

SECURING LAND TENURE IN SENEGAL

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Country: **Senegal** - Principal Organisation: **IFAD**

ABSTRACT

IFAD's agricultural development project in Matam (PRODAM) has contributed to securing land tenure by supporting the "one household, one hectare" principle in the allocation of land in village irrigation schemes and facilitating the establishment of pastoral units responsible for the management of pastoral

resources. The project granted access to land in irrigated areas to returnees and dispossessed people by regrouping the people and redistributing land to all families living in the villages.

ILC COMMITMENTS



**SECURE
TENURE RIGHTS**



**INCLUSIVE
DECISION-MAKING**

COMPETENCIES

AREAS

RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE

SKILLS

ESTABLISHMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

2

BACKGROUND

The project area is located in the Matam region, on the Senegalese border with Mauritania, where the population consists of rural households practising agriculture, livestock production, and, less often, river fishing. In the 50 years since independence, Senegal has pursued a decentralised model of governance, granting additional powers to democratically elected local bodies, including rural

councils and water user associations. In many communities, rural hierarchies are based on family lineage, religion, and political party membership. These rural governance structures dominate and control access to and rights over natural resources. Veto powers retained by the central government create challenges to rural land governance.

THE CHALLENGE

While the potential for intensification of agriculture is high, farmers and livestock owners in the region face challenges that include increasing demographic pressure, insecure land tenure, soil and pasture degradation, and changes in policy. In recent decades, a dramatic decline in rainfall (from 496mm to 250mm per year) and changes in the flood pattern of the

Senegal River have increased economic insecurity and poverty for families living in this area. Living conditions in the Matam region worsened following the repatriation and resettlement of 7,000 conflict refugees in 1989.





OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

The agricultural development project in Matam (PRODAM, or *Projet de développement agricole de Matam*) contributed to improving land tenure security by supporting the “one household, one hectare” principle for the allocation of land in village irrigation schemes (French acronym PIV) and the establishment of pastoral units responsible for the management of pastoral resources. In order to guarantee land access in irrigated areas for returnees and dispossessed people, PRODAM facilitated the redistribution of land amongst all the families living in each village. Each household received one irrigated plot of up to one hectare, with the actual size calculated on the basis of the household’s operating capacity. The process was led by chiefs and facilitated by committees of elders, with support from the project. PRODAM made it clear that it would not go ahead with irrigation infrastructure works unless an agreement was made at village level.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

More than 3,000 hectares of PIVs were rehabilitated by PRODAM, of which 100 hectares were set aside for women’s groups. On average, households managed to quadruple the size of the plot they used for agricultural production, due to improved access to water. Not only did the project help to improve the land tenure security of more vulnerable groups, namely women and dispossessed people; it also indirectly succeeded in enabling them to participate in broader decision-making processes. With support for people to organise themselves into economic interest groups (French acronym GIE) and to strengthen their skills, management of the PIVs has become easier and problems are being addressed more effectively (e.g. mobilising credit to pay for repair works).

THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS



1

Socio-economic study: PRODAM carried out a basic socio-economic study to determine the number of target families and the areas to be irrigated (on the basis of one hectare per household), followed by a feasibility study for the irrigation scheme.

2

Irrigation works consensus: In a process led by chiefs of villages and committees of elders, and supported by PRODAM, agreements were reached at the village level regarding irrigation infrastructure works. In this way, the project enabled communities to participate in broader decision-making processes.

3

Regrouping and redistribution of land: PRODAM facilitated the regrouping and redistribution of land amongst all the families living in each village. The inhabitants of the village decided on how to distribute the plots in the PIVs, the exact definition of a household, and the households that fell into this category.

4

Gender focus: Special attention was paid to ensuring that women were also recognised as land owners. PRODAM supported the allocation of 100 hectares of rehabilitated PIVs to women's groups. The project's gender focus also meant that the federation of economic interest groups (GIEs) included 58 women's groups.

5

Engagement of beneficiaries in lighter construction work: A construction company was engaged to carry out the heavy infrastructure work, but farmers received training on the operation and maintenance of water supply infrastructure, as well as support in establishing rules for the use of PIVs.



3 THREE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

1

Participatory decision-making: The inhabitants of the villages themselves decided how to distribute plots in the PIVs, the exact definition of a household, and the households that fell into this category.

2

Gender mainstreaming: Special attention was given to recognizing women as land owners. Focusing on the socio-economic challenges that women face, the project supported the allocation of land to women's groups.

3

Immediate needs of the community: The region is facing reduced flood patterns caused by the Manantali dam upstream, which has resulted in less flood recession farming, less fishing, and the drying up of many wells. As a result, more households are interested in irrigated agriculture.

5

LESSONS LEARNED

Some key lessons include the importance of identifying strategies that promote more equitable access to water and irrigated land, depending on the local situation and in coordination with the community. It became evident that allocating plots of

the same size to every household was unfair and inequitable. The needs of a family with 20 members are different from one with only five members.

Community irrigation infrastructure requires agreements on

maintenance, management of operations, book-keeping, and adherence to democratic usage. Some GIEs and PIVs experienced difficulties in maintaining the infrastructure; these challenges are being addressed through joint planning.

FIND OUT MORE

Jonckheere, S. and Liversage, H. (2017). "Inclusive land and water governance: experiences from Mauritania and Senegal". Paper presented at the World Bank Land and Poverty Conference 2017. Washington DC, USA, 20–24 March 2017.