Policy dialogue spaces and multi-actor platforms in the context of tenure governance. A civil society perspective on experiences and criteria to advance human rights-based governance of tenure

Working Paper

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I. Introduction

Five years after the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security1 (henceforth “the Guidelines” or the “Tenure Guidelines”) by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), efforts for their implementation and application at all levels are ongoing. One of the aspects that makes the Tenure Guidelines unique is the participatory and inclusive process through which they were developed and which particularly ensured the active participation of social movements of small-scale food producers. There is broad consensus that the inclusive nature of the process of developing the Guidelines needs to be applied also in the implementation phase. Participation of the most marginalized groups and those most affected by hunger and tenure insecurity is also a key principle of the Guidelines themselves, which underlie that these groups need to be the primary beneficiaries of the improvement of tenure governance (paragraph 1.1).

Policy dialogue between those most affected by tenure insecurity and state authorities at different levels can be a key element for human rights-based governance of tenure. Such dialogue can happen in different forms and spaces, according to the respective context. In several countries, multi-actor platforms have been a central part of efforts to implement the Guidelines. In some cases, such platforms exist also at the regional level. In a synthesis monitoring report produced by the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the CFS, which takes stock of the use, application and implementation of the Guidelines, a preliminary analysis of existing policy dialogue spaces revealed that there are fundamental differences in how these are set up, how they work, who participates in them and what their exact mandate and scope is.2 Based on this preliminary analysis, FAO expressed its interest in better understanding how multi-actor platforms can be a tool to implement the Guidelines, including developing some criteria for their establishment in order to ensure meaningful participation of social movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) in tenure governance.

This paper builds on the initial reflection contained in the CSM Monitoring report and takes it further by providing an analysis of some existing experiences of policy dialogue spaces and multi-actor platforms in different countries. It does not aim at a comprehensive list of such existing spaces, but will concentrate on some examples, which have been identified as being particularly interesting and useful from a CSO perspective in the context of the tenure governance and implementation of the Tenure Guidelines. This working paper also strongly builds on discussions within the Land and Territory Working Group of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), which has played a key role in coordinating the participation of social movements of small-scale food producers and indigenous peoples in the development of the Guidelines and their implementation. Our hope is that these examples will contribute to ensuring that the implementation processes of the Guidelines at country and regional levels give due attention to the rights of the most marginalized groups, including their meaningful participation in decision making and policy processes.

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II. Civil society participation and multi-actor platforms in the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines

1. What the Tenure Guidelines say about participation and multi-actor platforms

As already said, the Tenure Guidelines were developed through an inclusive process in the CFS, which included, in particular, the participation of the organizations of small-scale food producers and indigenous peoples in all phases (consultations and negotiations), through the CSM. This reflects the aspiration of the CFS to be the most inclusive intergovernmental space in the context of food security and nutrition. It is clear that this implies that participation and inclusion of the groups most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as the most marginalized groups, is also a crucial element of efforts aiming at the implementation, use and application of the CFS decisions.

The Tenure Guidelines underline the importance of inclusion and participation as one key element of responsible governance of tenure. Paragraph 1.1 establishes that the Guidelines form part of states’ obligations under international human rights law and sets out the aim of the Guidelines as being the improvement of governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests with a particular focus on marginalized groups. Indeed, access to information and effective participation in decision-making processes is one of the core principles of human rights. The Guidelines’ principles of implementation (chapter 3B) further require all processes of implementation and application to be non-discriminatory, equitable, gender sensitive, transparent and accountable. Paragraph 3B6 in particular establishes a standard for consultation and participation in the context of tenure governance, which requires states to engage with and seek “the support of those who, having legitimate tenure rights, could be affected by decisions, prior to decisions being taken, and responding to their contributions; taking into consideration existing power imbalances between different parties and ensuring active, free, meaningful and informed participation of individuals and groups in associated decision-making processes.”

The Guidelines also explicitly mention participation and consultation as an element of responsible governance in the context of: i) the recognition of different forms of tenure rights (paragraphs 4.4, 4.7 and 4.10); ii) the development of policy, legal and organizational frameworks (paragraph 5.5); iii) the prevention of corruption (paragraph 6.9); iv) the use and allocation of public land, fisheries and forests (paragraphs 8.6, 8.7 and 8.9); v) the recognition of informal tenure systems (paragraph 10.3); vi) investments, including in the form of land acquisitions (paragraphs 12.5, 12.9, 12.10 and 12.11); vii) redistributive agrarian reform (paragraphs 15.4 and 15.6); viii) expropriations/evictions (paragraph 16.2); ix) spatial planning (paragraph 20.2); and x) the negotiation and implementation of climate change mitigation or adaptation measures (paragraphs 23.2 and 23.3). Chapter 9 of the Tenure Guidelines further emphasizes the need of participation and consultation in the context of the governance of the land, fisheries and forests of indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems. In this context, paragraph 9.9 reaffirms the principle for indigenous peoples of free, prior and informed consent.

Regarding the promotion and implementation of the Tenure Guidelines, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of their implementation, the Guidelines encourage states to initiate “multi-stakeholder platforms and frameworks at local, national and regional levels or use such
existing platforms and frameworks to collaborate on the implementation of these Guidelines; to monitor and evaluate the implementation […]; and to evaluate the impact on improved governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests, and on improving food security and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food […], and sustainable development” (paragraph 26.2). It is important to read this call for multi-actor processes in conjunction with the human rights standard on inclusion and participation as well as the one set by the Guidelines (paragraph 3B6). This is particularly relevant in order to take into consideration and address power imbalances between different actors, which are a key issue in the context of tenure governance.

2. Experiences of policy dialogue spaces on tenure in the context of the Tenure Guidelines implementation process

The most comprehensive monitoring effort in the context of the Tenure Guidelines to date led to the publication of a report in 2016, which synthesizes civil society experiences regarding use and implementation of the Tenure Guidelines. This report, which was presented during the 43rd session of the CFS, shows that the creation of policy dialogue spaces has been an important feature in this context. Based on the submissions covering more than 40 countries, the report shows that social movements and CSOs have engaged in different types of spaces for political dialogue. These spaces are set up and framed in different ways and differ regarding the degree of formalization as well as the scope of the activities carried out by them – ranging from capacity building, over legal reform processes to resolution of conflicts or monitoring.

The existing experiences with dialogue spaces reveal that there are substantial differences as to how different dialogue spaces and platforms emerge and function. One key issue is who participates in such spaces and under which conditions. This is related to the question of who gets to decide who can participate. All this has a bearing on the legitimacy of such spaces and their potential impacts in terms of advancing the rights of communities and people. It makes a huge difference, for instance, whether or not participation of social movements and CSOs is open, or if only selected CSOs are invited. Similarly, it is of great relevance whether there is a mechanism in place to ensure the priority of representatives of those most affected and marginalized rights holders and if CSOs can organize autonomously. For many social movements and CSOs, the objective is to engage as organizations of rights-holders in accountability dialogues with state authorities (as duty bearers) as part of democratic decision-making and human rights-based governance. In some settings, such as in multi-actor or “multi-stakeholder” platforms, other kinds of entities may participate as third parties. In the context of the Tenure Guidelines implementation, for instance the FAO and donor countries (mostly through their development agencies) participate in platforms along with international NGOs, research institutions or religious institutions. In some cases, private sector representatives may also participate – and their participation is sometimes actively sought for by governments or donors. Such situations risk blurring the fundamental distinction between actors who claim to have a “stake” in natural resource governance on the one hand, and primary rights holders, i.e. communities and people, represented though their organizations, on the other hand. The stakes for these different groups are fundamentally different: for small-scale food producers and their communities, what is at stake is the very realization of their most basic economic, social, cultural, environment, civil and political rights. By contrast, what is at stake for investors and corporations are potential business opportunities. The power differences between these different kinds of participants are often huge, which in turn, if not addressed, can lead to outcomes that undermine rather than enforce basic human rights standards as those set by the Tenure Guidelines.

A second issue concerns the quality of dialogue spaces, which depends, among others, on their scope and objectives and how these are defined. Existing experiences show that both can vary considerably from one case to another, ranging from mere exchange of information

5 See CSM Synthesis Report, supra note 2, pp. 21-25.
to actual participation in decision-making or resolution of conflicts. For social movements representing the most marginalized rights holders, a key issue is to what extent dialogue contributes to achieving real changes on the ground in terms of advancing the rights of communities and people, while ensuring a democratic, equitable and accountable process. Dialogue spaces and platforms are seen in this context as a possibility to engage with state authorities at different levels, as long as they enhance democratic and inclusive decision-making, starting with the determination of national priorities in governance of tenure and management of natural resources. In addition to proceeding based on a clear accountability and human rights framework, this requires prioritizing the rights and needs of marginalized groups, including their right to participate in decision-making and to hold state authorities accountable.

A third lesson learnt from the existing experiences is that the origins and histories of dialogue platforms and spaces have much to do with how they work. In several countries, “multi-stakeholder” platforms have been created since the approval of the Tenure Guidelines in the name of their implementation. However, other examples predate the Guidelines or do not necessarily (or primarily) have “Guidelines implementation” as their main objective. Further, while some policy dialogue spaces are part of development cooperation projects, others are the result of social movements’ initiative and pressure, oftentimes in situations marked by burning tenure issues and human rights violations. When they take the realities of communities and people as a starting point, different types of policy dialogue spaces have served as an entry point for CSOs to finally discuss these problems with state authorities at different levels, at times triggering the creation of more regular and more institutionalized interactions between rights holders and state authorities.

3. The rise of multi-actor governance and the problems with “multi-stakeholder” approaches

The establishment of different types of policy dialogue spaces in the context of tenure governance, and in particular in the context of Tenure Guidelines implementation, reflects a broader dynamic with regards to governance more generally. Indeed, there is a widespread aspiration today to build more inclusive and participatory governance. New forms of interaction between state and non-state actors are part of some attempts to ensure a more dynamic state-society interaction. Some approaches thus aim at creating spaces for legitimate and participatory multi-actor deliberation, in which the voices of those most affected by policy decisions are heard and their rights can be defended and advanced, and states are being held accountable. However, other approaches ignore – or even negate – differences in identities, interest, roles and responsibilities of different actors, as well as existing power imbalances.

“Multi-stakeholder” governance, which sees the corporate sector as a key actor for development, is a case in point. The rise of “multi-stakeholderism” started in the 90s in the context of opening up the UN system to other actors, beyond the strict limitation to governments only. Since then, it has made its way into many international bodies and has recently been given further recognition in the form of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, which calls for “partnerships” with a clear focus on the corporate sector. 6 Multi-actor and “multi-stakeholder” governance is also increasingly promoted at national and regional levels. The “multi-stakeholder” approach is based on the assumption that it is in the key interest of corporate actors to act responsibly with regards to environmental and social issues and “that

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the public good will emerge from the procedure of bargaining and balancing the different interests of different parties. This approach is backed up by a narrative of ‘participation’ and ‘consensus’ that is supposed to neutralize political differences.”

Empirical research on “multi-stakeholder” governance shows, however, that standard setting through such approaches privileges a business-oriented framing of issues. Business interests are thus imposed through “multi-stakeholderism” while negating the real and serious differences of legitimacy, interest, vision and rights of different types of actors.

The rise of “multi-stakeholderism” has brought about risks, including:

- The confusion of the roles of states, inter-governmental organizations (IGO), civil society and the private sector. For example, the generalization of corporations and private investors, on the one hand, and communities and the social movements, which represent them, on the other, as “stakeholders” that negotiate on equal terms is unfounded and generates injustice. It also ignores the power and resource asymmetries that exist between the groups.

- The lack of a clear distinction between public and private interests, which ignores the fundamental differences in the nature, and consequently the roles and responsibilities, of states and, for example, corporations.

- The risk of existing asymmetries of powers between different actors leading to the co-optation of some actors and to the corporate capture of global governance on natural resources, food and nutrition. This can undermine the rights of the most vulnerable groups further and threatens the realization of human rights as well as people’s and food sovereignty.

- The provision of legitimacy to powerful actors – corporations and others – who are lacking it but need it to pursue their particular interests.

- The creation of artificial spaces, which risk limiting the role of existing, more legitimate decision-making spaces (where such spaces exist) as well as diverting time, energy, and funding away from such spaces.

The differences with regards to legitimacy, interest, vision and rights of different types of actors are also particularly pronounced in the context of governance of natural resources. Tenure and the access to and control over natural resources are extremely contentious issues in many societies. Key issues here are the very different stakes and interests that different actors have as well as existing power imbalances. Under these circumstances, it is an illusion that all “stakeholders” can develop a “common strategy and vision” on these issues, as many proponents of “multi-stakeholder” platforms want to make believe. Pretending to do so anyway and ignoring power asymmetries (in the context of land deals, for instance, corporate actors are often backed by states – both their home states as the authorities of the host state) the outcomes are likely to lead to more privatization of nature, rather than advancing the tenure and human rights of people and communities.

It is sometimes argued that the CFS itself is a “multi-stakeholder” space/platform and that the Tenure Guidelines call for “multi-stakeholder” processes for their implementation. However, while the CFS reform document states that the CFS is “the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger

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7 McKeon, supra note 6, p. 385.
and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings,” the very same document underlines the fact that the CFS deliberates on food and nutrition issues from a human rights perspective and clearly accords priority voice to the marginalized. In addition, civil society organizations are recognized as participants and organize autonomously through a civil society mechanism (CSM), which ensures that priority is given to the voices of small-scale food producers and the most marginalized groups. The CSM has, however, repeatedly denounced forces which aim at blurring the rules of the CFS as well as the risk of corporate capture of this governance body.

As said before, the Tenure Guidelines’ call for multi-actor approaches for their implementation is anchored in the human rights framework (which draws a clear line between rights holders, duty bearers and third parties) and, in particular, its principles of participation, which prioritize the most marginalized groups and recognize existing power imbalances. As such, the Guidelines themselves provide guidance for policy dialogue platforms by clearly prioritizing marginalized people – both regarding participation in processes and the outcomes of governance – as well as through their principles of participation, which are grounded in states’ human rights obligations. These criteria are echoed in the “Terms of Reference to share experiences and good practices in applying CFS decisions and recommendations through organizing events at national, regional and global levels” which were approved by the CFS in 2016.9

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9 Committee on Word Food Security (CFS), 2016, Terms of reference to share experiences and good practices in applying CFS decisions and recommendations through organizing events at national, regional and global (Document No. CFS 2016/43/7). Available at: http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr182e.pdf.
III. Some examples of policy dialogue spaces and multi-actor platforms in the context of governance tenure of land, fisheries and forests

1. Mali

Key points

- The establishment of the multi-actor platform resulted from social movements’ and CSOs’ struggles and mobilization against land grabbing as well as their advocacy for a high-level political dialogue.
- The Tenure Guidelines have been a key reference in CSOs’ advocacy and the setting up of the platform with the support of the government and FAO.
- The national platform of peasant organizations and other CSOs have an instrumental role in the operational work of the platform.
- A technical working group (cadre de concertation) involving technical staff of relevant ministries, CSOs and researchers ensures the operational work along the priorities and lines of actions defined by the high-level platform.
- Seminars and field visits of the technical working group have been key to understand the underlying issues of tenure insecurity and the functioning of customary tenure systems that are based on collective rights.
- The platform has strengthened the recognition of social movements and CSOs, as the state’s counterpart for constructive debates geared towards policy responses to existing problems, based on their expertise and the fact that they represent those most affected by tenure insecurity.
- The multi-actor platform as well as the technical working group have also been important spaces for deliberations on the national policy on agricultural lands and the law on agricultural lands, which recognizes customary rights of communities.

In Mali, a multi-actor platform was established in November 2014 in the context of efforts to implement the Tenure Guidelines at national level. The establishment of the platform resulted from social movements’ and CSOs’ struggles and mobilization against land grabbing in the country. These struggles led to the creation of the Malian Convergence Against Land Grabbing (Convergence Malienne Contre l’Accaparement des Terres, CMAT), an alliance of peasant organizations (Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes, CNOP\textsuperscript{11}, and Association des Organisations Professionnelles Paysannes, AOPP), the union of the communities affected of land grabbing (Union des Associations et Coordinations d’Associations pour le Développement et la Défense des Droits des Démunis, UACDDDD) and two national NGOs (Coalition des Alternatives Africaines Dette et Développement, CAD-Mali, and Ligue des Jeunes Juristes pour le Développement Humain, LJDH). As part of their work in support of communities affected by land grabbing in the struggles for their rights, CMAT advocated for the creation of a dialogue platform on tenure issues, in order to establish a high-level political dialogue with the Malian government, with the objective of resolving existing conflicts around natural resources and addressing structural problems of tenure governance. The Tenure Guidelines have been a key reference in CMAT’s advocacy and the setting up of the platform with the support of the government and FAO.

The Malian multi-actor platform is chaired by the ministry of agriculture and meets once a year. The national platform of peasant organizations (CNOP), which hosts the secretariat of CMAT, is co-chair of the platform and CMAT strongly contributes to the operational work of the platform. The members of the platform comprises state officials, social movements and peasant organizations, representatives of affected communities, parliamentarians, academia/researchers, the national FAO office as well as NGOs and some national private sector associations. In addition to this platform, which is the high-level forum for discussion, a technical working group (cadre

\textsuperscript{10} The experiences presented in this chapter are based on information, which was collected through interviews with CSO representatives and/or other resource persons involved in the respective spaces/platforms.

\textsuperscript{11} The CNOP is a member of La Via Campesina and the West African platform of peasant organizations, ROPPA (Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest).
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de concertation) has been established. This working group is convened every three months by CMAT and involves technical staff from relevant ministries and departments as well as researchers. It provides a space for more operational work along the priorities and lines of actions defined by the high-level platform. As part of the working group’s work, several seminars and field visits to communities affected by land grabbing have taken place, in order to jointly analyze existing problems concerning tenure governance and develop proposals for possible solutions. Both the multi-actor platform as well as the technical working group have also been important spaces for deliberations on the national policy on agricultural lands (politique foncière agricole, adopted in 2014) and the recent law on agricultural lands (loi foncière agricole), which was adopted by the national parliament in March 2017. The new law is an important step forward towards securing communities’ tenure rights in as much as it recognizes and gives legal protection to the customary communal tenure rights, through which most communities in Mali access, use and manage land and related natural resources.12

The multi-actor platform as well as the technical working group have been instrumental to create a space for policy dialogue between civil society and the state authorities at different levels. Key results have been the increasing recognition by state authorities of some of the structural causes of tenure insecurity in the country, in particular the lack of effective protection of customary tenure systems. The space created was instrumental in the process, which led to the adoption of a new policy and law on agricultural lands, which recognize communities’ collective customary tenure rights. The adoption of the decrees of application (décrets d’application), which specify how the law is to be operationalized, and the implementation of the law are now key processes in Mali, in which the created spaces will have a critical role. According to members of the CMAT, in particular the technical working group has been a key element to ensure the success of the policy dialogue, in as much as it allowed holding working sessions with the technical staff of different ministries in order to advance towards a common understanding of the underlying issues of tenure insecurity. The participation of researchers has been fundamental in this context as it allowed to understand the historical roots of problems regarding tenure governance today, which go back to the colonization. The seminars, which were organized as part of the work of the technical working group, allowed for a collective learning process, which laid the basis to discuss proposals to overcome the existing problems.

Similarly, the field visits to conflict sites and communities affected by land grabbing have been a crucial factor to build a common understanding and basis for discussing solutions, exposing state officials to the realities of communities and people affected by land grabbing. According to CMAT, this was a key factor in allowing state officials to understand the consequences of tenure insecurity for communities as well as to understand better how the existing customary tenure systems work in practice, in particular the collective nature of tenure rights. This work thus allowed for a sensitization of key actors and also strengthened the recognition of social movements and CSOs, as the state’s counterpart for constructive debates geared towards policy responses to existing problems, based on their expertise and the fact that they represent those most affected by tenure insecurity. Indeed, as mentioned before, civil society (in the form of CMAT) has been instrumental in setting up the platform and technical working group as well as their functioning and in ensuring a dynamic process, while ensuring an active role by those most affected. The close cooperation with state authorities at different level as well as other actors, such as the FAO, has lastly been one of the main factors, which has led to the initial success of the platform. In particular the direct work with the technical staff in the relevant ministries, but directly connected to high-level discussions with ministers, has allowed to advance in the spirit of the Tenure Guidelines. The instrumental role of civil society in Mali is based on the existence and long-standing work of CMAT, which provides a space for internal deliberations and developing of consolidated proposals, which are then brought to the discussions with state authorities at different levels, including into the multi-actor platform.

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2. Senegal

Key points

- The establishment of the multi-actor platform took place in the context of civil society mobilization against land grabbing and advocacy for a new legal framework on land.
- The platform is a high-level forum, which meets once a year to discuss burning tenure issues. The Tenure Guidelines are an important reference for its work.
- A steering committee has been created, which is composed by state authorities, CSOs and members of parliament, and which coordinates the operational work along the priority lines established by the high-level platform. The committee is co-chaired by the vice-minister of agriculture and the national platform of peasant organizations.
- Peasant organizations and other CSOs play a very active role in co-facilitating the process, proposing meetings and activities and providing inputs and expertise. Strong civil society participation is based on the existence of an autonomous and well-organized CSO platform.
- The multi-actor platform and steering committee have increased the recognition of social movements and CSOs as key actors to address tenure issues, based on their expertise and credibility.
- Both the Tenure Guidelines as well as the platform for their implementation have been instrumental to bring discussions on legal reforms forward, by providing a space for consultation and dialogue.
- The multi-actor platform has established a more consistent state-civil society interaction on tenure-related issues.

Also in Senegal, the establishment of a multi-actor platform to support the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines took place in the context of civil society mobilization against land grabbing and advocacy for a new legal framework on land. Indeed, established in 2014, the platform builds upon a process of organization of CSOs and interaction with the government, which had been going on for several years. Resistance and mobilization against land grabbing (in the context of agribusiness activities, mining, and urbanization) go back to at least 2010, when several peasant organizations and other CSOs created a civil society platform against land grabbing and for a participatory process of tenure reform, called Cadre de Réflexion et d’Action sur le foncier au Sénégal (CRAFS). In parallel, the national platform of peasant organizations (Comité National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux, CNCR13) participated in the process, which led to the adoption of the Tenure Guidelines. After their adoption in 2012, CNCR and other CSOs, including the research institute IPAR (Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale), took up a series of activities aiming at pushing for the implementation of the Guidelines in Senegal. These activities included distribution of the Guidelines and awareness raising, capacity development, creation of easy-access materials and translation into local languages, cases studies, advocacy etc. The support of discussions on how to apply the Tenure Guidelines in the national context led, among others, to the development of a matrix to assess the existing legal framework against the Guidelines. CSOs were able to mobilize support from different partners for these activities, including by FAO and IFAD. The efforts and discussions on the implementation of the Guidelines in Senegal took place in the context of a process of legal reform, which started at around the same time and which provided a concrete entry point for advocacy.

The multi-actor platform on the Tenure Guidelines in Senegal is a big forum (with more than 100 participants) to debate tenure-related issues, which meets once a year and in which participants include state authorities (especially relevant ministries and local authorities),

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13 CNCR is a member of La Via Campesina and the West African platform of peasant organizations, ROPPA (Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest).
CSOs, research institutions, members of parliament and some private sector associations. The platform thus provides a space to discuss the big issues in the context of governance of tenure, define priorities and assess progress over the years. While the Tenure Guidelines are an important reference for the work of the platform, the guiding thread of discussions are the burning issues around tenure governance. The platform has, for instance, debated extensively on the reform of the national land law and has, more recently, addressed a proposed law on pastoralism. In addition to the platform as such, a steering committee has been created, which is composed by state authorities, CSOs and associations of local members of parliament. Co-chaired by the vice-minister of agriculture and the national peasant platform CNCR, the steering committee coordinates the operational work along the priority lines established by the multi-actor platform. The steering committee meets regularly between the annual meetings of the multi-actor platform and carries out joint activities. IPAR hosts the secretariat of the steering committee and CSOs play a very active role in co-facilitating the process, proposing meetings and activities and providing inputs and expertise. More recently, a technical committee has been created as a third level within the setup of the multi-actor platform, which is composed by some of the steering committee members (criteria for the participation in the technical committee are legitimacy and expertise; several members of parliament and associations of MPs are part of the committee) and which works on more technical issues, including the drafting of documents. All three levels of the multi-actor platform work on the basis of terms of reference, which have been developed by the members and which specify the scope and way of working of the different levels.

The multi-actor platform in Senegal has allowed peasant organizations and CSOs to bring burning issues in the context of tenure governance into a policy dialogue with state authorities and other actors. Discussions regarding tenure issues between state and civil society existed prior to the creation of the multi-actor platform, but the latter contributed to strengthen it and create a space for more regular discussions, based on clear and commonly accepted terms. According to CSOs in Senegal, both the Tenure Guidelines as well as the platform for their implementation have been instrumental to bring discussions on legal reforms forward. Government programs have integrated several key principles of the Guidelines, but their implementation remains a challenge, including ensuring accountability. The three levels of action within the multi-actor platform have allowed for a dynamic state-CSO interaction on tenure issues, with the steering committee being the central piece to follow-up on the broad recommendations of the high-level deliberations within the multi-actor platforms.

The active and good participation of peasant organizations and other CSOs in the multi-actor platforms is based to a large extent on the existence of an autonomous and well-organized CSO platform – which, as has been said, predates the creation of the multi-actor platform – which provides a frame to discuss and agree on common CSO positions, which are then brought to the multi-actor platform. Indeed, CSOs have played an important role in setting up the platform and ensuring its day-to-day work, including by developing tools, bringing up issues and proposals and by taking an active role in facilitating meetings and the production of recommendations and documents. This has also contributed to increasing the recognition of CSOs as a relevant actor to address tenure issues, based on their expertise – which builds upon long-standing work on tenure issues with communities – and credibility, which is based on their capacity to bring in concrete proposals. CSO representatives from Senegal underline in this context that it has, for instance, become accepted practice that CSOs propose and facilitate high-level meetings.

The multi-actor platform has, in particular, played an important role in the process of a reform process of the national land law, by providing a space for consultation and dialogue. From a CSO perspective, it has also allowed to consolidate CSO proposals and bring them more strongly into the debate. In this context, the Tenure Guidelines have provided an important reference to analyze existing frameworks as well as to strengthen proposals to address and overcome structural problems. The example of Senegal also shows that the Tenure Guidelines...
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can play a catalyzing role in national processes, opening up the possibility for more consistent state-civil society interaction, including by providing additional resources for both civil society and multi-actor activities.

3. Sierra Leone

Key points

- The establishment of a “multi-stakeholder” platform is part of a comprehensive donor-financed program for the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines in the context of a G7 land partnership with funding provided by Germany and the technical support by FAO.
- The platform convenes once a year and has an advisory role. It includes the government of Sierra Leone, UN agencies, CSOs, NGOs and INGOs (including development partners), traditional leaders, land owners, the private sector and “representatives of tenure right holders.
- A technical working group as well as an inter-ministerial committee have been created to ensure follow-up between the annual sessions. The work of the platform is coordinated by the national VGGT Secretariat, which is hosted by the Ministry of Lands and the Environment.
- One of the bases of the platform’s work is an assessment of the national legal framework, which was produced based on the World Bank’s Land Government Assessment Framework (LGAF).
- The platform has created a space for policy dialogue between the state and civil society on tenure issues, which did not exist like that before. However, CSO voices are mainly brought in by NGOs and representatives of the groups most affected by tenure insecurity participate only to a limited extent.
- The platform has provided a space to discuss tenure-related policies, allowing CSOs to raise shortcomings contained in them, leading to their amendment.
- According to CSOs, there is a disconnect between the high-level policy debates in the “multi-stakeholder” platform on the one hand, and the reality of communities on the ground. Proposals made by CSOs to discuss concrete cases of land grabbing in the country within the platform have not been taken up by the government.

The case of Sierra Leone is somewhat different from Senegal and Mali in as much as the establishment of a “multi-stakeholder” platform is part of a comprehensive donor-financed program for the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines. Indeed, in the context of a G7 land partnership with funding provided by Germany and the technical support by FAO, the government of Sierra Leone has created an institutional framework, which consists of a “VGGT secretariat”, as well as a “multi-stakeholder” platform, a “multi-stakeholder” Technical Working Group, a Steering Committee and an Inter-Ministerial Task Force. CSOs working on land, water, food, gender and the environment were involved in the process leading to the establishment of the platform, bringing in their views into consultation workshops, which were organized by the government of Sierra Leone and FAO in 2014.

The “multi-stakeholder” platform, which convenes once a year and has an advisory role, includes the government of Sierra Leone (ministries and departments working on land, fisheries, and forests as well as decentralized government), UN agencies (such as FAO and UNDP) CSOs, NGOs and INGOs (including development partners), traditional leaders, land owners, the private sector and “representatives of tenure right holders.” Participation is, in principle, not restricted, but especially in the setting up phase, CSO participation was largely based on a number of CSOs that had been invited by FAO and the government. The platform has created a technical working group, which ensures follow-up between the annual sessions as well as an inter-ministerial committee. The composition of the participants in the technical working group is defined by the “multi-stakeholder” platform. The work of the platform, just as the overall

16 Ibid.
Tenure Guidelines implementation process is coordinated by the national VGGT Secretariat, which is hosted by the Ministry of Lands and the Environment. All members of the “multi-stakeholder” platform can bring in proposals for issues to be dealt with by the platform as well as contribute with proposals on how to address existing problems with regards to tenure governance.

Since its establishment, the platform has provided a space to discuss tenure issues as well as ongoing processes in the context of tenure governance. Some of these processes were initiated outside and previously to the creation of the platform, such as an assessment of the national legal framework, which was produced based on the World Bank’s Land Government Assessment Framework (LGAF). Also the development of two important documents, the National Land Policy and the Fisheries Bill had already advanced when the platform was established. However, the platform provided a space to discuss these policies, including allowing CSOs to raise shortcomings contained in them, leading to their amendment. As such, the Tenure Guidelines implementation program in Sierra Leone and the platform have created a space for policy dialogue, which did not exist like that before. CSO representatives state that discussion of tenure issues with state authorities was much more difficult prior to the setting up of the platform and that the interaction between CSOs and different ministries and departments has since improved substantially. However, they also underline that the achievements have not yet led to substantial changes on the ground, in particular to secure the tenure insecurity of affected communities. It is clear that implementation of policies and laws requires time, but so far there is still a disconnect between the high-level policy debates in the “multi-stakeholder” platform on the one hand, and the reality of communities on the ground. Proposals made by CSOs to discuss concrete cases of land grabbing in the country within the platform and seek to contribute to the resolution of conflicts within the created institutional framework have so far not been taken up by the government. Related to this, representatives of the groups most affected by tenure insecurity participate only to a limited extent in the “multi-stakeholder” platform and CSO voices are still mainly brought in by NGOs.
4. Argentina

**Key points**

- The national round table for dialogue on agriculture is the result of an initiative of the National Peasant and Indigenous Peoples’ Movement, based on discussions with different actors, including the division on family farming of the agricultural ministry and the Catholic Church.

- Until its suspension in 2016, the national round table was hosted as a permanent commission by the sub-secretariat on family farming and rural development of the agriculture ministry and had regular meetings every two months. Smaller working groups ensure the follow-up between meetings.

- The platform’s work is guided by a “Declaration of agreement,” which includes the resolution and prevention of conflicts as well as assessments of the impact of public policies in the field of tenure and agriculture as objectives.

- The national platform builds on an experience in the province of Santiago del Estero in the north of Argentina, where the local peasant organization has established a regular dialogue with the provincial government to address evictions and deforestation.

- Provincial round tables have been created in eleven provinces, some of which have a high record of tenure-related conflicts. These round tables continue their work despite the suspension of the national platform.

- Missions to conflict sites have taken place in three provinces, allowing members to understand the realities of communities as well as the impacts of different production models. Interventions regarding acute situations of conflicts and violence have been one of the results of these missions.

- The national round table has been an important space in the process of the elaboration of a national law on family agriculture, for which the Tenure Guidelines have been a key reference.

The setting up of a national round table for dialogue on agriculture in Argentina was the result of an initiative of the National Peasant and Indigenous Peoples’ Movement (Movimiento Nacional Campesino e Indígena, MNCI) in the context of discussions with different actors about how to address increasing violence and conflicts in rural areas. After discussions of MNCI representatives with the Sub-secretariat on family farming and rural development (hosted in the agricultural ministry) as well as with the Catholic Church, the “National dialogue round table for the sustainable development of family, peasant and indigenous agriculture” (Mesa Nacional de Diálogo para el Desarrollo Sustentable de la Agricultura Familiar, Campesina e Indígena) was eventually established in May 2013. This round table builds on an experience in the province of Santiago del Estero in the north of Argentina, where the local peasant organization, the Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero (MoCaSE), had established a regular dialogue with the provincial government since 2006. The policy dialogue in Santiago del Estero was established as one part of the MoCaSE’s struggle against evictions and deforestation, and for food sovereignty in the context of the advancement of monocultures and agribusiness in the Argentinian north. In 2010, the provincial Dialogue round table for Land and Production (Mesa de Diálogo por la Tierra y la Producción) was formally established by the provincial government, with the mandate to discuss issues related to land conflicts, the identification of tenure rights, land use, agricultural policies and production models. As part of this provincial round table, an emergency committee was put in place in order to address cases of violent conflicts. During the inception meeting of the national round table, participants explicitly referred to the experience in Santiago del Estero as an important source of inspiration and reference for the national process and encouraged the creation of more round tables at provincial level.

17 For more information please see: [http://redaf.org.ar/santiago-del-estero-una-mesa-de-dialogo-por-la-tierra-para-campesinos-organizados](http://redaf.org.ar/santiago-del-estero-una-mesa-de-dialogo-por-la-tierra-para-campesinos-organizados)
The national round table is hosted by the sub-secretariat on family farming and rural development of the agriculture ministry and is a permanent commission, which is co-coordinated by the ministry and the social pastoral of the Catholic Church. However, social movements and CSOs are actively involved in the functioning of the round table. In addition to these institutions, representatives of peasant, indigenous peoples’, youth and women’s organizations take part in the dialogue and working sessions, as well as representatives of some agribusiness companies. The round table has regular meetings every two months. Between these meetings, smaller working groups ensure the follow-up on decisions. In a “Declaration of agreement,” which was approved during the first meeting, the national round table establishes as its objectives to i) share knowledge of good practices of diverse production models and the transformation process in the context of the expansion of the agricultural frontier; ii) the identification, peaceful resolution and prevention of situations of conflict; and iii) assessments of the impact of public policies in the field of tenure and agriculture. The document explicitly underlines the importance of peasant farming systems for sustainable development, local economies and local food systems. The regular sessions of the national round tables take place in different provinces each time, in order to encourage local dialogue processes and involve provincial governments. A concrete result has been the creation of provincial round tables in eleven provinces, some of which have a high record of tenure-related conflicts. Importantly, several field visits to conflict sites have been organized around the sessions of the national round table. “Observation missions” have taken place in the provinces of Santiago del Estero (2014), Salta (2014) and Chaco (2015), allowing members to understand the realities of communities as well as the impacts of different production models, such as the consequences for local people and communities of the spraying of agrochemicals in the context of industrial monoculture production.

It should be mentioned that the functioning of the national round table was suspended in 2016, in the context of a reorientation of public policies of a new national government. However, round tables in several provinces continue to work, not least because of the strong demand by food producers’ organizations and CSOs.

The national round table as well as the creation of policy dialogue spaces at provincial level has been an important means for social movements and CSOs to engage with state authorities at different levels in order to address burning issues related to tenure. In particular the fact that meetings are held in different places and include field visits has allowed for a strong engagement of affected communities as people, including indigenous peoples who are among the most marginalized groups. The link of deliberations within the round table and the reality on the ground is exemplified by several interventions regarding acute situations of conflicts and violence. Outcomes of the session have, among others, been public interventions by the actors of the round table vis-à-vis local authorities and the judiciary – for instance leading to the stopping of an ongoing eviction –, the public denunciation of indiscriminate spraying of agrochemicals, the putting in place of mechanisms in order to clarify existing land rights and recognize informal tenure rights as well as the discussion of planned provincial laws (e.g. a law on land banks in the Chaco province). These concrete interventions have also allowed to open up a public discussion on the model of production and, concretely, the questioning of the agro-industrial model. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Argentinian experience goes beyond tenure issues in the strict sense, and links them to issues such as the use of agro-chemicals as well as the promotion of local markets, rural development and family businesses.

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18 This sub-secretariat was given the status of a secretariat in 2014. Since 2017, it has again the status of a sub-secretariat.
19 The participation of the private sector in the round table is facilitated by the Catholic Church.
20 Argentina is a federal republic in which the provinces have their own laws and the implementation of national laws at provincial level may vary from one place to another.
21 Provincial round tables have been created in the following provinces: Misiones, Formosa, Neuquén, Salta, Jujuy, San Juan, Chaco, Santiago del Estero, Corrientes, La Rioja, Catamarca.
farming. The national round table also has been an important space in the process of the elaboration of the national law on “Historic reparation for family agriculture for the construction of a new rurality in Argentina” (approved by the national parliament in 2015) as well as its implementation. The Tenure Guidelines have been an important reference for the elaboration of this law, as well as the setting up and work of the round tables.

In addition to this, the round tables have improved the dialogue and collaboration with universities and research institutions as well as technical state agencies, which play a role in implementing policies. The involvement of representatives of the agribusiness sector has allowed framing the debate on different models of production around the real impacts on the ground, leading to the recognition by some companies that some agribusiness actors have violated the law and abused of the rights of affected people.

An interesting feature of the process in Argentina is that the national round table has triggered processes at provincial level, leading to the creation of round tables at local level. At the same time, the national process has fed into a process of policy dialogue at the supra-national level, namely the REAF (Reunión Especializada en Agricultura Familiar/Special Meeting on Family Farming) of the Mercosur space. The grounding in local processes and the strong ownership of social movements and CSOs has also facilitated the sustainability of the round tables at provincial level despite a political change at national level, which led to the suspension of the national process. The latest example of the dynamic that has been created is the call for a round table for dialogue in the province of Río Negro, in order to end violence in the context of land claims by indigenous Mapuche communities in that province.

5. Uruguay

The experience of the round tables for rural development (mesas de desarrollo rural) predates the approval of the Tenure Guidelines and their functioning is not explicitly linked to the implementation of the Guidelines. However, they provide a relevant experience in the context of participatory local governance in the context of tenure. Differently from the other examples described in this paper, the round tables for rural development are formalized by a law (law 18.126 from 2007), which calls for their establishment in all 19 departments of the country. The creation of the round tables took place in a context of a series of policy reforms starting in 2005, which aim, among others, at establishing a more direct interaction between state and non-state actors, in particular CSOs. These policy reforms also take place in a context of decentralization, which gives bigger weight to decision-making and implementation of policies at sub-national level. The round tables are thus part of an institutionalized public governance framework, which connects local and national governance bodies in the field of agriculture, including tenure-related issues. While initially one round table per department was created, as of today, around 40 round tables exist throughout the 19 departments of the country.

Participants to the round tables for rural development include national state authorities (in particular representatives of the ministry of agriculture, breeding and fisheries as well as of the national institute for colonization, the institution in charge of agrarian reform), regional government, cooperatives, food producers’ organizations – in particular organizations of family farmers – and agricultural workers’ organizations. As of the rules of procedure, only formalized

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23 Ley N° 27.118 titulada “Reparación Histórica de la Agricultura Familiar para la Construcción de una Nueva Ruralidad en la Argentina.” Available at: http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/240000-244999/241352/norma.htm. This law is, however not applied at provincial level.


25 Other parts of this framework include the national council for agriculture (Consejo Agropecuario Nacional) as well as regional councils (Consejos Agropuecuarios Departamentales).
organizations are entitled to participate, but the practice is more flexible, taking into account the fact that the most marginalized cannot always easily establish organizations and thus allowing for a much broader participation. The meetings of the round tables are convened by the local representation of the ministry of agriculture, breeding and fisheries and take place once a month or once every two months, depending on the dynamic in the respective department.

As of the law, which creates them, the round tables are to contribute to the implementation of national policies, the better inclusion and participation of CSOs and in particular of food producers’ organization in local governance and the improvement of the articulation between state and non-state actors. They provide a space for regular exchange, information and consultation as well as training. The topics debated in the round tables are relatively broad and include agricultural production, housing issues, health, water, education and capacity building and mining. In the context of tenure governance, it is particularly relevant to mention that the round tables also provide an interface in the context of Uruguay’s land reform policy,26 for instance by identifying needs as well as individuals and groups who lack access to land and are eligible to receive land.

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The Uruguayan land law establishes the creation of the national institution for colonization, which is mandated to buy lands and make them available to groups and individuals who need land and are eligible to benefit from the land reform scheme.

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IV. Towards some key criteria to ensure meaningful participation of civil society in tenure governance

The examples presented in the previous section show that policy dialogue spaces can contribute to more participatory and democratic decision-making in the context of tenure governance. The creation of such spaces can establish and/or strengthen interaction between state authorities at different levels and those most affected by tenure insecurity. Platforms or dialogue spaces can provide a space for exchange of information, debate, analysis of challenges and definition of priorities, legal and policy reform as well as monitoring and accountability. Concrete outcomes – e.g. in the form of new policies and laws, which address key issues, or the resolution of conflicts – in several of the mentioned examples point to the potential to support the improvement of tenure governance.

The Tenure Guidelines can be – and have been in some cases – a tool, which may trigger such processes and outcomes. As some of the examples show, the adoption of the Guidelines has contributed to strengthening the articulation of social movements and CSOs and to an opening-up vis-à-vis more participatory governance approaches by some governments. The Guidelines also provide clear principles in this regard, which have been used by CSOs to shape the scope and functioning of dialogue spaces so that they serve the needs and rights of the most marginalized. Finally, the Tenure Guidelines have opened up the possibility to mobilize additional resources, which are needed to trigger processes and ensure their sustainability.

However, the creation and/or existence of policy dialogue spaces or platform alone does not automatically generate an inclusive, equitable, transparent and accountable process, nor produce outcomes geared towards the rights and needs of the most marginalized groups, as stipulated by the Guidelines. In order to achieve such results, policy dialogue spaces need to fulfil to certain criteria/parameters. What follows are some elements, which should be considered in the context of establishing or analyzing such spaces. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the specific national/local/regional context will have to be taken into account when considering these general recommendations.

1) The active role of social movements and CSOs in the creation and functioning of policy dialogue spaces is a key factor for good processes and outcomes. Several of the examples described above show that bottom-up processes leading to the establishment of a platform or space are more likely to ensure adequate participation of the groups most affected by tenure insecurity and those most marginalized. This is key in the context of the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines, which explicitly stipulate that their paramount objective is to improve governance of tenure for these groups (para. 1.1). The participation of these groups needs to be ensured at all stages, including the setting up and definition of the scope and working procedures, the definition of priorities and topics to be discussed, the operational work of the space/platform as well as monitoring. Special attention needs to be given to gender equality and the participation of women and women’s organizations.

2) The participation of representatives of the most marginalized groups and those most affected by tenure insecurity is a key component of human rights-based governance. As explained above, civil society participation in decision-making processes is crucial to achieve governance that is more democratic. Special attention needs to be given to the adequate representation and participation of the named groups, respecting their forms of organizing and of defining positions. Generic reference to “civil society” should not lead to rendering invisible the difference between, for instance, social movements and NGOs and, consequently, their legitimacy. Some of the examples above show that policy dialogue spaces have particularly good outcomes where the organizations representing those most affected by tenure insecurity play an active role in the governance structure of such spaces (e.g. the national platforms of peasant organizations in Mali and Senegal), provided that the state remains accountable for policy decisions (see point 4).
Given the high degree of violence against defenders of land and environmental rights, it needs to be ensured that the mentioned groups and/or their representatives can participate in policy dialogue spaces without security risks.

3) In order for social movements and CSOs to be able to participate effectively in policy dialogue spaces and in order to trigger outcomes geared towards the rights and needs of people and communities, they need to be able to organize autonomously. As shown by several of the examples described above, autonomous and strong organization of CSOs improves their capacity to participate on an equal footing in dialogues and to voice their concerns and proposals. In some countries, CSOs are well organized, while in others the degree of articulation and coordination among CSOs is much lower. This needs to be taken into account when establishing policy dialogue spaces and platforms. Strengthening social movements and CSOs as well their networks needs to be an explicit objective of such spaces.

4) Social movements and CSOs engage in dialogues with state authorities in order to improve democratic decision-making and to achieve outcomes that respect, protect and advance the rights of people and communities. Human rights-based governance is based on a clear accountability framework, which frames the engagement of organizations of rights-holders with state authorities (duty-bearers). Policy dialogue spaces need to be based on this principle, which is reflected by the strong anchoring of the Tenure Guidelines in human rights. Monitoring is a key component of accountability and should therefore be part of the work of policy dialogue spaces and platforms, based on the accountability of states to their people as well as states’ human rights obligations.

5) In cases where other actors than CSOs (as organizations of rights-holders) and state authorities (duty-bearers) participate in policy dialogue spaces, the distinct role of such actors need to be clearly defined and differentiated. In the human rights framework, actors such as academia, the private sector, international NGOs, UN agencies, religious institutions etc. are third parties, which have different responsibilities. The examples presented above show that the participation of some of these actors (e.g. academia and UN agencies) can improve the work of dialogue spaces if they respect their supporting role in decision-making processes. Also reaching out to the judicial sector can be a crucial element of the work of such platforms, given that access to justice by affected people and communities in the context of tenure conflicts is a big challenge in many countries and that judicial authorities sometimes lack understanding of tenure issues, e.g. of customary tenure systems. The contribution that policy dialogue spaces and platforms may provide to conflict resolution should, however, not replace judicial remedies. As underlined by the Tenure Guidelines, the provision of access through impartial and competent judicial and administrative bodies to timely, affordable and effective means of resolving disputes over tenure rights, as well as to effective and promptly enforced remedies is part of states’ obligations and human rights-based governance.

The clear distinction of roles is particularly important where the corporate sector participates in multi-actor platforms. While the Argentinian example shows that participation of agribusiness companies in deliberations can open up an evidence-based discussion on different production models and contribute to prevent violence in existing conflicts, corporations’ role in decision-making and governance needs to be clearly distinguished and regulated, based on the human rights framework. Proponents of “multi-stakeholderism” sometimes call for the need to maintain the “balance” between the points of view of different actors, e.g. between small-scale food producers and agribusiness companies. However, human rights-based governance requires giving priority to the most marginalized groups, which is different from putting “consensus outcomes” as the only possible way of moving forward. Especially in the context of tenure of natural resources, interest and visions of different actors necessarily differ and putting too much emphasis on “balance” and “consensus” will de facto play into the hands of those actors who are more powerful and have more resources at their disposal.
In order to advance human rights-based governance of tenure, policy dialogue spaces need to be geared towards outcomes, which benefit the most marginalized groups and those most affected by tenure insecurity and human rights violations. This requires that the issues, which are a priority for these groups need to be taken into account when establishing the priorities of the space and put at the center of discussions and activities. It has been said that the Tenure Guidelines and processes for their implementation have in some cases been an important reference to trigger processes geared towards improving state-society dialogue on tenure issues, including through the establishment or strengthening of policy dialogue spaces. However, the scope of such spaces should not be limited to “Tenure Guidelines implementation” as such, but should aim at addressing burning tenure issues. The Tenure Guidelines are not an end in themselves, but an instrument providing guidance to advance human rights-based governance of tenure.

The described examples show that one key factor to make policy dialogue spaces and platforms successful is to ensure that the discussion and activities are linked to the realities of communities and people on the ground. For this to happen, these groups need to have a say in defining the priorities and can participate in the discussions (see 1 and 2). However, as the examples of Mali and Argentina show, the connection between policy-level deliberations and the realities of people also needs to be made by the working procedures of the spaces or platforms, e.g. by conducting field visits to conflict sites. This opens up the possibility that the spaces or platforms can play a supporting role to resolve existing and to prevent further conflicts.

Without a connection to the realities of those who are most affected by tenure insecurity and existing tenure problems, discussions in such spaces risk to remain confined to the policy level with little to no impact on the ground. This connection is also a key factor when it comes to the implementation of decisions and political and/or legal frameworks. Based on the examples presented above, technical working groups, which are formed within policy dialogue spaces and coordinate the operational work, can be a means to ensure the connection with realities on the ground. Apart from the already mentioned field visits, also the inclusion of local actors, such as local authorities, members of parliament etc., can support the anchoring of policy debates within such spaces in the reality of people and communities. The involvement of local actors can also support implementation of decisions as well as monitoring.

Based on the examples described in this paper, the degree of formalization of policy dialogue spaces is not necessarily a decisive factor for their contribution to improving tenure governance. In fact, only the round-tables for rural development in Uruguay are formalized through a legal framework, which establishes them as part of decentralized public governance. However, apart from the need for clear and commonly accepted working procedures/terms of reference, it is important that the relation between a policy dialogue space or platform and other existing decision-making spaces and processes is clearly defined. This is also crucial in order to ensure accountability of such spaces. In this context, it is important to ensure that dialogue spaces and platforms do not replace or weaken other (more) legitimate democratic decision-making processes/spaces (such as parliamentary processes), but rather complement these. At the same time, it also needs to be ensured that they do not lead to the creation of artificial spaces with no links to decision-making processes, which detract resources (in time, funding and energy) away from other (more) legitimate spaces of democratic decision-making.
V. Conclusions

This paper has shown that there is a big variety of policy dialogue spaces and platforms in the context of tenure governance, which differ substantially with regards to how they have been created, what their objectives are, who participates in them, the way they operate and function, as well their relation to decision-making processes. This points to the fact there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating more democratic policy-making. Indeed, setting up multi-actor platforms without taking into account the specific context and existing power relations will not contribute to more inclusive, equitable, transparent and accountable governance, nor lead to outcomes that advance the rights of the groups most affected by tenure insecurity. Tenure governance is a complex and contentious issue because it deals with relations of power and social justice. Democratizing it requires processes that put the rights, needs and aspirations of communities and the most marginalized on center stage. Their meaningful participation in decision making and policy processes is one key aspect in this regard.

This paper cannot provide a comprehensive check list, but the criteria provided should be taken into account by States, FAO and other actors when they decide to support policy dialogue spaces and multi-actor platforms.