

Millennium Challenge Corporation

Providing Farmland Ownership Rights to Women In Rural Mali: The MCC Experience

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Introduction¹

From 2007 to 2012, the Government of Mali implemented the Alatona Irrigation Project, which converted almost 5,000 hectares of Sahel scrubland into high-value irrigated farmland. The project, an integrated agricultural development effort to permanently reduce poverty in the Alatona area and increase the country's food supply, was financed by the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). One of the project's key components was its land allocation activity, through which the irrigated land was transferred from the state to beneficiary families.

Founded in 2004, MCC has developed as an agency in a time when gender equality has been a policy priority. During this time, MCC has worked to learn, innovate and improve on its approach to gender equality in the context of its mission, poverty reduction through growth. This was also true of how gender equality was integrated into the Alatona Irrigation Project's land allocation activity. The development and allocation of high-value irrigated land offered a significant economic opportunity to women as well as men, yet, there were significant challenges to including women. The rural, traditional Muslim social structures embedded in a semi-pastoralist way of life in the Alatona project area, coupled with low education levels of women and men in the area, would make inclusion of women as project beneficiaries a challenging endeavor.

This paper is a short history of project design and implementation, and how the Alatona Irrigation Project developed and executed an approach for allocating land rights to women, the results achieved and the lessons learned. Section I of the paper sets the stage by describing MCC's approach to gender integration and ensuring that women are both participants and beneficiaries in the programs it funds. Section II presents a summary of the project's design and main results in order to provide context for the efforts made to include women in land allocation. Section III describes the three approaches used in the project to provide women with access to land: allocating market gardens to women's groups, promoting allocation of five-hectare farms to women and encouraging joint titling of land in the names of the husband and wife. Finally, Section IV offers some concluding thoughts.

¹ Many people contributed to the successful implementation of the Alatona Irrigation Project's land allocation activity. They are too numerous to mention here, but come from the following government entities and private contractors: MCA-Mali; MCC; AECOM; ACDI/VOCA; G-Force; Nyeta Conseils, *Institute Géographique du Mali*; and the *Direction Regionale des Domaines et du Cadastre*.

I. The Evolution of MCC's Gender Integration Requirements and their Relationship to the Project

The MCC compact with Mali was signed in November 2006. For the most part, project development occurred prior to the release of MCC's Gender Policy early in the following year. Nevertheless, gender inequality was recognized during the project development process as a challenge for design, and a gender and land consultant was commissioned to provide a technical assessment. MCC did not, at that time, have a social scientist with gender expertise assigned to the compact development team, nor did MCC's Malian government counterparts. Gender was essentially a "safeguards" issue, embedded in MCC's social assessment of risks and impacts on "project affected people." Through the efforts of MCC's Property Rights and Land Policy team and Environmental and Social Assessment team, a strategy was developed for ensuring that land-related benefits went to women as well as to men.

If the Mali Compact were developed today, the context for gender integration in compact development would be different, for MCC now has requirements for gender integration including operational procedures and milestones described in the agency's *Gender Integration Guidelines* (MCC, 2011). Among them are requirements for: (i) an analysis of the social inequality constraints to poverty reduction to inform early compact development decision-making; (ii) a senior-level social/gender expert on the partner country teams; and (iii) the partner country to have an MCC-approved gender integration plan no later than the second quarter of compact implementation. Gender differences and inequalities would have been a central issue in all analyses and design decisions related to the Mali Compact, and may have resulted in additional activities or variations in the land allocation approach that was implemented. Nevertheless, MCC's original commitment to gender integration was reflected in the design of the Alatona Irrigation Project, and the experience in Mali helped MCC further develop its approaches and requirements with regard to gender integration.

Finally, MCC's heightened emphasis on gender integration was reflected during compact implementation. MCA-Mali, the Malian government entity that implemented the compact, employed a social scientist with gender expertise for most of the five-year compact duration. On the MCC side, the agency established a Social and Gender Assessment (SGA) group in 2010, and a group member joined MCC's Mali country team to provide oversight and support on gender integration efforts. These key personnel helped maintain focus on gender integration and helped, thereby, to achieve the accomplishments described in this paper.

II. The Alatona Irrigation Project and its Land Allocation Activity

The Alatona Irrigation Project, a \$253 million endeavor, was implemented in a remote area of the Ségou region of central Mali.² The project area is located adjacent to a large administrative zone of villages and roughly 90,000 hectares of irrigated lands known as the *Office du Niger*, and is controlled by a parastatal agency of the same name. Despite a period of reform in the 1980s and 1990s that improved the land tenure security of farmers using these lands, farmers continued to complain about the heavy-handed manner in which their land use rights were managed by the *Office*. This experience influenced the design of the project's land allocation activity.

The Project was broken down into six activities: irrigation infrastructure development, resettlement, land allocation, agricultural services, financial services, and upgrade of the road between the towns of Niono and Goma Koura. The first three activities, which are most relevant to the theme of this report, are described in more detail here.

The irrigation infrastructure development activity was a large works project consisting of (i) dredging the large canals bringing water to the Alatona area to increase their capacity, (ii) creating a network of secondary and tertiary canals and drainage structures, and (iii) clearing and leveling the land for irrigation. Under this activity, the large canals were dredged and 4,940 hectares of irrigated land were developed. The original project plan was to develop 15,000 hectares, but it had to be scaled back because the bids received to carry out the work were far higher than the available budget.

The area needed for the development of the irrigated land was home to some 8,000 people grouped into 800 households living in several villages. In order to make land available for the irrigation and development under the project,³ these “project affected people,” or PAPs, had to be moved, compensated for their loss of livelihood and otherwise made whole in accordance with MCC's environmental and social standards. Under the resettlement activity, new villages were constructed with housing, schools, medical facilities, and other amenities. The project moved the PAPs to these new villages, provided them with a full range of social benefits and also provided them with two hectares of irrigated land free-of-charge as compensation for their loss of land uses they held prior to the project. The combination of facilities, land and other benefits resulted in the PAPs being far better off than they had been before the project.

² The Mali program also included a project to upgrade the airport in Bamako, Mali's capital city. MCA-Mali relied heavily on private companies to carry out project activities such as irrigation canal dredging, resettlement of project affected people and training of project beneficiaries on improved agricultural practices.

³ These people lived across the full 15,000 hectare area that was planned for irrigation in the original project design. When it became clear that only about 5,000 hectares could be developed, the project managers decided to compensate all of the 800 households anyway because they had already been promised benefits, and because addressing their claims would resolve all resettlement issues for future investors wanting to develop the remaining irrigated area.

Turning to the land allocation activity, as originally planned, it consisted of:

- ★ After the irrigation infrastructure work was completed, laying out individual land parcels, surveying their boundaries and preparing legal descriptions for each of these parcels;
- ★ Educating the rural population of the Alatona zone and nearby areas about private ownership, its rights and responsibilities, the benefits it can bring and how to properly manage these new land rights and obligations;
- ★ Establishing a temporary land registration office in the Alatona zone to process the project's land titles;
- ★ Allocating the land parcels to project beneficiaries and issuing land ownership titles to this land, an unprecedented step in rural Mali; and
- ★ Managing the revenue that would come in from payments for land since most of the land allocated to beneficiaries was sold to them (MCC, 2006).

The land allocation activity was generally implemented as it had been designed. The project laid out, surveyed and prepared legal descriptions for almost 3,000 individual land parcels. These parcels were grouped into 954 farms of five hectares in size, with each farm containing one hectare of land that was irrigated year round and four hectares of land that were irrigated only during the rainy season. The aforementioned PAPs received 801 of these farms totaling 4,000 hectares, and the remaining 153 farms (765 hectares) were awarded by lottery to pre-qualified farmers from the *Office du Niger*. An additional 55 hectares were provided to women's associations for market garden activities (see more detail below). Finally, the remaining 113 hectares could not be easily assembled into farms and were sold to farmers adjacent to these plots to supplement their existing holdings.

Once the farms were awarded, the beneficiaries had to sign land transfer contracts with the state to receive title to the land. Before signing these contracts, the project explained the contract terms to the beneficiaries so that they would have a full understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The project then facilitated the signature of the contracts, their processing at the local property registration office and the delivery of the resulting land titles to the beneficiaries.

The local property registration office, which was in the town of Niono, had been set up with project support. The project had also intended to assess and improve the operations of this office, but this task was halted by the March 2012 military coup that overthrew the country's democratically-elected government.

The land recipients had to pay for some or all of their land. The PAPs received two hectares free-of-charge as compensation for being displaced, and purchased the remaining three hectares of their farms for \$3,000⁴ per hectare. The 153 non-PAP farmers who received land through the lottery were required to pay for all five hectares. For non-PAPs, the project set the price at \$3,000 per hectare for land that was irrigated only during the rainy season,

4 FCFA 1.45 million.

and \$5,000⁵ per hectare for land that was irrigated year round. In all cases, the farmers received their land titles up-front and agreed to pay for their land by making installment payments over a 20-year period. These payments are secured by a mortgage.

To collect and manage the land revenue, the project established a local special-purpose entity under Malian law. This entity will also be responsible for enforcing mortgages in the event of non-payment, and will decide how to use the revenue for economic and social development activities in and around the Alatona zone.

As this activity list shows, joint effort in a variety of disciplines was needed to achieve the project's objectives. For example, the project invested heavily in developing the irrigated land, but the land allocation activity was necessary to provide the land to its intended beneficiaries, who could then maximize the land's productive use based on incentives that land ownership provided. Similarly, the success of the land allocation activity was enhanced by the project's agricultural services activity, which trained farmers how to more productively and efficiently use their land and supplied them with essential agricultural inputs. Finally, land allocation to PAPs was part of a broad resettlement action plan, and these PAPs turned out to be the vast majority of the beneficiaries of land allocation.

III. The Project's Efforts to Allocate Land to Women and the Results Achieved

The description of the Alatona Irrigation Project is presented in gender-neutral terms, but the actual context – like almost all projects – is not. Approximately 80 percent of the people living in the Alatona area are from the Peul (Fulani) ethnic group, a semi-nomadic people who practice polygamy and live in male-headed extended family households which the project labeled as “*concessions*.” The project presented the first significant opportunity in the country for the titling of farmland, but the socio-cultural context also made it unlikely that women would receive formal land rights. However, given the growing body of evidence that development outcomes for families increase when women have increased control over assets and when benefits flow to women, MCC was keenly interested in ensuring both women and men would receive rights to the irrigated land developed by the project (Sabates-Wheeler, 2006; Ali, Deininger, & Goldstein, 2011). The challenges for project design were: (i) how to promote women's rights to land that gave them *control* over land as well as access and (ii) how to provide long-term rights in light of local inheritance traditions that called for transfer of a woman's land to her son, in order to avoid the sustainability challenge of women's titling lasting only one generation.

Developing a design that would maximize the chances for women to receive land rights started from the assumption that trying to impose certain outcomes would not be accepted by the population and local leaders and could trigger significant social backlash. Thus, the project designers: (i) looked for ways to allocate land rights to women that would already be acceptable in the society without difficulty; (ii) sought to develop approaches to allocating

⁵ FCFA 2.4 million.

land that would encourage, but not force, inclusion of women; and (iii) looked for multiple avenues for allocating land rights to women so that, if one failed, others would be available. Using this approach, the project designed and executed a three-pronged effort to help women gain rights to the newly developed irrigated land: (i) the titling of women’s market gardens on irrigated land; (ii) promoting allocation of five-hectare farms to women; and (iii) designing a gender-responsive outreach program to encourage joint titling.

Market gardens

Women in the project area already had a tradition of growing fruit, vegetables, herbs, and spices on small plots of land for household consumption and sale in local markets. These small plots are known locally as market gardens. Because market gardening was an existing practice, project designers saw it as a readily acceptable and meaningful way to make sure that the project provided at least some land access to women, even if other approaches failed. The challenges were to ensure that women from the *concessions* did not lose either access or control of this valuable asset in the future because of local inheritance traditions, and that the gardens were designed to be responsive to women’s needs and interests.

A number of design decisions had to be made regarding the market gardens. First was the size of the market garden, which the project wanted to be manageable for women who had many other “reproductive labor” responsibilities yet large enough to provide a significant economic benefit.⁶ The project settled upon 500 square meters as an appropriate size. Thus, the project design included a “market garden” parcel for the women of each family who received a five-hectare farm. These parcels were provided free of charge.

The second major design question was what type of legal right the women should receive to their market garden plots. There were concerns that, according to traditional inheritance norms in the project area, a deceased woman’s property would be transferred to her sons, which would mean that land intended for women would transfer to men after only one generation. The project sought a solution that would provide women with legal control but would not lead to the automatic transfer of market garden land to men.

The solution developed was the creation of women’s associations⁷ whose primary purpose was to own and manage market garden land. These were legal entities established under Malian law. Individual women would join the association as members, and one of the benefits of membership would be access to a 500m² parcel of market garden land. The project drafted three documents to establish the associations:

⁶ “Reproductive labor” is a term used to describe a wide variety of responsibilities typically borne by women, including child care, cooking and gathering water and fuel.

⁷ In nine cases, cooperatives rather than associations were formed. For the purposes of this paper, the nine cooperatives are grouped together with the associations.

- ★ **Model articles of incorporation (*statuts*) for the association.** This document established the association upon the vote of its members, set forth the rights and responsibilities of its members and the association and described how the association would be governed;
- ★ **Model by-laws (*reglements interieur*) for the association.** These by-laws provided additional detail on the association’s work and decision-making processes as well as the rights and responsibilities of association members; and
- ★ **A model “permit for the exploitation and use of a market garden.”** This permit was an agreement between the association and the woman of a household that made her a member of the association, and granted her legal access to her individual market garden parcel. In families with more than one adult woman, multiple women could choose to become members of the association and obtain rights to the family’s market garden.

Associations were kept relatively small – approximately 20 beneficiary households per association – so that individual women would be sure to have an effective voice in the management of the association. As a result, 54 associations were established, with each association receiving ownership to roughly 1 hectare of irrigated land. In order to establish these associations, the project first conducted informational meetings with the women, and then organized general assemblies for each of the 54 associations to vote them into existence. Finally, once these organizations were established, the land was transferred into their ownership through the issuance of titles (ACDI/VOCA, 2012).

Encouraging the allocation of five-hectare farms to women farmers

The project’s market garden program was seen as a starting point: It assured women a certain level of access to land, but it affected only about 50 of the 4,940 hectares of irrigated land that the project developed. The more important goal was how to help women gain rights to the roughly 4,800 hectares of land that were assembled into 954 farms of five hectares each. Traditionally, such farms would go to the head of household, who is almost always a man. These rights are particularly important for the irrigated land because its intended use is for commercial production, which has the potential for a significant economic impact on traditional families. At the same time, though, this economic boost could have unintended negative consequences rooted in social inequalities, such as increased labor demands on women or women losing customary access to assets required for maintaining family well-being.

The Alatona Irrigation Project developed 954 farms. Out of this number, 801 farms had to be provided to the PAPs through the resettlement process. The remaining 153 farms were available for distribution to others. What criteria should be used to select the recipients of these 153 farms? This was a major project design question, and a number of factors were considered in developing a solution:

- ★ The project wanted qualified farmers to receive the 153 farms in order to maximize the chances of agricultural success. This factor was especially significant given that so much land was going to the PAPs, very few of whom had been farm managers before. This factor also weighed against the chances for a large number of women receiving farms for the same reason;
- ★ The project wanted farmers with limited or no direct access to land to have a good chance to receive a farm. This was helpful to women's chances to receive a farm, since very few women directly controlled farmland; and
- ★ The project wanted the farm allocation process to be fair to all applicants and to minimize the possibility of people gaining control over farms through corrupt action. This factor was more-or-less neutral concerning women's chances to receive a farm, though the project designers were concerned that a process that overly favored women could result in women acquiring land as "strawmen," with effective control of that land going to men.

After considering these factors, the project designers developed a two-stage process for picking the recipients of the 153 farms: a minimum qualifications test and a public lottery. The minimum qualifications test required applicants for land to complete a form with the following information:

- ★ Access to land: Applicants with little or no access to land could receive up to 20 points on their applications;
- ★ Farming experience: Applicants with experience in irrigated agriculture could receive up to 30 points on their applications, depending upon the number of years of experience;
- ★ Farming education: Applicants with some farming education could receive 5 points on their applications;
- ★ Proof of water fee payment: Applicants who could prove they had paid water fees in the past could receive 5 points on their applications. Since farmers would be required to pay for land and water under the project, past evidence of making payments was important;
- ★ Collaboration: Applicants who had participated in an association or cooperative in the past could receive 10 points on their applications. This was important because the farmers would have to work together to manage the irrigation infrastructure;
- ★ Resources: Applicants who had basic farming equipment, draft animals, equivalent cash, or proof of access to credit could receive 20 points on their applications; and
- ★ Women and youth: Applicants who were women or men under 40 years old would receive 10 points on their applications as a way to increase their participation while still respecting the other qualifications.

These attributes were graded on a 100-point scale, and 60 points were needed for an applicant to pass the minimum qualifications test and be eligible to participate in the lottery. The grades were not used to pick the farm recipients directly because there was a limit to the accuracy of these criteria as predictors of performance. Does a farmer with five years of experience always perform better than a farmer with four?

The second step in the process was a public lottery, through which the farm recipients would be selected. A lottery was used for two complementary reasons. First, a lottery is very transparent. It is conducted in a public forum where tampering with the results is difficult, which makes the outcome more likely to be accepted by the population. Second, due to the random selection that a lottery provides, control and treatment groups could be established, which would allow for statistically valid evaluations to be carried out on the project's impact. The project designers did not know how many women would apply for land but wanted to ensure that women would receive some land, so 10 percent of the land available for allocation through the lottery was set aside for women in the project design. Women could receive more than 10 percent of the land through the lottery, but not less.

The minimum qualifications and public lottery process was implemented from October 2011 to March 2012. The project extensively advertised the opportunity to participate in the lottery throughout the *Office du Niger*, and established "depots" in five different towns where 7,561 people submitted applications. The advertising effort specifically encouraged women to apply for land. However, due to an implementation oversight, the advertising effort failed to mention that at least 10 percent of the land was earmarked for women. Corrective action was considered when this was discovered, but concerns were raised that informing the public on the day of the lottery about the set-aside would be seen as a last-minute change in the rules and thus not transparent. Consequently, the project decided against implementing the set-aside and hoped that at least 10 percent of the land would go to women without it.

Out of the 7,561 applications submitted, the project rejected 3,114 applications before technical evaluation for a number of reasons, such as failure to supply required information or the applicant was not a Malian citizen. This left 4,447 applications to evaluate, out of which 799 (18 percent) were from women.

The project then reviewed and scored the remaining 4,447 applications, and 3,391 farmers had the minimum attributes required to participate in the lottery. Women comprised 578 of these farmers, or 17 percent of the total. Project implementers reported that the number of women applicants who met the minimum qualifications was increased by the 10 bonus points awarded.

Lottery day was March 6, 2012, in the town of Niono. At a public ceremony the recipients of the 154 farms were selected through a random drawing. Twenty four women were selected in the random drawing to receive farms, or 16 percent of the total. By all accounts the lottery was properly conducted, was free from fraud and its results were accepted by both government officials and the general population.

In summary, 18 percent of the applications for land that the project evaluated came from women, 17 percent of the applications that met the minimum qualifications came from women and 16 percent of the five-hectare farms that were awarded through the random drawing went to women. This exceeded the project's minimum target of 10 percent (AECOM, 2012a).

Joint titling

In addition to encouraging the allocation of land to women through the minimum qualifications and lottery effort, the project tried to make land available to women through joint titling, that is, by registering ownership of the allocated land to the husband as well as his wife. By giving the wife equal legal control over the land parcel, it increases her ability to have her ideas considered on how best to use the land. This tends to lead to better use and investment decisions that benefit the entire family. The joint titling effort was pursued for all 954 farms but was especially important for the land to be allocated to the PAPs since (i) it represented 81 percent of the irrigated land developed by the project and (ii) it was already intended for designated households, thus other methods to allocate this land to women were not possible.

Joint titling was not required because of concerns that forcing the issue in the socio-cultural environment in which the project was implemented might trigger social backlash that would adversely affect overall project implementation. Instead, joint titling was presented as an option to the family members, who then made the decision whether to jointly title the land or not. The question of how to deal with joint titling in the polygamous environment seemed insolvable at one point, until project implementers came to the realization that the best, and probably only, solution was to let the parties in a beneficiary family work it out for themselves.

Turning to implementation of joint titling, the project's specialists prepared two model land transfer contracts: one for the transfer of the land to the PAPs that they received free as compensation for being displaced by the project and one for the transfer of the land that had to be purchased by the PAPs and the lottery winners. Each model contract included specific references to co-ownership of the land, a blank space to insert each co-owner's name and space on the signature page for each co-owner's signature. These seemingly mundane details are in fact very important to achieving success in joint titling. The project then translated the contracts and related documents into the three local languages used by the land recipients.⁸

For the PAPs, the project carried out a very robust outreach effort leading up to contract signing and this effort included joint titling. Each PAP was to designate two people to participate – the head of the *concession* and the *concession's* “responsible woman.” Since the majority of the PAPs were illiterate, and almost none of them had prior knowledge of the concepts contained in the contracts, the outreach effort was vital to joint titling and to titling generally.

Details on how the outreach effort was conducted are as follows:

- ★ The outreach effort consisted of five sessions: explanation of ownership and joint titling; explanation of the contents of the notification letter sent to each PAP *concession* describing what they were to receive; explanation of the contents of the contracts; explanation of the contents of the *cahier des charges*, a document

⁸ Fulfuldé, Bamanankan, and Tamacheq.

describing the rules that had to be followed when using irrigated land; and evaluation of the education's impact and contract signature;

- ★ Each session also included a review of the information learned in the prior session to reinforce its retention and provide the PAPs with an opportunity to ask follow-up questions;
- ★ Separate sessions were conducted for the men and women so that the latter would be free to participate actively and thus learn more. Both sessions presented the same information, including the benefits of joint titling. The contracts and *cahier des charges* were also presented line by line;
- ★ The information was presented over a four to six day period, with two to three hours of instruction per day. This schedule gave the women time to care for their children and engage in other household tasks, thus making their participation possible; and
- ★ The sessions were continuously evaluated for their effectiveness in the delivery of information and its retention by the PAPs. These evaluations were used to improve upcoming sessions. Examples of improvements include introducing “ice breaking” exercises to engage the PAPs and set a good tone for the session and building in more opportunities for the PAPs to actively interact with each other and the trainers during the session.

The project carried out the PAP outreach sessions across 33 villages over a six-month period from September 2011 to February 2012. The level of participation was good and, considering the context, women's participation was very good: Out of the 801 PAP *concessions*, 795 men and 799 women participated to some degree. For the men who participated, 70 percent fully completed the training, 26 percent partially completed it and the remainder did not complete it. For the women who participated, 62 percent fully completed the training, 32 percent partially completed it and the remainder did not complete it (AECOM, 2012b).

Implementation of joint titling was a great success for the PAPs, especially in the socio-cultural context of Peul households. About 40 percent of the beneficiaries decided to title their farmland in the names of the husband and wife, a figure that far exceeded project expectations of 10 to 20 percent. Both parties signed the land transfer contract, and both parties were registered as owners at the local property registration office. Interestingly, an additional 17 percent of the PAPs decided to title their farmland in the names of multiple men in the *concession*, such as the *concession* head and his brother. In these cases the women were left out. Taken together, more than half of the land was jointly titled.

By contrast, joint titling was not successful vis-à-vis the farms allocated through the lottery. While the outreach work with the PAPs had emphasized that the land being provided was for the benefit of the household, the lottery winners saw themselves as entitled to take sole possession of the land they had received, for they had applied for the lottery as individuals. The project's ability to encourage joint-titling through an outreach effort similar to one used with the PAPs was derailed by the Malian military's overthrow of the government in March 2012. Thus, the

outreach work with the lottery winners, and with their spouses, was not nearly as robust as the work with the PAPs. As a result, almost no land awarded through the lottery was jointly titled.

Finally, turning to the development of MCC's approach and focus on gender integration discussed above, if the Alatona Irrigation Project were being designed today, joint titling of land awarded through the pre-qualification and lottery process is an example of something that might have been approached differently. Women applicants for land received 10 points on their applications as described above. To encourage significantly more control over land by women, perhaps the project would have also awarded additional points to applicants who agreed to jointly title land with their spouses.

Summary of results

Under the Alatona Irrigation Project, Malian citizens took ownership of 4,940 hectares of irrigated land. Women received ownership rights to approximately 37 percent of this land as shown in the table below.

Irrigated Land Allocated to Women through the Alatona Irrigation Project

Type of land allocated	Amount of land titled in total (ha)	Amount of land titled to women (ha)	
		Titled jointly to husbands and wives	Titled to women only
Market gardens	54	0	54
Five-hectare farms allocated to PAPs	4,121 ⁹	1,648	0
Five-hectare farms allocated through the lottery	765	0	120
		1,648	174
Total	4,940	1,822	

⁹ This includes some 113 hectares that could not be easily assembled into five-hectare farms, thus were sold to the PAPs whose farms were adjacent to this land. It is assumed that this land was jointly titled in the same percentage as were the five-hectare farms.

IV. Conclusion

In MCC's Mali program, gender analysis conducted during the design of the Alatona Irrigation Project showed that innovative measures were needed if women were to gain both access and control of the newly-irrigated land. The measures designed and implemented resulted in 37 percent of the 4,940 hectares of irrigated land going to the ownership of women through women's market garden associations, joint titling or awards through the lottery. This result was a significant success and demonstrates that gender equality objectives to support income growth and poverty reduction can be achieved even in a highly-challenging socio-cultural context. Sometimes even seemingly innocuous efforts, such as providing spaces for co-titling on forms, can lead to equitable outcomes. What is important is sufficient up-front technical analysis, commitment from project designers and implementers to pursue equity objectives, and both a sensitivity to the context and a willingness to reach for change in innovative ways.

The importance of gender-responsive public outreach bears special mention here. There is no way the project would have delivered the positive results for women that it did without the well-designed and well-implemented outreach effort to educate the project beneficiaries about their rights and responsibilities as fledgling landowners, and about the benefits of joint titling for the family at large.

Finally, the Alatona Irrigation Project's land allocation activity can be considered highly innovative in the context of rural Mali. The allocation of irrigated land directly to farmers, and the granting of ownership rights to that land, was a first in rural Mali and a significant accomplishment in itself. The allocation of that land to both women and men not only strengthens that accomplishment but also sets the stage for sustainable and equitable economic growth into the future.

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