



Global Soil Week 2017 – Berlin, 22-24 May 2017

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Workshop

Right to [defend] Land: Strengthening accountability at the local level through Thematic Reviews

Concept Note

Abstract

Secure access to land and natural resources is crucial for the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. Despite international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda and the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure*, marginalized people struggle to enjoy their legitimate land tenure rights given competing pressures on resources and injustice, often resulting in violent silencing of activists. Protecting land rights defenders and strengthening local accountability mechanisms is not only key to people's lives, but is also essential to achieving the SDGs. By addressing the "shrinking civic space", this workshop will utilize the Thematic Reviews promoted in the framework of the 2030 Agenda to create a support function for accountability at national levels by elaborating guidelines for government-led multi-stakeholder reporting and empowering local actors.

Rationale

Secure access to land and natural resources is crucial for the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. Even though land rights may be recognized in national legislations and promoted through international agreements such as the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure* (VGGT) of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), marginalized and vulnerable people struggle to enjoy their legitimate land tenure rights and are confronted with competing demands and injustice, often leading to violence and the killings of land rights activists. Threats and intimidations do not spare civil society organizations, whose ability to safely operate in support of local people's land rights is shrinking in many places. Corruption and unaccountable bureaucratic structures pose additional hurdles.

Prioritizing the protection of land rights defenders and strengthening existing or building novel local accountability mechanisms is not only key to the socio-economic development of land rights holders, but it is essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Addressing the issue of "shrinking democratic space" is a fundamental condition to this. The 2030 Agenda and the VGGT both emphasize the fundamental need to uphold human rights in order to realize the goals of eradicating poverty (SDG 1) (in particular ensuring equal land rights and tenure security – SDG 1.4), ensuring food security (SDG 2) (in particular ensuring secure and equal access to land for small-scale food producers – SDG 2.3), achieving gender equality (SDG 5) (in particular equal rights to land for



women – SDG 5.a), and promoting peaceful societies and responsible governance (SDG 16). In its 2017 follow-up and review process on the topic “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will review SDGs 1, 2 and 5. SDG 16 will be reviewed in 2019. However, to advance on the goals 1, 2 and 5, it is of utmost importance to also consider SDG 16 as it points to fundamental conditions for equal land rights and tenure security such as no violence, access to justice for all, and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

In this way, Thematic Reviews provide a unique opportunity to create a support function for accountability by pointing to critical issues, good practices and failures, and raising the perspectives of marginalized unheard voices.

Overarching goals

- (i) Empower local actors left behind in national reviews by offering a space for knowledge exchange and mutual learning on how to reinforce or create accountability.
- (ii) Utilize the Thematic Reviews promoted in the framework of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen or build a support function for accountability at national levels.

Activities

- Actors from diverse backgrounds are invited to jointly develop reporting guidelines which point to critical issues of accountability in land governance that should be monitored and reviewed at national level. To this end, the actors will work in groups on selected topics in order to carve out critical issues, share and learn from good practices and failures, and discuss ways to strengthen or build accountability for land and environmental rights defenders and rights holders.
- Suggestions for reporting guidelines are collected from actors before the workshop, compiled in a draft and shared ahead. This draft intends to trigger discussions and serves as a starting point for the development of the guidelines at the workshop.

Outcomes

- Reporting guidelines on accountability in land governance which complement and specify national review guidelines to be used by member states for their monitoring and reporting activities and by civil society actors as reference tool for their (advocacy) work. These reporting guidelines will be part of the Global Soil Week’s thematic review input to the HLPF 2017 in New York.
- Good practices and strategies to strengthen accountability activities conducted by local actors in different settings.
- Call to strengthen or establish learning-oriented multi-actor monitoring processes to improve accountability in land governance.



Partners and participants

- The workshop will benefit from the participation and contribution of independent experts as well as representatives of various organizations including, among others, the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), the German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR), the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), the National Land Commission of Kenya (NLC), the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the International Land Coalition (ILC), Oxfam, the Katiba Institute, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Ekta Parishad, Transparency International (TI), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the National Peasant and Indigenous Movement - Vía Campesina Argentina.

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