



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES: SECURING OUR RIGHTS **SIERRA LEONE**

Success stories

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SIERRA LEONE CASE STUDY

Highlights



Sierra Leone's National Land Policy was launched in March 2017 by President Ernest Bai Koroma. It is widely viewed as one of the documents that most closely adheres to the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines.



Fisheries bill drafted based on the Voluntary Guidelines.



FAO supports the drafting of the new forestry bill to ensure that it follows the Voluntary Guidelines and the principles of Community Based Forestry.



Institutional frameworks including multi-stakeholder platforms have effectively **brought together** the government, civil society, and the private sector to address complex challenges in securing tenure rights.



Agribusiness Investment Approval Process has been revised.



Women are becoming part of the decision-making process through multi-stakeholder platforms and capacity development.



Land parcels are being **mapped** successfully.



1. INTRODUCTION

Two-thirds of Sierra Leone's population is involved in subsistence agriculture. Farmers, most of whom are women, operate in an informal and precarious system without any legal titles to their lands. In the aftermath of the country's 11-year civil war, the government of Sierra Leone began the long overdue process to modernise its land tenure system, putting policies in place so that each parcel of land would be productive and economically valuable.

The *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* were endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security in May 2012.

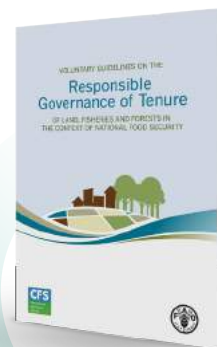
These Voluntary Guidelines have been described as a catalyst leading to improvements in the conditions under which land and natural resources are held in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. The Voluntary Guidelines address problems of weak governance of tenure and the growing pressure on natural resources, thereby assisting countries to achieve food security for all.

FAO has been working in more than 58 countries providing technical assistance, training and capacity development, as well as support to the assessment, formulation and implementation of the relevant national policies and laws.

The Voluntary Guidelines were introduced in Sierra Leone in 2014 through funds provided by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

This booklet presents both successes and challenges faced by the people of Sierra Leone, whose lives and livelihoods are dependent on their legitimate rights to own, farm, fish, build or develop an area of land or water.

The Voluntary Guidelines have helped these communities to turn their challenges into achievements.



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[Nepali](#), [Russian](#), [Spanish](#)





SIERRA LEONE IS COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDELINES AND REQUESTED FAO'S SUPPORT TO DO THIS

SIERRA LEONE

- ★ National capital
- City
- Dam
- River
- Water Body
- Administrative Boundary
- International Boundary

0 20 40 Kilometres
0 20 40 Miles

2. THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

BACKGROUND

Land administration in Sierra Leone is characterized by a dual tenure system that dates as far back as the colonial era – the British Crown Colony known as Freetown was established in 1808 and the subsequent acquisition of the indigenous hinterland was dubbed the Protectorate in 1896.

The British instituted the freehold and leasehold tenure system in and around Freetown, which was a system of land laws identical to the system used in Great Britain. Upon acquisition of the Protectorate, the land laws that were based on the customs and traditions of those territories were, for the most part untouched by the English law and legal institutions that had been introduced. These customary laws, while not uniform across the board were largely similar. They were unwritten and land disputes were subject to informal arbitration.

In the Western Area Rural and the Western Area Urban districts the population grew from 195,023 in 1960 to 1,500,234 in 2015¹.

A surge in population meant an increase in the demand for land, which in turn put pressure that exposed the need for improved technology and increased human capacity in the relevant ministries.

Land matters are by far the most common in the local courts, but many get left unattended due to their sheer number. These matters range from the encroachment on public lands to land grabbing and dubious land transactions.

In the provinces, customary law largely applies, and this can lead to conflict. There have been numerous disputes between neighbouring chiefdoms, based on disagreements as to where neighbouring plots of land begin and end. The lack of exact land measurements means that local landowners often don't know the true size of the lands they own. Boundary markers such as trees and bodies of water are used but these provide a rough estimate and, due to environmental activity can become unreliable.

EMERGING ISSUES GENDER



Laws allow individuals to register their land without spousal consent. This usually means that men register lands without the involvement of their wives. This plays into the existing gender gap between men and women. Spousal consent has been proposed in the **New Land Policy**

POOR INVESTMENT STRUCTURES

At the end of the Civil War in 2002, foreign investment was needed to help rebuild the country. Sierra Leone's newfound stability as well as its arable land, quickly attracted the attention of agribusiness and mining companies, highlighting the need for investment regulations.

¹ 2015 Sierra Leone Population and Housing Census





Illegal settlements have proliferated in the capital. The hills of Freetown, which, were once lush with vegetation, have been stripped bare due to encroachment and mining activities.



AGRIBUSINESS AND MINING COMPANIES

In the past, agribusiness and mining companies wishing to acquire large areas of land, found themselves negotiating land deals with communities who had no proper legal representation.

Daniel Sesay from Namati described how lease agreements are regularly drawn up by the companies that do not reflect promises of development made by those companies to the communities. He explained that because the promise to build a bridge or a public water supply is made verbally, the company are not legally bound to deliver.

“ In some cases, the companies would provide legal representation for the communities, who would more than likely negotiate in favour of the companies. ”

DANIEL SESAY
Namati.

Communities are therefore not able to hold them accountable and the proposals can be backed by influential individuals who have an interest in the proposed investment.

According to customary law, Paramount Chiefs are custodians of these lands but have often been accused of confusing that mandate with ownership.

The powers of the Paramount Chiefs have been challenged, due to numerous instances in which they have signed agreements with companies without the consent or even knowledge of land owning families.

LAND, FISHERIES AND FORESTS

Tenure rights are very relevant in all the agriculture sectors; **illegal poaching by foreign fishing vessels not only depletes resources but destroys fish breeding grounds. Large scale investors, oil drilling companies and other companies compound the problem by polluting the fishing environment.** Inland, fish habitats in mangroves and wetlands have been destroyed by construction.

In the forestry sector, the indiscriminate felling of trees is threatening the country's ecosystem.

In April 2018, the newly elected government of President Julius Maada Bio issued an executive order suspending the export

Namati Sierra Leone is a movement of grass roots legal advocates working closely with citizens to secure their rights and to protect community land.

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of timber logs. Civil Society Organizations have since called for a permanent ban.

Arable land is one of Sierra Leone's natural gifts but there are no geospatial and cadastral information systems to measure it. With two-thirds of the population being involved in subsistence agriculture, this poses a significant problem as it is unknown how much land is required for the large population of smallholder farmers and how much can go to investors.

“ Approximately 70% of the country was formerly covered by forest, but less than 5% of original intact forest remains. ”

Forestry Policy 2010



WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO LAND: A CHALLENGE

Women represent 70 percent of the agricultural labour force in Sierra Leone, yet women's land rights have been a challenge, especially in the provinces where customary law, which is patriarchal in nature, prevails.

Paramount chiefs are predominantly male and on issues of land inheritance, men are generally favoured over women. When the patriarch of a family dies, his wife does not automatically inherit his land. Instead the land goes to the next surviving male heir. If there is no male heir, the land remains under the authority of the family or section head.

Dr Alphajoh Cham, Deputy Director of Planning, Policy and Project Development at the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment says that 70-80% of court cases are related to land conflict.

“ What we are registering right now is not actually registered as ‘title to the land parcel’. This leaves it open to many manipulations that can lead to conflict. ”

Dr ALPHAJOH CHAM

This gap in the law creates room for an individual in the Western area, where freehold rights exist, to sell a piece of land multiple times, which inevitably leads to conflict. Lapses of this kind were identified as the root cause of land conflict in Sierra Leone and the reason to overhaul existing land laws.

“ The closest a woman can get to owning property is by marrying a man who owns property... If someone comes to buy a piece of land, we are told it's not our business. ”

YAYOH KAMARA

Rosint Village in Bombali District



3. THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES IN SIERRA LEONE

The Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment (MLHE) in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including civil society, academia, development partners among others started the drafting of **Sierra Leone's new Land Policy** in 2009.

On the 1st February 2014 the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests were launched in Sierra Leone.

The government of Sierra Leone, through the MLHE reached out to FAO for support in an overhaul of the draft National Land Policy and signed a tripartite agreement with the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture and FAO for its implementation.

In this agreement, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany committed to funding the process and FAO committed to providing technical expertise.

In November 2015, a fifth draft of the National Land Policy was approved by the Cabinet of Sierra Leone. It includes the full set of principles from the Voluntary Guidelines and refers to the Guidelines in more than

90 paragraphs. Worldwide, no other known policy refers as closely to the principles of the Guidelines as Sierra Leone's new National Land Policy.

The core principles of the Voluntary Guidelines provided a basis to review the new Land Policy, assessing if it:

- Recognizes and respects tenure rights
- Safeguards and protects against threats
- Promotes and facilitates the employment of legitimate tenure rights
- Provides access to justice
- Prevents disputes, conflicts and corruption

These principles are all core elements designed to ensure public participation, visibility, accountability and transparency.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

An important way in which collective governance is manifested to support responsible governance of tenure is through the so-called multi-stakeholder platforms. These platforms bring together the government, civil society, academia, and the private sector to address complex challenges in securing tenure rights that no one party has the capacity, resources, and know-how to do alone.

A multi-stakeholder platform was established in Sierra Leone in April 2014 comprising over a hundred participants including women and youth from CSOs, NGOs, the private sector, the media, development partners, landowners and traditional leaders.

“ One thing that was key was the political commitment from the Sierra Leone Government, which is basically saying that yes, we're indeed ready to be a part of the process. ”

Dr ALHAJOH CHAM

Deputy Director of Planning, Policy and Project Development at the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment.

Meetings are held annually and close with the signing of an official document or communiqué tracking progress over the previous twelve months.

It was at the first of these meetings that an intricate institutional framework was devised that would integrate the efforts of all stakeholders. The first course of action for the multi-stakeholder platform was to discuss the core principles of the Guidelines and see how they are reflected in Sierra Leone's land laws.

AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGNS

Outside of the multi-stakeholder platform discussions, community outreach was required. Civil Society Organizations such as Namati, Action for Large-scale Land Acquisition Transparency (ALLAT), Women's Organization for Human Rights and Democracy (WOHFRAD), Solidaridad and Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), Green Scenery and Trócaire joined FAO to undertake a massive awareness-raising campaign, which brought them in contact with local communities.

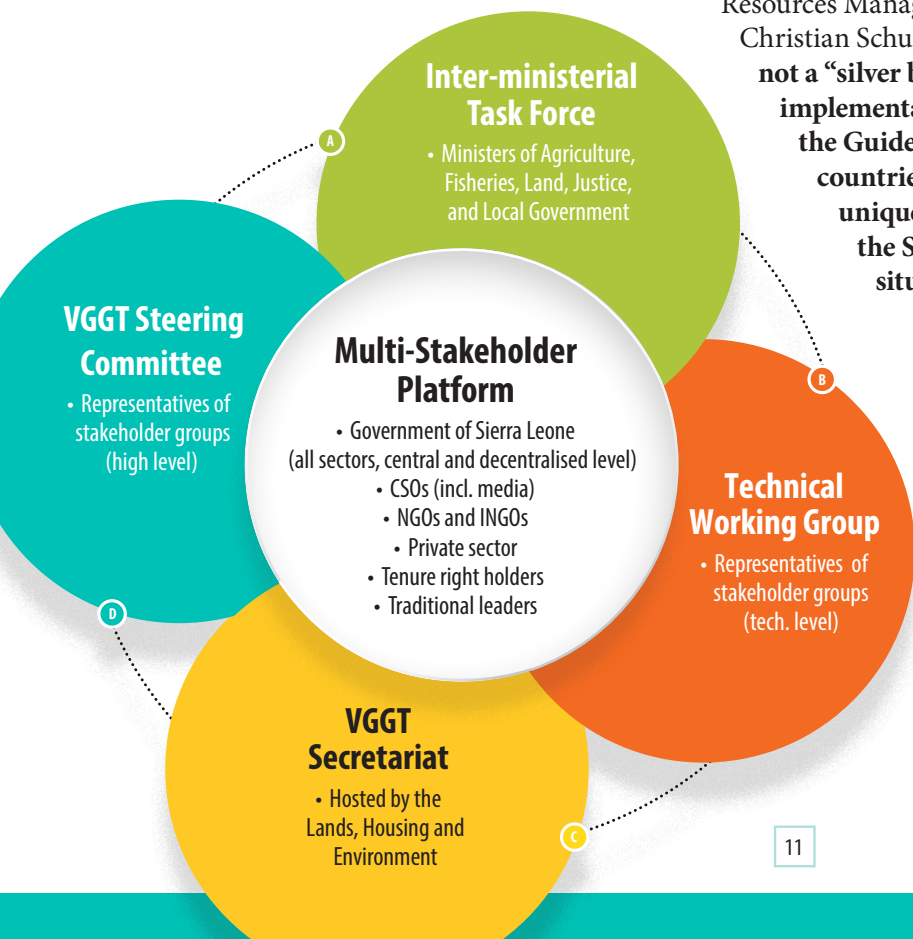


4. CHANGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Anchoring the Voluntary Guidelines within government structures has been identified as a key achievement in the process to implement the Voluntary Guidelines. This was achieved by setting up various Technical Working Groups (TWGs) with differing functions and a large representation of government players.

The Voluntary Guidelines Secretariat is housed in the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment. The secretariat provides support, serving as a one-stop-shop for all activities relating to the Voluntary Guidelines in the country.

With this framework in place, the basic objectives of the Voluntary Guidelines could be achieved through a series of steps that, according to FAO Natural Resources Management Officer Christian Schulze, were **not a “silver bullet” for implementation of the Guidelines in all countries, but a unique approach to the Sierra Leone situation.**



VGGT INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK IN SIERRA LEONE



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“ The Civil Society Organizations go far and wide - their key role has been to popularize the principles and documents of the Voluntary Guidelines. Now that we have the National Land Policy, some of them have translated key clauses of the document into local languages to communicate its relevance to the rural people. ”

JOSEPH BRIMA
Assistant FAO Representative

“ A national land policy expresses the aspirations of a nation regarding what the people believe should be the direction by which the government should pursue the management of land resources in the country. ”

DR REXFORD AHENE
FAO Land Administration Specialist

“ The success in implementing the Guidelines comes as a direct result of technical working groups, a steering committee, an inter-ministerial task force and non-state actors such as Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, private sector and traditional leaders, all working together. ”

JOBO SAMBA
Deputy Director of Geographic Information System and Remote Sensing, Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment



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OVERHAULING INVESTMENT APPROVAL PROCESSES IN LINE WITH THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

The investment climate for agribusiness in Sierra Leone suffers from similar problems to the land sector, in that it too is held back by outdated legislation. The Provinces Land Act of 1927 is still utilized, as is the Concessions Act of 1931.

The procedure as to how investors operate is unclear, but the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines are being applied to existing systems within the context of agricultural investment.

FAO partnered with the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) and the Sierra Leone government to review the Agribusiness Investment Approval Process (AIAP) in line with the Voluntary Guidelines.

While concepts like screening prospective investors and preparing contracts were not new in the country, they needed to be made more efficient with the goal of:

1. Attracting more investors into the country.
2. Providing a level playing field for investors.
3. Creating greater confidence to invest in agriculture.

In October 2017, a workshop was held to review and validate these newly developed procedures. After some deliberation a final document was agreed on, which currently awaits approval from the Inter-Ministerial Task Force.

The development of the document has gone hand in hand with sensitization to the Voluntary Guidelines at local level, which focuses on the obligations of agribusiness investors to the communities with which they interact. For instance, the Guidelines note that **the consultation and participation of all affected stakeholders should be ensured.**

Through lack of effective communication, family land owners and agribusiness investors rarely met each other’s expectations. Natural Habitats Group Sierra Leone is in the business of large-scale oil palm plantations, currently operating in two main areas in Sierra Leone, Yele and Zimmi.

“ The awareness raising has enabled companies to realise that community participation is very important... we think that implementing the Voluntary Guidelines should be an ongoing process. ”

VICTOR BANGURA
Investment Promotion Manager
of the Sierra Leone Investment
and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA)

Community Relations Manager, Mr **ALI BAO**, describes the developments he has seen in certain areas since the Voluntary Guidelines were introduced. Investors, he says, are now very aware that they can’t just begin operating on a piece of land without the knowledge of the land owners and the stakeholders. In the past this was a major source of contention:

“ Now, the Paramount Chief as well as family land owners are consulted so that they can decide whether they want to sell a piece of land. There has since been no clear movement by the companies without consultation with land owners ”

FORESTRY SECTOR



Sierra Leone's Forestry Policy Act prescribes a conventional forest management approach, in which paid individuals police forest reserves. This creates a problem because in between shifts, the reserves are left unguarded, creating a window for illegal activity.

FAO is collaborating with the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, and other government and non-government stakeholders to arrive at a common vision for forestry and for community-based forestry (CBF) to improve the governance and management of forests.

The work involves a review of the a review of forest tenure and the

existing CBF tenure regimes with respect to the Guidelines, the development of a national strategy to strengthen CBF and a piloting of community forestry in selected sites.

The CBF approach works towards ensuring that the forest and the land are controlled by local communities. The idea is that communities develop a culture of forest preservation, which will hinder destructive practices. Scaling-up the project will however mean that the support of donors and other agencies is required.

FAO is also supporting the drafting of the new forestry bill to ensure that the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines and CBF are reflected.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector is plagued with illegal poaching by foreign vessels, which not only depletes the marine resources but destroys fish breeding grounds. To address these issues, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources has drafted a fisheries bill based on the principles of the Guidelines.



FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR

“The return of the forests to the management of those who depend on it means the return of their cultural heritage.

Forests are their of livelihood.”

GBESSAY MOMOH
FAO Forestry Officer

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When enacted, this bill is expected to:

1. Manage, develop, conserve and use fisheries and marine resources through the establishment of Marine Protected Areas, the prohibition of destructive fishing gear and methods, the exploitation of endangered species and the prevention of water pollution.
2. Establish reserved areas for artisanal fishing and give priority to artisanal or semi-industrial fisheries by allocating fishing licenses, rights or quotas.
3. Co-manage small-scale fisheries.
4. Ensure that fisheries and marine resources contribute to food security, income generation and investment potential.

REVISING LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

With a high percentage of women involved in farming, increasing land ownership for women has been an important focus during awareness raising on the Voluntary Guidelines. The National Land Policy promotes equal access to land and tenure security for men and women.

Trócaire is an international organization working in Sierra Leone. They are focused on the empowerment of women, gender equality and livelihood programming. They have trained Civil Society Organizations and Community Based Organizations (village associations,

environmental groups, women’s rights groups, farmers associations, faith-based groups) on the Voluntary Guidelines and the National Land Policy. As these groups are best placed to relay information on the Guidelines at community level, it was an opportunity for local people to be more than just stakeholders, but also drivers of the process to improve the conditions under which land is held or occupied.

In January 2018, FAO in partnership with the Sierra Leone government launched the “Protecting Women’s Customary Land Rights in Sierra Leone” Project. The project has three main components:

- **Context analysis** of the critical aspects influencing and hindering women’s land rights in three ethnically different customary tenure communities (Temne, Limba and Mende).
- **Training and capacity development** to be able to participate in the decisions on the allocation of land rights.
- Pilot systematic **mapping of customary land rights** using SOLA Open Tenure.

Under the project FAO with funding from Irish Aid, also organized Training of Trainers. The idea was that participants from across the country would return to their communities prepared to spread the concept of equal land rights for women.



©FAO / Samuel Mabikke

“ Let me once again use this opportunity to thank you, the training not only exposed the work you and different stakeholders have been doing to empower local landowners but in a special way has given prominence to women’s land rights, a very powerful tool in the struggle for women’s economic and political rights. ”

GLADYS G. GBAPPY-BRIMA
Founder and National Co-ordinator
Women’s Partnership for Justice
and Peace (WPJP)



LAND MAPPING

Since the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012, FAO has been supporting the development of transparent, accessible and accountable computerized systems for recording legitimate tenure rights as a basis for responsible governance of tenure.

“ Because of engagement with FAO and Namati, women are more conscious of their rights and sometimes you will even see a lady leading a discussion! ”

Paramount Chief
DESMOND KANGOBAI
– Selenga Chiefdom

FAO’s Solutions for Open Land Administration (SOLA) and Open Tenure tools target a wide audience from Government to community level and their common objective is to make recording of land rights faster and more affordable. SOLA Open Tenure is cost effective, customizable and user-friendly technology that captures coordinates, making it possible to generate land parcels based on their location patterns.

By January 2017 a customized version of the SOLA Registry was being used by Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment (MLHE) and the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General (OARG).

According to the FAO Land Administration Specialist Dr Rexford Ahene, this process of securing land rights in a systematic way is preferred for first registration, because sporadic registration tends to be driven by those who can afford to demarcate and register their land.

The entire exercise involves five stages:

- 1 Adjudication and clearing of boundaries
- 2 Demarcation survey
- 3 Harmonization of boundaries
- 4 Community validation of mapping results
- 5 Preparation and issuance of parcel cadastral maps



PILOT STUDY

The selected pilot site was Paki Masabong Chiefdom, in the northern Bombali District. Village Area Land Committee members, local leaders, elders and youth were trained to record information related to land parcels on tablets, using a Global Positioning System (GPS).

Mashema village was the primary focus of this exercise. Systematic demarcation was carried out effectively by teams consisting of FAO technical staff, surveyors from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment and members of the community who had been trained to use the technology. The demarcation process provided comprehensive information on the spatial location of every parcel of land in the selected areas.

This information was used to develop a map for Mashema village, which was then taken back to Paki Masabong chiefdom where it was validated

The Systematic demarcation has continued in Mapaki, Mafina and Rosint villages in the Northern Region of Bombali District, as well as in Selenga Chiefdom in the Southern Region of Bo District. The mapping activities have been scaled up to include the other two districts; Kenema in the Eastern region and Port Loko in the Northwestern region.

“I was very impressed to see the full support of the district leadership, other Paramount Chiefs from Bombali, the Office of National Security, and the Human Rights Commission. It was the first time we had the full district leadership show up and say this is indeed something we want to see and work on replicating.”

SAMUEL MABIKKE
FAO Land Tenure Officer

Solutions for Open Land Administration

The SOLA Registry has the potential to provide Sierra Leone with a continuous digital cadastral map for the whole country as well as a comprehensive land registration system for the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General (OARG). Field data collection using the SOLA Open Tenure tool began with a pilot systematic demarcation exercise carried out in Bombali District to capture boundary coordinates of family land parcels.

Various challenges arose which will be considered during subsequent land mapping exercises:

- **Boundary disputes hinder progress and varying levels of negotiation needed to be conducted for the work to proceed.**
- **Walking through areas of rough terrain and swampland can require special protective clothing.**
- **The tablets being used to record information were vulnerable to overheating and loss of information.**

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS THROUGH THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

These achievements are examples of the positive outcomes attained through the implementation and increased awareness of the Voluntary Guidelines in Sierra Leone.

The Inter-Ministerial Task Force consists of Ministers from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Justice / Attorney General, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. It establishes high-level political support for implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

Awareness of tenure rights

Communities in chiefdoms and urban dwellers throughout Sierra Leone are now more aware of their tenure rights, the Voluntary Guidelines and the National Land Policy through training and the media.

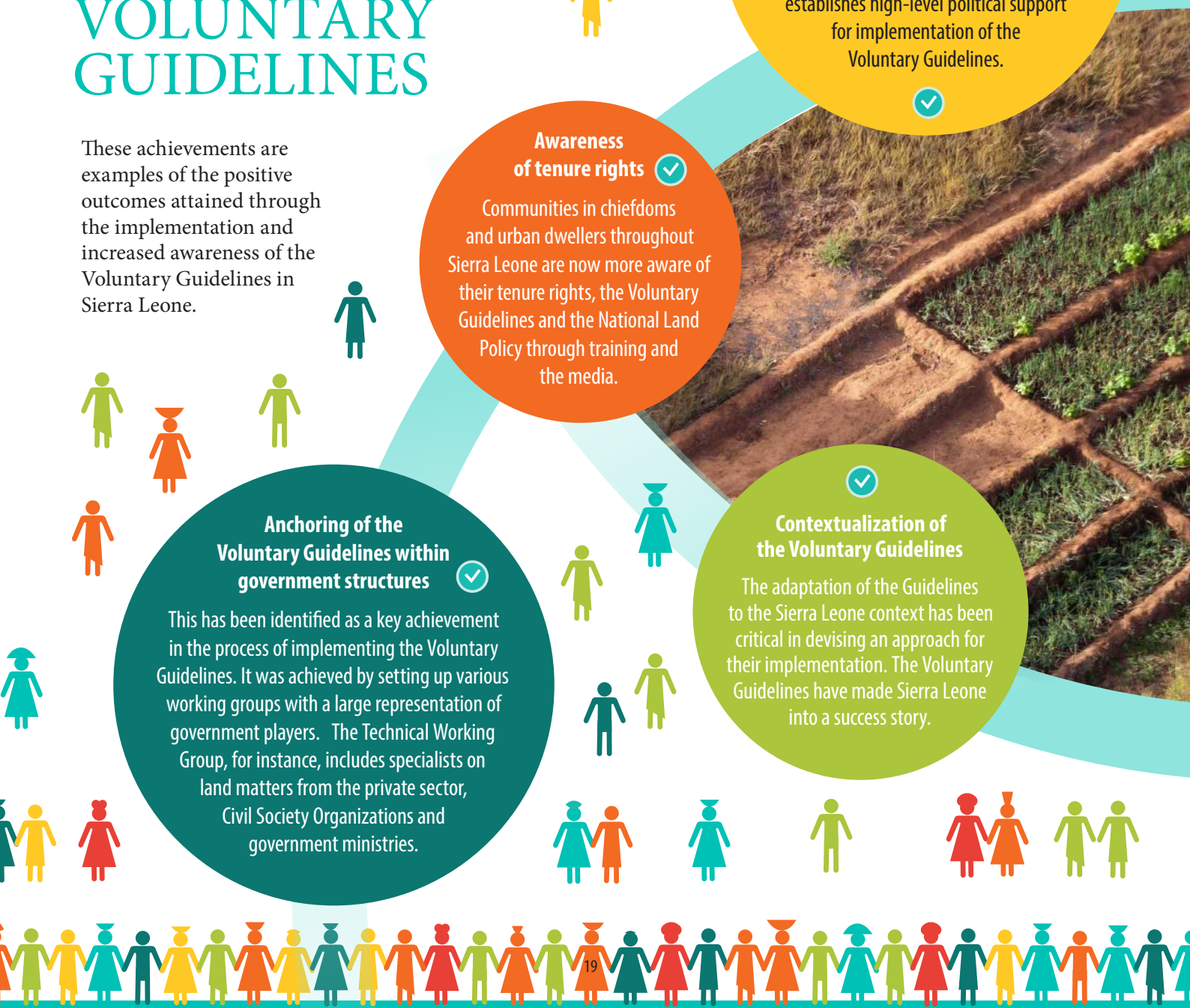
Anchoring of the Voluntary Guidelines within government structures

This has been identified as a key achievement in the process of implementing the Voluntary Guidelines. It was achieved by setting up various working groups with a large representation of government players. The Technical Working Group, for instance, includes specialists on land matters from the private sector, Civil Society Organizations and government ministries.

Contextualization of the Voluntary Guidelines

The adaptation of the Guidelines to the Sierra Leone context has been critical in devising an approach for their implementation. The Voluntary Guidelines have made Sierra Leone into a success story.

© FAO / Yasuyoshi Chiba



Active involvement of Civil Society Organizations

Green Scenery, Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) and Namati meet monthly to discuss tenure governance and look at the cross-cutting issues between different ministries. Afterwards they make recommendations to a Steering Committee, which also comprises representatives from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Civil Society Organizations. Recommendations that they are unable to translate into decisions are sent to the Inter-Ministerial Task Force.



Learning exchanges between stakeholders in Liberia and Sierra Leone

FAO has facilitated several training programmes attended by both Liberian and Sierra Leonean stakeholders to share knowledge and experience of agribusiness investment.



Rollout of the learning program on the Voluntary Guidelines

Capacity development is one of the pillars of the Voluntary Guidelines. FAO's capacity development package includes technical guidelines, thematic training materials, an e-learning curriculum and learning programs that can be adapted to diverse groups from government officials to non-governmental organizations and local communities.



Principles of the Voluntary Guidelines included in National Land Policy

Ninety paragraphs of the National Land Policy make direct reference to principles set out in the Voluntary Guidelines. The document's close adherence to the guidelines make it stand out as one of the most successful manifestations of the Guidelines' principles in the world.



Sustained interest in further application of the Voluntary Guidelines

Multiple stakeholders have expressed interest in replicating the success of the National Land Policy in the other agriculture sectors (forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) using the principles set out in the Guidelines.



5. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED



“ The cross-cutting approach of the implementation strategy of the Guidelines, wherein different actors, Government, Development Partners, CSO's and the Private Sector are brought together in collaborative efforts to achieve the vision and objectives of the Guidelines and the National Land Policy, is a unique achievement. ”

Mr RASHID CHARLES NGLAWEE

former Staff Supervisor/Head of the Land Reform Program in the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment





MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS

A major challenge, prior to the engagement of the Voluntary Guidelines, was the fact that public agencies responsible for land management were operating in organizational silos.

“ The Ministry of Agriculture was solely looking at agricultural issues... in the absence of a policy from the Ministry of Lands that should guide all the land-based sectors in doing their work in a complimentary manner, there was chaos. ”

Paramount Chief
DESMOND KANGOBAI
– Selenga Chiefdom

The **multi-stakeholder platform** fixed this problem, by creating a unique opportunity for all these sectors to come together to be part of the Land Policy reform process and to recognize the synergy that should exist between these agencies.



LOCAL LEVEL DECISION MAKERS

Ensuring that authorities and decision-makers at local level are directly involved in the process of sharing both knowledge and understanding of the Voluntary Guidelines is important. Awareness must reach all the communities in Sierra Leone’s chiefdoms.

“ I attended a forum to which FAO had invited local authorities and decision-makers at local level. It was a little disappointing to see that instead of attending personally, most of them had sent representatives. Sensitization still needs to be taken to the communities in all 149 chiefdoms so that community leaders can be directly involved. ”

HON QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH
Member of Parliament for Constituency 007, Kailahun District and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Land, Housing and the Environment

AGRIBUSINESS AND MINING COMPANIES

In certain incidences, the lack of awareness among the rural population meant that small-holder farmers were easily moved off their land by of agribusiness and mining companies only to suffer the consequences.

Time and experience have highlighted the importance of:

- **Recognizing and protecting tenure rights.**
- **Encouraging consultation and participation in decision-making.**
- **Demanding transparency and accountability from those involved in the investment process.**



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the provinces where customary law still largely applies, and women have little or no right to ownership or inheritance, the challenge to change ways of thinking to a fairer more equitable system has been huge. The process is a slow one but through multi-stakeholder platforms, investment in capacity development at community level and awareness raising through the learning programmes, changes in ways of thinking and the acceptance of new laws is already underway.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Parliamentarians are key stakeholders in the process of implementing the Voluntary Guidelines, given their unique position to educate their constituents, participate in negotiations for land acquisition or leases and protect the natural resources in the various constituencies. A newly elected government in April 2018 came with a newly elected parliament. To support the progress made, it is important that new members of parliament are familiar with the Guidelines and its internationally recognized good practices in tenure-related policies, laws, regulations and strategies.

“ One of the biggest problems is that although women are responsible for 65% of agricultural produce, very few own land under customary law. ”

HON QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH

Member of Parliament for Constituency 007, Kailahun District and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Land, Housing and the Environment.



NEXT STEPS

A ten-year implementation period of the National Land Policy has been divided into two phases. The first phase (2017 – 2020) focuses on clarification and protection of land rights.

The second phase of the implementation period (2021 – 2027) will be the systematic implementation of phase one. It will consist of:

- Enacting land laws and planning laws.
- Strengthening the capacity of land related institutions.
- Scaling up of compulsory and systemic first registration of legitimate land rights.

“ The development and aligning of the National Land Policy with the Voluntary Guidelines is an achievement that has enabled the National Land Policy to adopt the following principles: human dignity, fair and equitable access to land, responsible investment in agribusiness, and the protection of women's land rights. ”

Mr RASHID CHARLES NGIAWEE

former Staff Supervisor/Head of the Land Reform Program in the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment



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