

How People-Centered Land Monitoring Can Contribute to the Realization of the SDGs and VGGTs – the Case of the Dashboard

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Abstract

The adoption of the SDGs and VGGTs and the recent promotion of key land indicators to Tier II status have turned a spotlight onto gaps in the existing informational ecosystem and the limits to available data. Moreover, it has created an opportunity, and a moment for reflection: What changes to land governance are the most important to monitor, and how can we build local capacity to measure those changes? It was in the spirit of promoting people-centered land governance, recognizing that a number of civil society organizations are well – if not the best – positioned to measure certain changes to land governance on the ground, that the ILC's Dashboard tool was conceived. Relying on a common set of indicators defined in regional consultations by organizations engaged in land monitoring, the Dashboard prioritizes populations and data often underrepresented in national statistics. Today, with pilots beginning in several countries, the tool can offer important lessons about how civil society can contribute to the realization of the SDGs and VGGTs.

Introduction

A growing recognition that land and tenure security is central to efforts to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development has driven a need to better characterize the state of land governance at the country level. The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGTs) in 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of the United Nations further affirmed the importance of state efforts to ensure tenure security in debates about food security. With high levels of legitimacy – the result of the three year, participatory process by which the guidelines were developed – the VGGTs are the first international soft law instrument of its type.

The centrality of land to the international development agenda was again emphasized with the passage of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2014. A comprehensive set of targets and goals – in contrast to the preceding Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the SDGs clearly stated the importance of data and

monitoring progress towards established indicators. By 2020, the SDGs intend to “increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”

While the demand for land data has driven calls for improved capacity among state statistical offices, it has also raised some questions: What changes to land governance are the most important to monitor and who should carry out such monitoring?

Historically, official statistics have been the primary if not only source of data related to land, coming by and large through agricultural censuses carried out, in many cases, with low frequency. Narratives surrounding fundamental debates on tenure security, land reform, and rural development, were and have been largely driven at the hands of the state, the only entity with capacity and resources to collect data on a large scale.

Civil Society Monitoring: A Brief Overview

Building the Dashboard: From Concept to Practice

Preliminary Implementation Results

The Role of Citizen Data in Growing Ecosystems of Information

Analysis and Conclusions