SECURING LAND ACCESS FOR WOMEN
An innovative process based on social legitimacy
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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AGV Assemblée Générale Villageoise (General Village Assembly)

APFR Attestation de Possession Foncière Rurale (Rural Lands Certificate of Possession)

BMZ German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

CCFV Comité de Conciliation Foncière Villageoise (Village Land Tenure Conciliation Committee)

CCP Programme de Partenariat de Pays (Rural Partnership Programme for sustainable land management)

CFV Commission Foncière Villageoise (Village Land Tenure Commission)

CVD Conseil Villageois de Développement (Village Development Council)

SLM Sustainable Land Management

GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

GPS Geographic Positioning System

GRAF Groupe de Recherche et d’Action sur le Foncier (Land Tenure Research and Action Group)

ODEC Opérations de Développement, Études et Conseils (Development, Research and Consulting Operations)

PAR Participatory Action Research

ProSol ‘Rehabilitation and Protection of Soils to Improve Food Security’

SFR Services Fonciers Ruraux (Rural Land Services)

TMG Töpfer Müller Gassner
About the guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide development practitioners with a tool for the conduct of an alternative process for securing access to land for women. Land access needs to be secured particularly where legal and regulatory provisions are adopted and implemented only to a limited extent and where customary land regimes are still prevalent.

The guide is the result of Participatory Action Research (PAR) carried out by the Groupe de Recherche et d’Action sur le Foncier (GRAF) and TMG Research gGmbH (TMG).

This action research was done within the context of a research project accompanying the Soil Protection and Rehabilitation for Food Security project, implemented by GIZ in the Hauts-Basins Region of Burkina Faso. Both projects are part of the ‘One World, No Hunger’ initiative financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The PAR was developed in cooperation with the people of Tiarako, the Satiri municipal council and decentralised technical services, and GIZ. The initiative, founded on social legitimacy, allowed 228 women to obtain secure access to land. This guide summarises this process and outlines the different steps required to achieve the stabilisation of land rights for women. The lessons learned from the process, and the outcomes from the successive workshops following the process, were incorporated.

This guide is aimed mainly at the following actors: farmers’ organisations; technical services responsible for rural sector management (agriculture, animal resources, environment) and for the promotion of women; technical and financial partners of development cooperation; and stakeholders involved in projects and programmes on land governance, natural resource management, agriculture and rural development.
Land tenure insecurity at the heart of the agricultural productivity challenge

Agriculture, and land degradation

In Burkina Faso, agricultural production (crops and livestock) is the principal occupation of at least 85% of the population: it constitutes the main source of income for the vast majority of Burkinabé.

But agricultural land in the country is threatened by progressive degradation. Indeed, one-third of the country’s territory – 9,234,500 hectares (ha) – is already degraded, according to Burkina Faso’s Ministry of the Environment. Every year, between 105,000 and 360,000 ha further degrade.

Land degradation is the result of several factors, including demographic pressure, farming practices unsuitable to the agro-ecological context, poor land management and climate change.

In order to stop this accelerated land degradation and its impact on biodiversity and food security, the government of Burkina Faso has, since the 1960s, ratified numerous international conventions and adopted many policy interventions in the area of sustainable land management (SLM).

Despite considerable efforts, the adoption rate of land rehabilitation and protection practices remains low. And SLM initiatives are still very limited in space and time. In the context
of the accompanying research project, an analysis of SLM projects and programmes in the provinces of Ioba, Tuy and Houet shows that only 3 out of 10 projects analysed take the land tenure dimension into consideration. This low level of attention given to land tenure issues could explain the limited duration of these projects’ accomplishments (Koudougou and Stiem, 2017).

**Land tenure insecurity: obstacle to the adoption of SLM technologies**

Preliminary studies carried out by the authors of this guide in the ProSol intervention area revealed that land tenure insecurity is a major obstacle to SLM, and that women, migrants, youth and agro-pastoralists are the primary groups affected (Koudougou et al., 2017; Koudougou and Stiem, 2017). The lack of land tenure security hinders the application of SLM practices, particularly tree plantation, anti-erosion measures, as well as other measures that entail significant investments.

The development of commercial crops and of mining operations, the increased competition for land, and the monetarisation of land transactions – within a context of a weak application of legal and regulatory provisions – aggravate the land tenure insecurity situation for women and other vulnerable groups.
Modes of access to land for women

Access to land for women in Burkina Faso

Women in Burkina Faso play a paramount role in family farming; they are responsible for 52 per cent of agricultural production (Saito et al., 1994). But their access to land remains problematic. Under the still widely predominant traditional land tenure systems, women only have precarious (often annual) land use rights, and their land is generally degraded.

The field on which a woman grows legumes during an agricultural season is usually recovered by the husband or the land owner, who then assigns the woman another, less fertile plot of land for the next season. This forced rotation, and the impossibility of sustainably profiting from their efforts invested in improving soil fertility, contribute to limiting the women’s commitment to SLM.

Only women who are menopausal or who are farm heads themselves (widows in most cases) can enjoy permanent land use rights. The situation varies greatly from one culture to another, depending on the status and rank of the women within the family. The woman’s status in terms of land tenure, however, is generally precarious.

Limited implementation of ongoing land reforms

Land rights in rural areas of Burkina Faso are still largely based on customary and traditional land systems.

The land reforms initiated since 2007 (Politique nationale de sécurisation foncière en milieu rural decree) and the adoption of the 2009 rural land tenure law (034-2009) constitute an attempt to formalise customary land rights. However, the application of the land legislation is still only limited to 112 of a total of 351 communes. Moreover, even in those municipalities where it is implemented, its adoption by local actors is very limited. In the case of women, the situation is even more difficult because they are hardly taken into consideration.
Nevertheless, the 2009 rural land tenure law does establish the access to land for vulnerable groups, including women, by means of special programmes. This law and other regulatory texts provide for the possibility of initiating special programmes to secure land access and quotas for women in the attribution of cleared lands. However, their implementation in the field is limited because of a lack of financial and human resources.

How to successfully secure land access for women

Securing land in a context of a weak legal implementation

In a context characterised by nascent statutory land governance systems, in particular by the absence or weakness of the local land governance institutions such as the Rural Land Services (SFR), it is clearly essential to select a path towards securing land rights that is legitimate, accessible to the rural actors and grounded in law.

By ‘securing land rights’ we mean ‘the set of processes, actions and measures of all kinds that are aimed at enabling the users of rural land to effectively deploy their productive activities, and protecting them from any dispute or disturbance in the enjoyment of their rights.’ (Bary, Ouédraogo, Sanou and Thiéba, 2005). Securing land rights therefore does not entail full ownership, that is, rights to transfer, sell or mortgage.

The other options for the granting of individual deeds to women, such as the Rural Land Certificate of Possession (APFR), have proven difficult in a context in which the heads of farming households (the husbands) do not themselves hold any land title document. Choosing to grant the APFRs would imply the prior establishment of the Rural Land Services by the municipalities, but the latter do not yet dispose of the perennial resources needed for the creation and proper functioning of such services. Besides, the process of granting of the APFRs entails costs that are beyond the means of many female farmers in rural areas.

Against this background the process of securing access to land for women, piloted by the GRAF and TMG in the village of Tiarako, offers an alternative. The process is in fact based on social legitimation: the land tenure agreements and arrangements between women and heads of farming households are validated by all local actors: by the customary and administrative authorities and by the population.
Principal stages of the process

The objective of the process presented below is to generally facilitate the dialogue about land tenure questions between the different stakeholders of the village community. Specifically, the purpose is to create the conditions for a broad consensus about land tenure agreements in accordance with the land legislation and to focus on securing access to land for women.

The implementation of the process of securing land rights for women required the development of an inclusive approach. It involves creating frameworks for reflection, collaboration and expression regarding the question of securing land access for women. Based on the Tiarako experience, this process can span over a period of four to six months.

The following principles should guide this approach as a whole:

- The commitment and effective participation of all the actors concerned.
- The setting aside of all pre-established solutions.
- The negotiation of a consensus acceptable to all.

The process of securing land access for women involves several steps:

1. **Co-conception and validation of the approach**
   The approach and all the stages of the process should be designed and validated with all of the actors concerned. A technical, multi-actor workshop provides the framework for the amendment and validation of the proposals put forward. This workshop should also make it possible to establish and validate, together with the participants, a mapping of the actors involved. This mapping will detail the level of intervention, role and responsibility of each actor identified. Each actor will commit to participate and should know the role he or she will play during the process.
Launch at General Village Assembly (AGV)
It is important that the outcomes of the technical, multi-actor workshop are shared with the entire village population so that the approach can be validated and legitimised. The discussions revolve around the legal framework supporting women's access to land. All concerns about the deeds to be formalised and the purpose of the process should be addressed. The AGV should build a general consensus in the village to commit to the process.

Information and raising awareness about securing land access for women
This stage involves providing information about the legal provisions and policies regarding securing land access for women – special emphasis should be placed on the benefits, both for the woman and for her family, resulting from her securing access to land. The main objective is to dispel all fears and worries connected to securing land access for women.

Social/land surveys
These surveys should allow information to be collected about the participating families by providing a list of the heads of farming households and of all the members under their individual tutelage. They include the declaration of the farm heads about the type of agreement (grant or lease) and the size of the plots they envision transferring. Any competences within the village population should be relied on to carry out these surveys – not only to reduce financial costs, but also strengthen the social anchoring of the process.

The surveys should include other institutions, particularly the technical public services, to provide reliable information about the land rights, and all resource persons who possess information about the land in the area.

Census of voluntary heads of farming households
This stage aims to distinguish between land owners and non-owners and identify farmers who agree to transfer a portion of their land to one or more women. So this is a census of the heads of farming households who voluntarily engage in the process.

Negotiations between land owners and non-owners
In this stage, the farmers not owning land who would like to transfer land to women (wives and others) start to negotiate with the land owners, seeking their agreement for the transfer of a plots of their farms, even though they are not actually the owners. This negotiation is bilateral and involves no third parties.
Negotiations between recipient women and head of farming households

One focus group for men is organised to collect the major concerns of those men prepared to transfer land to women. The men should detail their concerns and the conditions under which they are prepared to transfer their land. At this point, it is useful to inform the parties of the advantages of securing women’s access to land. The benefits of the land transfers should be explained from the outset, and the parties should be reminded of them before the negotiations.

Another focus group is then organised for the women. They will be informed of the concerns of the men and of their land transfer intentions. Consensus about the transfers and the associated conditions will result from these focus groups.

AGV to validate the list of the head of farming households transferring land

A general assembly presided by the president of the Village Development Council (CVD) validates the list of farm heads who have committed to transferring land plots from their holdings to women. This assembly will allow the entire village to be informed of the list of heads of farming households involved in the transfers. In case of disputes, this list will be validated at another stage.

AGV to validate the list of farm heads and the recipient women

A general assembly is organised to communicate the list of validated commitments and the accepted transfers, both with regard to the land surfaces and conditions. This information is incorporated into a single table, which will be used subsequently in the process.

The technical services and the representatives of the rural municipality will participate in this AGV. Every AGV must be endorsed by Official Minutes, duly signed by the session table.
10 Georeferencing of the parcels transferred to women
At this point, it is important to determine the true surface area of the transferred plots. Using devices such as a GPS, the areas can be accurately recorded and included in the land agreement document. To minimise the operation’s financial costs, it is useful to use local actors who know how to operate the GPS.

11 Exchange session with the communal administration
This stage involves the ‘formalisation’ of the land agreements by the local authority in charge (the municipality). Discussions take place with the members of the office of the municipal council in a session presided by the mayor. During the course of this meeting, the municipal council will determine the key issues to be highlighted in the endorsement document, which will then be communicated during an AGV.

12 AGV for the validation of the local land agreements
This assembly offers the municipality an opportunity to verify the legitimacy of the agreements that transfer land to women. Here, the conditions for the management of the agreements are specified with the village elders and local committees (CVD, CFV, CCFV), recipient women, transferring farmers, etc., and with the public as witnesses.

The official protocol document of this assembly facilitates the endorsement of these local agreements by the municipality, which is the ultimate purpose of the process. The mayor can take part in this village assembly.

13 AGV for the deposit of the land agreements
This AGV, presided by the chairperson of the CVD, validates the land agreements. Official minutes of the AGV should be taken and need to include a table of the land transfers. This table contains the names and signatures of the transferrers and of
the recipient women, the areas transferred, the georeferenced coordinates of the transferred land, the neighbouring parcels, the nature of the transfers, and their duration in the case of a lease. The communal authority approves the Official Minutes by decree by order of the municipal council.

14 Multi-actor reflection workshop
A reflection workshop is organised with all the actors involved to discuss lessons learned and facilitate the support process for the women who have secured access to their farms.
Guiding principles for a successful process

The conduct and success of the process of securing land access for women, as tested by GRAF and TMG, is founded on the following guiding principles:

1. **Preliminary in-depth diagnosis**
   The process should begin with an analysis and documentation of the modes of land tenure (including those of disadvantaged groups), the land conflicts, the average size of the farms, etc. This diagnosis will make it possible to reduce conflicts and other risks once the process is under way.

2. **The inclusive and effective participation of the local actors**
   From the outset, the process requires a strong commitment from the public and participants. Responsibility for the process should be borne by the affected landholders and by the communal administration or authority. To this end, make sure that the process of securing land is not a matter for experts or consultants but for local actors: customary and traditional chiefs, religious figures, opinion leaders, resource persons, civil society organisations, etc.

3. **The transparency and anchoring in social legitimacy**
   To succeed in having the population accept the process and the resulting land agreements, ensure that the process is transparent. Each stage of the process must be validated in a village assembly to build and strengthen consensus and social legitimacy for the process. Similarly, the worries and fears of local actors about the process and its purpose need to be taken into account.

4. **Legality anchored in legitimacy**
   The process of securing land for women should not only be anchored in legitimacy but also comply with the entire set of legal and regulatory texts concerning rural land. The official minutes for the land agreements of Tiarako is a prime example.
of legality anchored in legitimacy. The deeds and documents should be initialled by the mayor of the rural community. And the deeds securing land rights should be accessible (content controlled by the local actors, affordable cost, etc.).

5 Creation of a serene climate

Identify the points of disagreement and reservations to gain the confidence of the parties involved, so that they can negotiate in a non-confrontational climate and arrive at consensual solutions.

Conclusion

The alternative process for securing women's access to land demonstrates that legitimacy and legality can be achieved by taking a co-construction approach with the local actors. Moreover, the process was carried out without incurring prohibitive costs when the land institutions were still in their infancy.

In effect, this process was carried out in a rural municipality that did not yet have a Rural Land Service. The village's land management bodies (CFV and CCFV) were set up only recently, and are not yet adequately equipped to fully fulfil their roles.

The process for securing women's access to land piloted by GRAF and TMG bears relatively less costs, when compared to issuance of land deeds provided for in law 034-2009 (obtaining APFRs and land deeds).

It is up to the relevant actors to make use of this guide, which offers them a means of efficiently accompanying the stabilisation of the rights of women to rural lands.
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