

Results from land tenure formalization activities in the Senegal River valley: a mixed-methods evaluation at medium-term

In 2015, the Senegal government completed a five-year project of land tenure formalization, registration and land tenure management capacity building, which was combined with activities of irrigation, drainage and road system construction in nine communes (municipalities) in the Senegal River Valley. The Irrigation and Water Resource Management (IWRM) project was undertaken with assistance from the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation. It was one of a series of similar projects that have been carried out over the years in the primary zones for irrigated cultivation in the Senegal River Valley delta.

The MCC-funded project was similar to the other international assisted projects in providing for post-project evaluation to help determine and measure the impacts and outcomes of the activities, provide lessons, and help insure the sustainability of the capital investments, processes and reforms put into place by the project. An early stage evaluation of the outcomes and impacts was presented at the World Bank Land and Poverty Conference in 2016. It reported the measurements and findings from an initial quantitative analysis of project results, showing gains in the volume of formalized landholding rights including:

- Numbers of land parcels, documented and entered into the registries and computerized land information system (known as the SIF);
- Hectares of land, encompassed, with a total volume that exceeded the project targets;
- Newly-created irrigated land parcels with rights, allocated to new landholding entities and households;
- Revitalized landholding rights in lands previously abandoned or degraded.
- Volumes of land being cultivated in the main planting season, and increased size of parcels, being cultivated by the average household.

In addition, the early findings appeared to show that local citizens had gained a better understanding of the rights and benefits of land tenure formalization and they were coming forward in significant numbers to request the allocation of new parcels for cultivation or the formalization of parcels they already held informally or by custom.

The post-project tracking and evaluation has continued since 2015 and several activities of qualitative analysis have been added, making it possible to cross reference the statistical data and survey responses used for the impact and pre-post project evaluations with other information and insights gained from stakeholders, focus groups and review of registry and municipal documentation. This combination of evaluation methods is revealing a highly nuanced picture of differences in results, outputs and sustainability among the communal administrations and the beneficiary groups.

Some landholders report feeling more secure and confident in their rights, while others have not realized their expectations of improvement or opportunities. Citizens in some zones have continued to file applications, requesting the allocation of new parcels for cultivation or the formalization of rights in existing parcels. Elsewhere, the volume of citizen demands for land has declined. Some commune offices are carrying forward the routine work of receiving and

Preliminary results: not for citation or distribution

processing landholder applications and transaction documents, using the SIF and keeping the registries current. Other communes have been unable to sustain this activity.

The goal of the post-project evaluation has been to clarify and measure these differences and to identify factors of land conditions, location, previous history of land allocation or land arrangements, and local government structure and capabilities, which might account for the variations. Among the key findings of the evaluation conducted two years after the end of the project implementation are the following:

- In the project zone that received an extensive rehabilitation and improvement of the irrigation system, known as the “Delta” activity area, farm households concentrate their time, efforts and investment in rice farming during the main growing season. The irrigation project helped households access a steady flow of water and this has resulted in increased land under cultivation and increased yields and profits, but also has led to increases in the absolute costs of inputs for the main growing season.
- By contrast, however, off-farm work, counter-season cultivation and horticulture production has not increased, as the project had expected. Thus, household incomes from year-round activity has not increased significantly.
- Related to this result of concentration of rice production in the main growing season, the benefits of project activities for women have fallen short. In both the Delta activity area and the “Podor” activity area, which received a different but similar set of interventions, women are the primary producers of horticultural products. The project created a significant number of new women’s production groups with rights in land and access to irrigation for agricultural production. However, many of these groups have been unable to farm the land they received, particularly in the Podor project area; counter-season horticulture production has not proven financially viable.
- During and immediately after the project, communal officials and citizens consistently reported satisfaction with the methods of public education and broad public participation in planning and land decision-making. But because of budget and logistics restrictions, most commune administrations have not been able to sustain the activities of routine field visits and village meetings that helped to build confidence in land systems.

Our presentation focuses on the medium-term evaluation findings, focusing on the land-related outcomes in communes in, 1) the Delta Activity area, where the land tenure activities accompanied the construction of improved irrigation canals and drainage: (i) Gandon, which is adjacent to the urban municipality of Saint Louis and consequently has a real estate market influenced by urban development and land value gains; (ii) Ronkh, a more remote, low-density rural commune, where most residents and farmers were settled on the land in recent years as reclamation of wetlands for irrigated rice fields has taken place; 2) the Podor Activity area (i) Ndiayene Pendao, where the IWRM project created a new irrigated rice perimeter of 450 hectares and assisted the organization of 53 new farm enterprises (producer groups) which received the rights to the land parcels in the perimeter; and (ii) Guede, where the project included road construction and formalized land tenure rights but no irrigation or agricultural land development.

Preliminary results: not for citation or distribution

The variations of the situations of these four communes, which likely represent features found in other Senegalese communes of the lower Senegal River Valley, help to explain some of the differences in the quantitative outcomes and the perceptions of the citizens reported in the surveys carried out for the midterm evaluation.

Summary of preliminary findings (please do not cite or distribute)

- Policies for land use and the principles for land allocation are understood by officials in the communes we examined, and they were implemented during the LTSA project, but since the end of the compact, they have not been used as they were expected to be.
- Land management practices differed considerably by commune.
- The IWRM Project had a positive impact on households' knowledge of the deliberation process for obtaining land rights and led to households obtaining titles to their land in the communes included in the Delta Activity.
- For households in the Delta Activity area, the project did not change households' concerns about losing their land, and had no effect on the number of land conflicts, which was already quite low.
- The land use principles (POAS) are in use in the communes we studied and zone commissions are functioning in the commune that has received more recent funding from a donor project.
- Throughout the LTSA project area, customary land tenure is dominant, thus land "allocation" most often consists of formalizing customary claims, which creates barriers to land access for those without customary claims, such as women and landless residents.
- LTSA outreach, education, and land grants provided to GIEs and GPFs in the Ngalenka perimeter created strong demand for formalization but lack of funds to cover the costs of land survey, spatial arrangement and Rural Council administration have led to a backlog of applications.
- The land management database created as part of the LTSA is in some use by land offices, but is not routinely updated; lack of human and material resources limit its use.

Specific to the Podor Activity area:

- Households with land in the Ngalenka perimeter were less likely to report knowing the process for obtaining land titles at follow-up than at baseline. Since the project included an extensive educational outreach on new land titling procedures, it is possible this outcome reflects a decrease in confidence rather than in knowledge.
- Decisions about investment in the Ngalenka perimeter do not appear related to land security or concerns about conflict. Rather, farmers cultivate when the likelihood of a good harvest is highest-which is the hot season in Ngalenka, when water flow can be well regulated, credit is available, and other communal actors with land in the perimeter, under advice from the local agricultural extension agent, are also farming there.
- Women and landless residents received land in the Ngalenka perimeter: 10 percent of the land was allocated to each group. This is viewed as a very positive element of the project. However, women's groups have not been able to cultivate their preferred market garden crops, because

Preliminary results: not for citation or distribution

the costs for inputs, especially electricity to run pumps, exceed any potential profit for the small land area that would be cultivated.