



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



FIG Academic Members Forum: Strengthening land governance in professional surveying curricula and academic research.

FIG and land governance

For many years Land Governance has been one of the main themes within FIG. In 2009, FIG together with the World Bank hosted the conference on “*Land Governance in Support of the Millennium Development Goals: Responding to New Challenges*”. This resulted in FIG’s policy statement on Land Governance (WB/FIG, 2010). Many FIG events and initiatives supporting good land governance followed and resulted in several publications such as the recent FIG publication ‘Fit-for-Purpose Land Administration’ (FIG/WB, 2015). Land governance continued to be an essential element in FIG’s Work Plan for 2015 – 2018.

The VGGT

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security are a means to an end: They present an unprecedented international soft law instrument that is a reference for work to ensure that people benefit from secure and equitable tenure rights. The VGGT were prepared through negotiations by governments of countries from all regions of the world. The negotiations included participation by representatives of civil society, private sector and research institutes including FIG. The VGGT were endorsed in May 2012 and since then implementation has been encouraged by G7, G20, Rio+ 20, United Nations General Assembly and Francophone Assembly of Parliamentarians.

FAO and FIG and the VGGT

FIG works closely together with FAO within the framework of implementing the VGGT. During the FIG Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in June 2014, the Members of the FIG Academic Forum agreed that the academic bodies have a role to play in advocating and implementing the VGGT; in mainstreaming them into academic programmes and research and that they should recognize their role as change agents. At the same time members, noted the need for guidance and support in doing this.

FAO and FIG joined forces again during the FIG Working Week, in Christchurch, New Zealand, May 2016. The session of the Academic Members Forum was dedicated to the VGGT with the intention to make a further step in the implementation of the VGGT in our surveying education and research.

Online discussion - Building on Kuala Lumpur, preparing for Christchurch, 18 April 2016

In preparation of the Academic Forum Session during the FIG Working Week in Christchurch an online meeting was organized on Monday, 18 April. Facilitated by FAO and guided by the chair of FIG Commission 2, 7 academic members addressed the following issues:

- take stock of actions taken;
- identify additional requirements to support the inclusion of the VGGT into curricula and research
- propose key issues to be addressed in the FIG Academic Members Forum in Christchurch

All participants in the online meeting implement the VGGT in their university education. The VGGT are part of the curriculum in different domains, ranging from geomatic and geo-informatics, land administration and land management, real estate or land governance oriented programs. At the same time the subject is offered at different levels from undergraduate to PhD programs. A range of teaching methods is applied, fitting several learning levels and objectives.

Further the Academic Members proposed issues to be discussed in detail during the Academic Forum Session in Christchurch. The outcome of this meeting is summarized as follows¹:

1. Curriculum development and implementation

- For what type of programs?
- What are the professional needs and related skill sets?
- How to deal with the VGGT in different learning contexts?
- VGGT, FIG and GLTN integrational approach.
- Course Materials availability.

2. Research

- Empirical research
 - Measuring the impact of the VGGT.
 - The meaning of the concepts in the VGGT: do they mean the same for everybody?
 - How do the VGGT relate to the Sustainable Development Goals?
- Learning from practice
 - Do we have examples of VGGT implementation and its impact; best practices? What can we do to ease the accessibility of such examples?
 - What research agenda can be defined based on the practical examples of VGGT implementation?

[FIG Academic Members Forum, 5th of May 2016. Strengthening land governance in professional surveying curricula and academic research.](#)

The FIG Academic Member Forum during the FIG Working Week in Christchurch took place on Thursday 05th of May 2016. The session was introduced by Paul Munro-Faure during his presentation on 'Materials and Opportunities' demonstrating FAO's technical guides on the VGGT, capacity development materials, learning programs (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mongolia and Nepal) and partnerships and stressed the role of Academia, Civil Society Organizations and the Private sector in supporting the application of the VGGT.

¹ More details in the summary of the online meeting: FIG Academic Members' Forum: Online discussion - Building on Kuala Lumpur, preparing for Christchurch, Monday, 18 April 1-3 p.m.

This was followed by a short overview of the status of the project on the GLTN Curriculum Responsible Land Governance. The session was further dedicated to work out one or more of the issues identified during the online Academic Forum Meeting of 18th of April.

Outcome

One of the key outcomes of the discussion was the centrality of the relationship between National Associations and Academic Members to the successful application of the VGGT as is illustrated in the following graph:

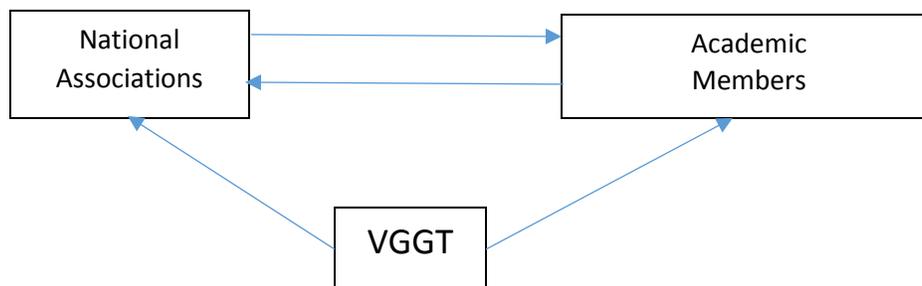


Figure 1 The relation between National Associations and Academic Members in the application of the VGGT.

In addition, it was found important to define professional needs and skill sets in close collaboration with national associations. On the one hand, national associations inform academic and training institutions about the need to and purpose of including the VGGT in curricula and accredit programs. On the other hand, academic institutions play a role in informing national associations on the need to adhere to the VGGT in their work and in defining the professional needs and skills sets required by professionals in order for them to operate within the framework of the VGGT.

FIG Academic Members Working Group 'Exploring the VGGT in Practice'

In order to follow up on the outcomes of the Academic Members Forum in Christchurch, New Zealand and with the aim of exploring the VGGT from a surveying (and land professional) perspective, the Forum decided to form a working group. The working group will conduct exploratory research to assess practical examples of VGGT implementation in different countries, which could eventually result in a position paper. The working group intends to present the first outcome of their exploratory study during the FIG Working Week in Helsinki. FAO will be happy to discuss possibilities to support the FIG Academic Members in this initiative.

Working Group Members		
Academic Member	Institution	E-mail
Walter de Vries	Technische Universität München, Germany	wt.de-vries@tum.de
Chethna Ben	School of Land Management and Development, Faculty of Business and Economics, FIJI	chethna.ben@usp.ac.fj
Mohsen Kalantari	Melbourne School of Engineering, Australia	mohsen.kalantari@unimelb.edu.au
Liz Groenendijk	ITC -University of Twente, The Netherlands	e.m.c.groenendijk@itc.nl

Figure 2. Academic Members Working Group ‘Exploring the VGGT in Practice’

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has received more than 60 submissions illustrating the application and impacts of the VGGT following its call for inputs into the forthcoming October CFS session. It is anticipated that these will be made public at some point and they are likely to be a very useful resource from an academic perspective both as a resource and as an indication of potential research directions.

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