

Supporting local mechanisms for resolving land and forest tenure conflicts



The pilot strengthened the capacity of **17 local land commissions** to resolve conflict over land and resources in rural communities – in 22 months

Project duration
1 November 2015
to 31 July 2017

In 1990, Mali began a process of decentralization to allow communities to assert their tenure rights and passed the Land Reform Act in 2006. The Act establishes the first commune-level land commissions to address land-related conflict. Despite the government's efforts, natural resources and land governance remained centralized, with overlapping statutory and customary rights that result in frequent land conflicts. These conflicts fueled the armed conflict and insurgencies that plagued Mali in the past decade and local conflicts that continue to hamper development, feed unrest, and imperil community livelihoods. In 2015, the Government of Mali and the Tuareg rebels signed the Accord for Peace and Reconciliation. However, while the accord addresses longstanding political grievances, it failed to recognize the role conflict over land has played in destabilizing the country and eroding trust between communities and the central government.

The National Coordinating Body of Peasant Organizations in Mali (CNOP) and HELVETAS Mali pioneered innovative approaches and tools for resolving tenure conflicts and encouraging collaborative natural resource management. The project capitalized on the opportunity to address land conflict in the aftermath of Mali's civil war and contributed to achieving the 2015 Peace Accord. CNOP and HELVETAS organized and trained 17 local land commissions and established Mali's first intercommunal forest. The potential for scaling up is promising, and the project is generating knowledge that will inform the development of cornerstone laws for rural land rights in Mali.



Building the capacity of land commissions to resolve local conflicts over land and forests reduced land conflicts in participating villages and municipalities by up to 35%.



Results

- The project established, organized and trained 17 local land commissions – eight at the municipal level and nine at the village level. This reduced by 35% land conflicts in participating villages and 25% in participating municipalities.
- Building the capacity addressed the urgent need to resolve longstanding conflict over land by pioneering, testing, and demonstrating scalable approaches and tools that rural municipalities and local communities can use to resolve conflicts among themselves and with government, investors, immigrants, and settlers.
- The project set the stage for scaling the success of land commissions across the country by supporting and learning from the experiences of land commissions in the south, where conflict is more localized; the learning can be scaled to areas where conflict is more prevalent and widespread, particularly in the north.
- The project mapped, demarcated and geo-referenced Mali's first intercommunal forest area covering 4,220 hectares and prepared for official recognition.
- The project established and facilitated a national multi-stakeholder strategic orientation committee to support the implementation of Mali's Agricultural Land Policy and the National Assembly's development and enactment of the country's landmark 2017 Agrarian Reform law.
- It engaged the High Council of Local Collectivities (Haut Conseil des Collectivités), the Permanent Secretary of the High Council on Agriculture (Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil Supérieur de l'Agriculture), and other high-level government institutions to guide project activities, validate approaches and tools, and draft new legal instruments.
- The project's multistakeholder approach built trusting and collaborative relationships among communities, government, civil society, and private sector that show the way forward in a post-conflict environment.

For the full story, visit thetenurefacility.org/projects/mali



“The Tenure Facility pilot in Mali is strengthening national reconciliation and peace. Commissions help to calm the country. The pilot started in accessible areas in southern Mali, with a level of security that allows for movement on the ground. Based on the experience gained in these areas, we plan to expand project activities in the more volatile and conflict-prone part of the country.”

– Célestin Dembélé, HELVETAS Mali



Three villages in the region of Sikasso established a 4,200-hectare communal forest in a conflict-prone area threatened by climate change and land grabbing

Herders, agriculturalists and villagers negotiated their traditional uses



In the region of Sikasso, 80% of the population lives off the land. Facing pressure on their lands due to climate change and land grabs in the surrounding areas, three communes collaborated to develop Mali's first-ever inter-communally held and managed forest with the support of CNOP and HELVETAS Mali. The inter-communal nature of the forest allows the community to work together to strengthen the productivity of these 4,220 hectares of forest.

"Of every 100 land conflicts in the Region of Sikasso, 70 come from Ganadougou, an area of Sikasso composed of 10 municipalities, including the municipality of Nièna. These conflicts are often brought before the courts in Bamako. The COFOs [land commissions] are helping to end this situation. There have been recommendations to send back the cases that are pending before the courts, given that the COFOs can help resolve these conflicts in a more permanent way."

— Mohamed Barry, Secretary General of the Mayor, Nièna Municipality

the
**TENURE
FACILITY**

The Tenure Facility is the first and only international, multi-stakeholder institution exclusively focused on securing land and forest rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It provides grants to implement tenure reform within existing government and international structures and shares the knowledge, innovations and tools that emerge. Launched in 2014 by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), the Tenure Facility is dedicated to scaling up recognition of collective land and forest rights globally. The Tenure Facility is an international foundation registered in Sweden.

www.thetenurefacility.org

The Tenure Facility is supported by several donors, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Ford Foundation and Norad.



Disclaimer: The views presented here are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, nor any other agencies that support the Tenure Facility.