

# Land and livelihoods for smallholder and livestock rearing families

## Context

The West African country of Senegal has been one of the most stable in the region since its independence in 1960. New governmental and parliamentary elections are held regularly and popular participation in the multi-party system is high. Some 55 per cent of the population live in rural areas and the average age is about 23 years. Young people under 20 years of age make up some 60 per cent of the population.

However, for this overwhelmingly young population, prospects of a life that provides sufficient income for themselves and their families have been steadily dwindling – especially in the countryside. Undersized plots of land, infertile and eroding soil, lack of rain, insufficient means of production and lack of capital are some of the reasons why farming and livestock rearing families are often unable to live on their earnings.

In addition, for some years now land speculation and «land-grabbing» by investors have been a problem. Smallholder families without official land titles risk losing their land. Living space for livestock rearing families and their herds is also under threat. Many young people are migrating to the cities or abroad in search of a better life.

## Objectives, priorities, activities

The 2016-2020 HEKS/EPER Country Programme emphasizes access to land first and foremost. The aim is for people to participate in shaping the current administrative and land law-related reforms. Other priorities are the restoration and preservation of natural resources, sustainable cultivation, as well as boosting the incomes of smallholder and livestock farming families.

HEKS and its local partners are active in the Ferlo region in the north-east of the





country, in the coastal region (Niayes, Petite Côte) and in the Saloum Delta. They support the local people in the pursuit of the following goals:

- Secured access to land, so as to be able to live and produce in security.
- Restoring, protecting and preserving natural resources in order to ensure prosperity for future generations.
- High-quality products and fair market prices.
- The following activities are planned in pursuit of these goals:
- Supporting smallholder families in preparing dossiers to obtain official land titles.
- Continuing education, information and awareness building around land issues and legislation; campaigning on specific issues; lobbying political players to ensure that the concerns of smallholder and livestock farming families are taken into account in the land reform process.
- Advising and supporting women's groups in the production of butter oil, the fattening of domestic animals and the processing of seafood; advising smallholder families on fruit and vegetable production and market access; and the production of local vegetable seeds.
- Literacy and continuing education courses on various community development issues; fostering and strengthening village grassroots organizations, women's groups and community representatives; conflict prevention and transformation.
- Building up, protecting and managing resources; negotiating and signing local usufruct agreements between various interest groups.

### **Target groups**

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The beneficiaries are families and in particular women's groups in four regions, who live from the production and marketing of fruit and vegetables, livestock rearing and seafood.

### **Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships**

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HEKS/EPER works with local authorities and includes them in project activities. Agricultural research centres are also preferred partners in selected fields. Wherever possible, HEKS/EPER cooperates with other international relief agencies and helps fund joint projects.

### **HEKS/EPER on the ground**

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HEKS/EPER runs a coordination office in the city of Thiès. A small local staff complement maintain ongoing dialogue with partner organizations and provide professional support and accompaniment for projects.

### **Topics and working approach**

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Projects funded by HEKS/EPER are realized in cooperation with beneficiary target groups: the starting point is the holding of discussions between partner organizations and beneficiaries about aims and activities. In this way, local knowledge feeds into the project.



## Progress

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The most important changes and results brought about by the country programme in 2016:

- The project teams of partner organizations improved their know-how and capacities through various continuing education courses, for example on seed production, product marketing, successfully mounting income-generating activities, as well as disaster resilience and project management.
- Several women from supported women's groups were elected to local decision-making bodies (at district level) after taking literacy and specific continuing education courses for women.
- Raising the incomes of grassroots group members, by as much as CHF 40 per month from the sale of various products.
- Improving the housing situation and mobility of villagers during the rainy season. The building of a small bridge and action to counter erosion by rain-water have meant that residents of Landau and Toul can now move about without restriction or danger even during the rainy season.
- Greater popular awareness of the need to sustainably manage and protect natural resources. This takes the form, inter alia, of reforestation campaigns and the use of energy-saving cooking stoves.
- A population mobilized and committed to ensuring that their interests are taken into account in the ongoing land reform and to opposing land grabs by investors.

**Country:**

Senegal

**Programme costs 2018:**

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