood of lasting change*

## **3.1 Sustainability in terms of the development narrative**

**Finding 12.** With regard to the global land tenure agenda, elements of sustainability can be seen in the way in which the VGGT appear to be fully integrated into the land tenure narrative within and outside FAO, where the VGGT and related materials have become a public good and a benchmark for standard setting.

131. Phase II projects continued to promote and advance the use of the VGGT as a core reference document in relevant land tenure dialogue and development practice. Within FAO, the VGGT appear to be fully mainstreamed and integrated into all land-related projects. Development actors and donors alike have been seen to adopt VGGT thinking as part of their land tenure governance agenda and have mainstreamed related principles in projects, policies and strategies.
132. To mention but a few: the African Union embraced the VGGT as integrated with the F&G in the advancement of land policy on the continent; at regional level, the VGGT provided institutions such as ECOWAS and CILSS with the necessary guidance on their interventions in the area of pastoralism; and several development agencies (such as the World Bank in

Senegal and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ] in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Niger) have taken advantage of the dialogue framework set up under the umbrella of the VGGT to develop either separate or FAO-related interventions. This shows that the VGGT are possibly one of the most powerful voluntary instruments among the many endorsed by the CFS.

### 3.2 Sustainability of results on the ground

**Finding 13.** Despite the positive results achieved in strengthening national capacity and enhancing multi-stakeholder dialogue through multi-stakeholder platforms, changes cannot yet be considered sustainable, in that they are not completely independent of FAO support.

133. When looking at sustainability, it is important to realize that capacity development is an area requiring continuous investment, as are steps aimed at fully internalizing VGGT principles and practices, skills and mandates within key institutions. Significant efforts have been made to enhance sustainability, for instance, by strengthening engagement with relevant ministries central to land governance and with parliamentarians, contributing to cross-sectoral coordination within the public administration and local-level institutions.
134. Following an initial phase focused on awareness raising and sensitization to the VGGT principles and practices, over time, support has moved to strengthening local actors' capacity and associated institutional platforms with a view to creating "agents of change" able to influence legal and policy reform. As mentioned, significant results have been achieved in this regard, however, not all of the results can be considered sustainable at present, in that sustaining those changes in the long term still depends on external support from FAO and donors.
135. The implementation of some of the action plans developed during the training sessions, the continuation of cross-boundary dialogue on peaceful transhumance, the functioning of the multi-stakeholder groups at regional, national and local levels, and efforts to regulate transboundary transhumance in the Sahel are all steps in the right direction with regard to ensuring sustainability. However, the evaluation found that work is still dependent on external support. Projects of a global nature with a relatively limited budget, such as these, should be catalysts for country-level projects. Had it been allowed to move forward, the proposed European Union project in Myanmar would have contributed robustly to the sustainability of results.

**Finding 14.** With the exception of Colombia, where capacities have been developed to the point where several FAO partners are currently in a position to carry out work independently, the continuity of most activities remains highly dependent on support from headquarters.

136. Skills and knowledge are still very centralized in headquarters. Significant improvements in skills and capacities can be seen in most countries. However, with the exception of Colombia (work with the National Parks authorities to manage environmental conflicts and the formalization of public law entities), those capacities are not yet at a level whereby they can operate autonomously.
137. Part of the problem is the nature of investment in capacity development, which is primarily devoted to training, with hand-in-hand mentoring taking place on an ad hoc basis and not systematically. What is more, partners (often governments) have not fulfilled their

commitments to institutionalize those capacities, meaning that the skills lie primarily with individuals rather than institutions.

138. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected and is likely to continue to affect field travel and face-to-face support, although the evaluation noted extremely positive achievements in terms of remote support. COVID-19 also prompted national organizations to take the lead in the rollout of activities in country and this has put local organizations' commitment, accountability and ownership on a new and very positive footing.



## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

139. Based on its findings, the Evaluation Team has come to the following key conclusions.

**Conclusion 1.** Relevance: the programme is highly relevant to FAO's new strategic narrative (2022–2031) and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Nevertheless, the country-specific relevance of interventions could be strengthened by complementing the current approach with broader political economy analyses to better understand the political space surrounding governance of tenure in different socioeconomic contexts.

140. The core of FAO's VGGT work is perfectly aligned with both international development priorities and those of the Organization's new Strategic Framework. It is increasingly relevant in the face of challenges such as climate change, fragility, conflict and, more recently, COVID-19. Country-level relevance lags at times due to insufficient analysis of the political space within which proposed interventions are designed, as well as limited ties to other initiatives within the national tenure agenda. The programme would have benefited from better integration of VGGT land-related work with the fisheries and forests sectors on the ground (with the exception of the work in the Mekong Region), greater emphasis on sustainable and inclusive land-based investment and the establishment of linkages with decision-making processes on cross-border transhumance at national and regional levels.

**Conclusion 2.** Coherence: VGGT project thinking is coherent with that of other internal and external initiatives on governance of tenure, though not integrated in practice to the maximum extent possible. Excellent steps have been taken to enhance coherence at regional level in both Africa and Asia, especially in instances where links were forged with regional institutions. Country-level coherence could be enhanced by strengthening integration with other players operating in the same space.

141. Work undertaken as part of the pan-Africa, pastoralism and Mekong Region components delivered significant results in terms of harmonizing cross-country learning and leveraging this to inform regional frameworks. At country level, greater strategic effort could be made to better integrate with the work of other actors engaged in advancing the governance of tenure agenda and with government plans, in particular. Greater efforts could also be made to establish effective linkages with academia and the private sector, currently marginally considered.

142. The VGGT project team was able to establish several strategic partnerships within FAO and externally, at both national and international levels. The lack of formal institutionalization of these partnerships and the limited engagement with academia and the private sector are elements that affect aspects of relevance, coherence, efficiency and sustainability.

**Conclusion 3.** Effectiveness: throughout phase II, there was significant progress in capacitating both sector leaders and stakeholders, in advancing the governance of tenure agenda at local, national, regional and global levels (further enhancing a compendium of public good materials of technical assistance to practitioners) and in promoting a new mode of addressing governance through inclusive and multi-stakeholder dialogue. Linking these achievements to changes in legal,

policy and institutional frameworks – which, by their very nature, are lengthy and complex processes – has lagged, albeit with some successes.

143. During phase II, particular emphasis was placed on country-level support, with a number of significant initiatives also recorded at regional level. Some perceived FAO's global thought leadership in the area of governance of tenure to have decreased over time, possibly due to a simple shift in the emphasis of projects and investments towards country-level support. While a number of successful capacity development programmes were carried out, which were extremely well received by all, insufficient efforts were made, at times, to link these to national legal and policy reform agendas.
144. FAO demonstrated a competitive advantage in areas of capacity development, specialized technical support (such as legal advice), actor coordination and multisector dialogue facilitation. Many respondents said FAO support was indispensable in terms of technical skills and resources.
145. Greater effort could be made to capitalize on FAO's links to government, ministries of agriculture and, more recently, parliaments, to inform sector reform processes and make a greater contribution to the enabling environment. This is insufficiently articulated in the programme's theory of change at present and faces the challenge of a waning funding environment.

**Conclusion 4.** Efficiency: positive practices have emerged from the effective and efficient provision of support for programme delivery on the ground, including the most recent remote support and learning programmes brought about by COVID-19 restrictions. However, the centralized nature of support presents challenges in terms of efficiency, opportunities to fully engage with the national agenda and local ownership of results.

146. While decentralizing support may not be a realistic option for the programme, the greater engagement of Country Offices may help to address some of the aforementioned challenges. Several country-based respondents mentioned the value of having land tenure and natural resources expertise in each Country Office to enable more localized decision-making and to foster ownership of similar future programmes.
147. VGGT work is often promoted as a "programme", but is supported, in reality, by different streams of "project funding", which are not always efficiently coordinated, with each responding to a different donor and a different results-based framework. This appears to go against the original intention of a multilateral trust fund in the case of GCP/GLO/347/MUL, where the evaluation found that the evolution of funding – with donors increasingly funding individual programme aspects rather than an overall "concerted and coordinated plan" – greatly contributed to the fragmentation of the programme. This resulted in more of a "collage" of interventions than an integrated programme framework. Furthermore, the value for money and return on investment of different interventions in different countries remain unclear.

**Conclusion 5.** Efficiency: the programme's current approach to documentation and knowledge management focuses primarily on achievements, or the lack thereof, and insufficiently on processes, challenges and the historical tracking of different steps in programme support.

148. Knowledge management as a function is not fully developed and systematized across programme areas and countries. The evaluation found there to be a sufficient level of monitoring for donor and accountability purposes, but less with a view to ongoing

programme learning and development, communication and visibility. Of note are shortfalls in terms of the systematic tracking of process-related information (that is, the evolution of support at country level and a description of "how change happened"), a lack of uniformity in terms of information recording methods in different countries and the absence of a coordinated approach to relationship management.

**Conclusion 6.** Sustainability: the programme's long-term sustainability has not yet been secured, with the exception of some actions in Colombia. Challenges remain in terms of fully institutionalizing capacities within government, the breadth of strategic partnerships and the sustainability of engagement within multi-stakeholder platforms.

149. While, on the one hand, the VGGT "message" as a new governance of tenure narrative can be considered sustainable, in that it is by now well integrated into the agenda of most players in this space, on the other, project work on the ground is still highly dependent on external support.
150. While significant progress has been made in terms of strengthening capacities at both national and regional levels, most still see headquarters technical support as essential in translating learning into meaningful influencing abilities in the legal and policy reform space. In this sense, long-lasting change remains contingent on the continuation of support. FAO's current limited engagement in policy implementation is a further constraining factor in terms of sustaining results long term.

## 4.2 Recommendations

151. Based on its findings and conclusions, the Evaluation Team makes the following recommendations.

**Recommendation 1.** Relevance: to maintain and boost relevance, the FAO Land Tenure Team should pursue greater integration of VGGT land-related work with the areas of forestry and fisheries, conflict management and land-based investments, as exemplified by the Mekong Region. Resources permitting, the FAO Land Tenure Team should invest in political economy analysis with a view to identifying both openings for and obstacles to land governance reform and use such evidence to inform country-level intervention strategies.

Suggested actions:

- i. Increase efforts to integrate land work with that of fisheries and forestry (as foreseen in the VGGT). As it is acknowledged that there is still a sectoral approach in relation to dealing with tenure at country level, the effective integration of the three sectors would require changes in programming from the early stages of a future project.
- ii. Increase investment in the area of conflict prevention as part of efforts currently being rolled out under the pastoralism in the Sahel component.
- iii. Increase the focus on safeguarding tenure in the context of sustainable and inclusive land-based investment, linking more closely with investment agencies, investors and operators of land-based investment, including financial institutions, with a view to ensuring that investment policies and strategies are VGGT compliant and investment processes at country level are aligned with the VGGT. As mentioned in Finding 2, the evaluation acknowledges that relevant work has already been undertaken in this area and it is, therefore, only a suggestion that emphasis on it increase in future. This could be

done by scaling up the pilot activities already undertaken and operationalizing the guidance of the three technical guides dedicated to RAI.

- iv. Invest in relevant studies and analyses to better understand the political economy underpinning land tenure reform processes. The evaluation recognizes the limitations imposed by the FAO project cycle and by each of the resource partners in providing time and space for conducting such analysis within the timeframe of a project. Prioritizing these studies would need to be a central aspect for discussion with resource partners at the project planning stage.
- v. Adopt a more strategic approach to programming based on an assessment of the extent to which VGGT principles and practices are already integrated into national policymaking. This will assist in designing VGGT-relevant projects that support existing national processes and prioritize interventions accordingly.

**Recommendation 2.** Coherence: to increase coherence, the FAO Land Tenure Team should identify ways to better integrate the work at national level with that of other actors and FAO, and link more closely to national agendas and roadmaps, where they exist, FAO Country Programming Frameworks and projects.

Suggested actions:

- i. Ensure that VGGT projects are implemented within the context of country-level tenure initiatives/action plans, where they exist, so as to better align with national agenda priorities.
- ii. Develop a relationship management plan (which can provide both a strategy and an operational plan in terms of partnership outreach and development) aimed at sustaining and institutionalizing existing and potential new partnerships (such as the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Land Coalition, NGOs and the private sector).

**Recommendation 3.** Effectiveness: to improve effectiveness, the FAO Land Tenure Team should identify ways to link capacity development work and multisectoral dialogue more directly with decision-making processes and to engage more systematically at grassroots level through the direct support of pilots.

Suggested actions:

- i. Redesign the programme's overall theory of change to address the aforementioned gaps and begin to use it regularly for planning and review purposes, rethinking outcome definitions, the stage in the policy reform process where FAO comes in and its actual sphere of influence. Particular attention should be paid to: i) FAO's role in facilitating the move from capacity development to legal and policy reforms in place; and ii) FAO's role in facilitating reform implementation, leading to changes in lives and livelihoods.
- ii. Make the high-level outcome of "improved frameworks" (defined in the project documents as "policy and institutional frameworks for regulating the tenure of land, fisheries and forests based on wide participation, non-discrimination, transparency and mutual accountability") more central to country programmes and plans and systematically link capacity development and dialogue-enhancing work to specific decision-making processes on legal and policy reform with a view to contributing directly to them. This renewed emphasis on the "reform" side of the work needs to be backed by donors' political commitment, and resources should be a recurring agenda item for the

VGGT Steering Committee. In a waning funding environment, depth should be prioritized over breadth in all short- to medium-term planning.

- iii. Consider limiting breadth to allow for greater depth in priority countries. Directly support pilots that demonstrate good land governance per VGGT principles and practices (work at grassroots level, as well as with government and civil society on demonstrating effective land governance practices).

**Recommendation 4.** Efficiency: to improve efficiency, the FAO Land Tenure Team should consider ways to strengthen Country Office engagement and leadership in the rollout of project interventions and the overall promotion of the tenure agenda. It should also rethink the current “programmatic approach” in light of project funding realities.

Suggested actions:

- i. Establish VGGT expertise (within or outside existing roles) at Country Office level.
- ii. Identify and replicate good practices across different Country Office experiences in relation to VGGT engagement and implementation, as well as within the team, and replicate them as much as possible across the different portfolios.
- iii. Identify ways to better coordinate the many projects falling under the VGGT umbrella programme with a view to more systematically leveraging synergies across them and gaining greater efficiency.
- iv. Invest in a value-for-money exercise to determine the real return on investment in each country and of different types of initiative. Should a detailed value-for-money exercise not be viable, studies could be commissioned to better understand what types and nature of investment and which operating models have delivered the best results under different circumstances. This could inform both planning and review processes.

**Recommendation 5.** Efficiency: to improve documentation and learning, the FAO Land Tenure Team should develop a comprehensive knowledge management system to ensure the systematic documentation of information and greater cross-country learning, with particular emphasis on eastern and western Africa.

Suggested actions:

- i. Systematically document “how change happened” in instances where legal and policy reforms were achieved, emphasizing process tracing, beyond the mere tracking of results.
- ii. Harmonize information recording methods among countries and project team members.

**Recommendation 6.** Sustainability: to increase sustainability, the FAO Land Tenure Team should adopt a more systematic approach to capacity building and a more strategic approach to partnership development.

Suggested actions:

- i. Adopt a more structured approach to supporting the internalization of skills within institutions and mandates (not just individuals) with a view to securing the centrality of VGGT principles and practices within relevant agricultural mandates.
- ii. Sustain and strengthen linkages with parliamentarians at both the national and regional levels, with civil society and the private sector, as well as with other partners involved in governance of tenure.



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## Appendix 1. Stakeholder breakdown

| Tool/stakeholder category             | FAO       | Donors   | External partners | Govt. officials | CSO*/ NGO | Consultants | Community leaders | Academia | Total      |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|----------|------------|
| <b>Non-country specific</b>           |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>23</b>  |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 12        | 2        | 3                 |                 |           |             |                   |          |            |
| Project team focus groups/workshops** | 6         |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>Colombia</b>                       |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>22</b>  |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 8         |          |                   | 6               | 8         |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>Myanmar</b>                        |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>20</b>  |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 6         | 2        | 4                 |                 | 8         |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>Namibia</b>                        |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>4</b>   |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 1         |          |                   |                 |           | 1           |                   |          |            |
| Survey                                |           |          |                   | 2               |           |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>The Niger</b>                      |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>14</b>  |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 1         |          |                   | 2               | 3         |             | 3                 |          |            |
| Workshop                              |           |          |                   | 2               | 3         |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>Viet Nam</b>                       |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>9</b>   |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 1         |          | 1                 | 4               | 2         | 1           |                   |          |            |
| <b>Chinese land-based investments</b> |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>4</b>   |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 1         |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   | 3        |            |
| <b>Mekong Region</b>                  |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>17</b>  |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 6         |          | 6                 |                 | 1         | 4           |                   |          |            |
| <b>Pan-Africa</b>                     |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>6</b>   |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 2         |          |                   | 4               |           |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>Pastoralism in the Sahel</b>       |           |          |                   |                 |           |             |                   |          | <b>29</b>  |
| Semi-structured interviews            | 2         |          |                   | 2               | 3         |             |                   | 1        |            |
| Survey                                |           |          |                   | 6               | 15        |             |                   |          |            |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>46</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>9</b>          | <b>33</b>       | <b>43</b> | <b>6</b>    | <b>3</b>          | <b>4</b> | <b>148</b> |

Notes: Some respondents were interviewed under more than one component but for the purpose of this listing they were counted only once.

\* CSO = civil society organization

\*\* Plus nine people from FAO already included under semi-structured interviews.

## Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

| Evaluation question and sub-questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Methods                                                                                | Sources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Relevance.</b> To what extent is the programme relevant to the global development agenda and to the actual needs of the participating countries?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1.1. To what extent is the programme relevant to FAO's mandate and to the global development agenda?<br>1.2. On what basis were the participating countries selected?<br>1.3. To what extent have the programme activities been designed to respond to the actual needs of the participating countries?<br>1.4. Who was involved in the development of the programme theory of change? Was the programme logic well thought out and indicators adequately identified? Was the theory of change regularly checked and rescoped?<br>1.5. To what extent has the context of the intervention changed since the programme was formulated and how has the programme responded to those changes? | Desk review, interviews, survey and workshops (where applicable), country case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents, donor reports, earlier evaluation reports, technical briefs and other relevant documents shared by the project team</li> <li>• Remote interviews with FAO personnel at headquarters and in decentralized offices involved in the implementation of VGGT II, with resource partners and stakeholders at global, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Survey and workshop reports where applicable</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. Effectiveness.</b> To what extent has the programme achieved or is the programme likely to achieve its planned results? Has it produced any unintended results?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2.1 To what extent has the programme achieved results? What major factors affected their achievement or lack thereof (implementation challenges/systemic factors)?<br>2.2 What has worked well so far and what hasn't?<br>2.3 Are there any unintended (positive or negative) outcomes? To what extent were these outcomes foreseen and managed?<br>2.4 What specific role did FAO play in enhancing governance of tenure at national, regional and global levels?                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Desk review, interviews, survey and workshops (where applicable), country case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents, donor reports, earlier evaluation reports, technical briefs and other relevant documents shared by the project team</li> <li>• Remote interviews with FAO personnel at headquarters and in decentralized offices involved in the implementation of VGGT II, with resource partners and stakeholders at global, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Survey and workshop reports where applicable</li> </ul> |
| <b>3. Coherence.</b> To what extent has the programme observed consistencies and interlinkages with other actors and interventions during its implementation (both internally and externally)? To what extent has the programme built solid and effective partnerships?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3.1. Were the programme activities and outcomes consistent with the national context and policy processes, and coherent with the national set of laws and policies? Was a sectoral compatibility review undertaken to assess legal, policy and institutional frameworks ahead of selecting reforms?<br>3.2. To what extent has the project team built synergies within FAO (at both the centralized and decentralized levels) and collaborated with other units, divisions and/or teams implementing similar or complementing interventions?                                                                                                                                               | Desk review, interviews, survey and workshops (where applicable), country case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents, donor reports, earlier evaluation reports, technical briefs and other relevant documents shared by the project team</li> <li>• Remote interviews with FAO personnel at headquarters and in decentralized offices involved in the implementation of VGGT II, with resource partners and stakeholders at global, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Survey and workshop reports where applicable</li> </ul> |

| Evaluation question and sub-questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Methods                                                                                | Sources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.3. To what extent did the programme create partnerships?<br>3.4. Did the programme build synergies with other stakeholders (within the United Nations, civil society, academia and the private sector) implementing similar activities in support of food and agricultural policies?<br>3.5. To what extent have the programme activities and outcomes adopted a human rights-based approach and observed equity and equality principles?<br>3.6. Were there any missed opportunities in terms of coherence?                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>4. Efficiency.</b> To what extent have the programme's structure and operational processes been fit for purpose?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 4.1. To what extent have the organizational set-up and the internal governance of VGGT II been adequate for its implementation?<br>4.2. To what extent have the funding modality, delivery mechanisms and resources (both human and financial) been adequate for delivering the expected outcomes?<br>4.3. Were the activities monitored regularly by the programme? If so, were corrective measures applied as necessary?<br>4.4. To what extent did VGGT II embed innovation, including digital, in its approach?                                                                                                                                                                                             | Desk review, interviews, survey and workshops (where applicable), country case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents, donor reports, earlier evaluation reports, technical briefs and other relevant documents shared by the project team</li> <li>• Remote interviews with FAO personnel at headquarters and in decentralized offices involved in the implementation of VGGT II, with resource partners and stakeholders at global, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Survey and workshop reports where applicable</li> </ul> |
| <b>5. Sustainability.</b> To what extent is the current approach likely to last?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5.1. To what extent is there ownership of the programme activities and outputs by key users/beneficiaries?<br>5.2. To what extent are the outcomes likely to last?<br>5.3. To what extent is the COVID-19 pandemic likely to affect the implementation of VGGT II activities? To what extent is the programme ready to address the potential impacts of COVID-19 on its implementation?<br>5.4. How sustainable is VGGT work within FAO? How dependent is the programme on its resource partners? To what extent are resource partners interested in continuing funding this type of activity?<br>5.6. What could be the core elements of a phase III and in what way would these contribute to sustainability? | Desk review, interviews, survey and workshops (where applicable), country case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents, donor reports, earlier evaluation reports, technical briefs and other relevant documents shared by the project team</li> <li>• Remote interviews with FAO personnel at headquarters and in decentralized offices involved in the implementation of VGGT II, with resource partners and stakeholders at global, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Survey and workshop reports where applicable</li> </ul> |

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