



OUTCOME STORY FOR MALI

Facilitating women's access to land



Summary of the change

In Mali, women and youth play a significant role in land restoration and the development of agroforestry value chains. However, they face challenges related to access and ownership of land resources, as they often operate on family or communal land. To ensure equitable benefit sharing from restored ecosystems, it is essential to address the issue of women's access to land. In response, the Regreening Africa programmeⁱ and its partners have engaged in advocacy with local authorities, resulting in the acquisition of 30 two-hectare plots for 30 women's associations. These associations have received land registration certificates from local authorities, officially recognising these areas as their agroforestry parks where food trees such as shea, parkia, and moringa are grown.

ⁱ Regreening Africa is an ambitious five and a half year (2017-2023) programme supported by the European Union. Implemented by World Agroforestry (ICRAF) and a consortium of organisations including World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, Care and Sahel Eco, the programme aims to reverse land degradation among 500,000 households across 1 million hectares in eight Sub-Saharan African countries. By integrating trees into croplands, communal lands, and pastoral areas, Regreening Africa seeks to improve smallholder livelihoods, food security and resilience to climate change. The programme leverages science and research to measure impact, enhance social inclusion and livelihood efforts, and creates a sustainable enabling policy environment for land restoration at national and sub-national levels.





Context

In Mali, the land use sector, particularly agro-sylvo-pastoral resources, contributes significantly to the national economy and the livelihoods of rural communities. Non-timber forest products, such as shea or *nééré* (*Parkia biglobosa*), play a crucial role in generating income and acting as a safety net for communities, especially for women who rely on these products for household consumption and sale. However, the agroforestry parklands that host these valuable food trees are experiencing degradation, necessitating large-scale ecosystem restoration. Land-related issues, including access and ownership, are crucial factors that influence the successful upscaling of land restoration efforts (Regreening Africa 2022).



Officially, land in Mali is said to belong to the state, and various instruments, such as the Agricultural Orientation Law, 2006 ([Loi n° 06-045 portant loi d'orientation agricole](#)), and the Land Policy, 2014 ([Politique Foncière Agricole du Mali](#)), provide guidelines for land acquisition, management and security. The principle of equal rights to land is proclaimed for all citizens regardless of their sex, ethnicity, origin, or area of residence. However, in practice, state law is not fully implemented, and customary provisions often determine land access and control, particularly for productive lands used for agro-sylvo-pastoral purposes. Land tenure security remains a major issue, and women and youth face additional constraints as they typically access land indirectly through male figures or head of households. Productive land includes private family lands and communal lands that are under the custodianship of customary authorities. Land can be accessed through inheritance, borrowing, or purchasing from a third party.

However, women face challenges in inheriting land due to various reasons, such as marrying into a different lineage. Women and youth have the option to borrow or buy land, provided they can afford it, for their agricultural needs. In the context of land restoration activities, women and youth play a crucial role as the workforce, even though they lack secure access to land. They often engage in restoration activities on family lands, which raises questions about equity in restoration efforts and benefit sharing, as well as the long-term sustainability of these investments. Additionally, concerns arise when landowners restrict restoration activities such as tree planting, on borrowed land, as it may be perceived as a claim to land ownership.



Description of the outcome process

Women's associations were able to acquire plots of land from local authorities for their land restoration activities. These lands were registered under the names of the women's associations to provide greater security. This outcome was achieved through a multi-stakeholder advocacy process involving village chiefs and municipal authorities. Prior to the advocacy efforts, the Regreening Africa programme conducted a study to map land management practices, customs, and identify potential sources of conflict in the Tominian circle. Sensitisation of stakeholders, including local authorities at various levels (circle, municipal, village), took place.

Land management committees (COFOs) at the village level were trained on Mali's legal provisions regarding land management to strengthen their capacities and support the advocacy process. The women's associations also received capacity-building in business management and gendered communication in households and the community. Additionally, a campaign titled "One Woman, One Shea or Néré Tree" was launched to encourage women to grow these trees through direct seeding, assisted natural regeneration, or planting seedlings.

With programme support, 30 agroforestry parklands covering 60 hectares were restored for the value chain development of agroforestry products such as shea, *nééré*, cashew, and moringa. The 30 villages had already donated their land for the establishment of these parks. Thirteen women's associations have received land registration certificates from mayors, and the process is ongoing for the remaining women's groups. The mayors have pledged to expedite the certificate issuance process.



Significance of the outcome

This outcome represents a breakthrough in ensuring women's secured access and control over land resources. While individual socio-cultural barriers still limit land security for women, the acquisition of land by women's associations provides them with security and ownership over the areas for their activities, even beyond the programme's duration. The registration of lands with municipal authorities, surpassing the usual authorization from village chiefs, is another step forward for women's associations. This outcome also signifies a change in perceptions regarding women's relationships with land. Women's land rights are now recognized, although this recognition pertains to collective land ownership. Further work and advocacy are needed to secure women's individual land rights and ownership.

This improvement is crucial as it paves the way for land security for women, particularly in land restoration efforts and benefit sharing. The benefits from land restoration are usually long-term, and land security is essential to ensure that those investing in land restoration can benefit without the fear of losing their investments. Moreover, this outcome provides a roadmap for future land restoration programmes that prioritise women's land security.





Contribution of Regreening Africa

The Regreening Africa programme in Mali, through its implementation partners Sahel Eco and Oxfam, has provided the necessary funds and expertise that contributed to the success of the advocacy processes. The achievements can be seen through the land registration permits, meeting reports, and photographs of various activities.



Next steps

The next steps involve completing the land registration process and creating parklands for the remaining women's associations. Continued support from local advisory services, who have played a crucial role in training these women's associations, is essential beyond the completion of the programme's first phase. Municipal support is also important to ensure the secured land rights acquired by these women's associations are upheld and not questioned in the future.

Suggested citation

Regreening Africa. 2023. Outcome Story for Mali: Facilitating women's access to land. World Agroforestry, Nairobi, Kenya.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge Pierre Dembélé, Souleymane F. Doumbia and Mawa Karambiri for their contribution to this outcome story on women's land rights and access in Mali.

References

- ¹ Assemblée Nationale du Mali, Loi N° 06-045/ du 5 Septembre 2006, portant loi d'orientation Agricole au Mali.
- ² Ministère du developement rural. 2014. Politique foncière Agricole du Mali, Bamako, Mali.
- ³ Regreening Africa. 2022. Prioritizing gender inclusion and agency in land restoration. Insights Series volume 1. World Agroforestry, Nairobi, Kenya.



Regreening Africa



www.regreeningafrica.org



twitter.com/RegreenAfrica



www.facebook.com/RegreenAfrica