Contribution of the Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF) to integrating Voluntary Guidelines principles in country level action plans

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The “Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security” (VGGT), endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2012, set out principles and internationally accepted standards for responsible practices and is the first comprehensive intergovernmental global instrument on tenure and its administration. The VGGT allow government authorities, the private sector, civil society, citizens and other stakeholders to judge jointly whether their proposed actions and the actions of others constitute acceptable practices according to these principles and standards. The Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF), developed by the Bank and its partners (FAO, IFAD, UN-Habitat, African Union, IFPRI) precedes the VGGT. Its development was inspired by the consultations leading to the guidelines. The LGAF methodology piloting started in 2010, the Bank report was published in 2012, and a peer reviewed article in 2014.

Motivation for developing the LGAF was to mitigate the controversial aspects of land policy reforms, improve its information base, and facilitate local analysis. This is the basis for evidence based and participatory policy development. Resources are needed for implementing policy reform and expand land governance related service delivery. Local engagement and better information can potentially significantly increase the level of support by the World Bank and other development partners to the land sector, if identified as a priority for investment, and included in the country strategy.

LGAF is a country level, independent and comprehensive assessment guided by a framework of indicators, and undertaken by local experts using existing data and information. The LGAF assessment combines an analysis of the policy and institutional framework, with an assessment of the actual practice of implementation. It does so by compiling available data, information and experience, and drawing on expertise from all levels within government, academia, CSO/NGO and the private sector. The participatory process used consists of a series of steps to arrive at a shared assessment of the status of land governance in the country and agreed priorities. The LGAF process helps create a local constituency around land and determines who can act as ‘champions’ or change agents. The results are the basis for policy recommendations and an action plan, with opportunities for innovating, identifying knowledge gaps and monitoring indicators to track progress. LGAF, methodology and country reports are publicly available.

LGAF Framework is based on international standards of good land governance and constructed around nine thematic modules, each composed of land indicators and dimensions, with predefined scores from A to D. The scoring is, as much as possible, quantified with the thresholds being defined according to what is regarded internationally as good practice. Country teams draw their own conclusions based on available evidence without the interference of the WB, FAO or other development partners. The scores indicate where a country is doing well and areas for improvement. The framework provides a format that facilitates the communication of findings and recommendations with policy makers.

LGAF implementation draws on local subject matter experts and uses a participatory process. LGAF is coordinated by a country coordinator, who is a locally recognized, independent land expert, and has a

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broad network within and outside government. About half of all LGAFs are coordinated by researchers or research institutes, one third by independent consultants, and 15% by NGOs. LGAF implementation steps starts with adaptation of the framework to the country context by the country coordinator, who subsequently selects a team of technical experts for each of the topic areas. The coordinator also agrees with the ministry responsible for land matters on access to data, and participation of government staff in panel meetings. The technical experts each prepare an “expert investigator report” that brings together available data and information and suggests a ranking for each dimension. This report is then discussed thoroughly, with policy recommendations derived, in day-long technical panels with knowledgeable stakeholders from the government, CSO, academia and the private sector. The reports, panel documents and agreed minutes are synthesized in a country report that is publicly validated with results and recommendations presented to policy-makers in a separate meeting. The World Bank generally organizes a high level policy dialogue with the government to discuss key conclusion and policy recommendations. The LGAF progress and methodology are reviewed annually with country coordinators and partners. The framework has become more modular, making it easier to add new thematic modules or dimensions.

**Quality assurance and technical guidance and support** to country-teams implementing LGAF is coordinated by the global LGAF Secretariat located in the World Bank’s research department, which works closely with LGAF experts and regional secretariats in India and Africa. The value of the LGAF process to country level procedures depends on the accuracy of the analysis and engagement of key land governance actors in the country. Technical Advisory Groups (TAG) of key experts are established in Africa and India to provide quality assurance in each of the panel areas. It is planned that the TAG will be closely linked to networks of knowledge and expertise, where available, and expanded to other regions. The LGAF process is to emphasize quality assurance, and the global secretariat is building a network of regional experts to review LGAF outputs and provide guidance to country teams.

**LGAF as a basis for monitoring progress.** LGAF is not intended to rank countries. Scorecards help to benchmark, prioritize and identify good practice. In addition to a multi-annual LGAF assessment, countries also need frequent, real-time monitoring to track progress and adjust where needed. The VGGT recommends that each country develop a monitoring mechanism to track the agreed priorities and measures to improve the governance of tenure. LGAF has already inspired follow-up monitoring of key indicators to assess progress in the priority areas as identified in LGAF. This is done by systematic collection and linking of administrative data at different levels of disaggregation within a country. Administrative data are low-cost and frequent, enabling regular reporting to policy makers.

**How LGAF fostered Bank engagement.** Impacts of LGAF have been multi-faceted, including (i) LGAF coordinators playing key roles in discussions on country level reform processes (DRC, Senegal, Mauritania); (ii) Bank sector studies (Brazil, India, Moldova, South Sudan); (iii) design of programs supported by the Bank or others (Honduras, Malawi, Peru, Philippines, Ukraine; Georgia, Malawi, Ukraine). LGAF country coordinators are also playing key roles in VGGT awareness and follow-up (e.g. in Senegal, Malawi, Mauritania, and the Philippines).

**LGAF framework is compliant with the VGGT.** FAO has developed a methodology to evaluate the usefulness and completeness of existing land governance assessment tools in the context of the VGGT for use at the country level and which was tested with LGAF reports for Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and the Philippines. The results shows that LGAF indicators and dimensions cover most of the VGGT principles

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and technical sections, and that the instrument provides a good base for assessing in a short period of time and at a low cost the land governance status at the country level in the context of the Guidelines. LGAF does not cover all themes of the Guidelines, however, as the focus is mainly on land. An optional module for forests exists and it was recommended to develop another optional module on fisheries. FAO also recommended that the local VGGT platform could build on the assessment by linking each recommendation to the VGGT principles, as well as identify suitable technical guidelines and good practices made available by FAO and other partners. Following the FAO review, the framework was adjusted by adding dimensions to address the gaps identified and making the approach more modular, which facilitates adding optional modules like forests and fisheries as well as mining.

**How LGAF can promote Voluntary Guidelines implementation.** Building synergy around reinforcing the use of international standards for good land governance will be relatively easy as there is likely to be a large overlap with many people and organizations being a part of both initiatives, and this is to be developed on a case by case basis. VGGT and LGAF are also mutually reinforcing, with the VGGTs focusing on principles and overall guidance, and the LGAF on an evidence-based assessment of the current status of land governance and entry points, on which the VGGT can build.