

Niger | Land certificates guarantee access to farmland for women

In the Dosso region, agriculture is the main economic activity for local communities and the biggest source of household revenue. However, land access for women remains a major obstacle to rural development. According to a study by the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency, very few women own land, despite the existence of customary laws which recognize their right to inherit property. The situation is very challenging, but solutions can be found, as shown by the case of Seybou Djamma.

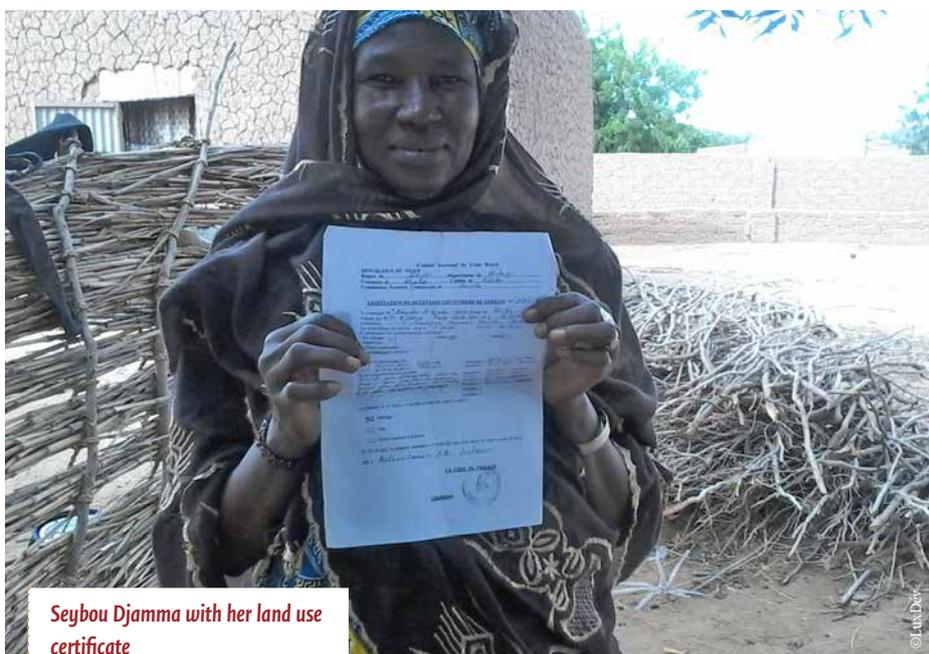
When her husband left to join the rural exodus more than fifteen years ago, Seybou Djamma found herself as head of household, alone in looking after the house, their children and the land.

Seybou lives in the village of Kolgou Zerma, not far from Kiota, in the department of Boboye. Throughout the region, it is customary for women to work a small plot of land loaned to them by their husband, brother or another village landowner, so as to engage in horticulture during the off-season. Afterwards, at the start of the winter period, the plot is returned to the owner, who benefits from the organic fertilizer applied by the woman tenant by way of compensation.

This highly precarious situation became untenable for Seybou Djamma, after more than a decade during which time she had had to assure the livelihoods and well-being of the entire family. Listening to a broadcast on the local radio, she learned that a Regional Support Fund – made available by the Regional Council of Dosso from funds given by the Luxembourg Development Cooperation – would allow her to access credit subsidized by the Banque Agricole du Niger (Agricultural Bank of Niger), based in Dosso.

A life-changing decision

In order to have a right to this loan, Seybou had to negotiate the donation of a 1.5 ha plot of family land with her husband, so that she could practice horticulture, in so doing helping to support the household. A few days later, Seybou Djamma and her husband reached an agreement by telephone in the presence of three witnesses: the neighborhood chief, the village chief and the local mayor.



Seybou Djamma with her land use certificate

Following this agreement, Seybou obtained a certificate giving proof of customary occupancy of the land in question from the village chief, marking an important milestone in her life: this certificate has enabled her to access the Regional Support Fund.

Collaboration from the whole family

The loan, of which Seybou will only pay back 55%-45% being a subsidy from the Regional Support Fund – has enabled her to close off her garden with wire netting, to protect it from animals, as well as sinking two wells and buying a motor pump and good quality seeds. In all her work to develop and cultivate her plot of land, she has been able to count on help from her children and daughters-in-law. Together, they are planning to increase the production of onions, peppers, aubergines and moringa, so as to

earn up to 30 euros per week. This makes a valuable contribution, for which Seybou is deeply grateful: “With the money that I’ll earn from the sale of my horticultural products, I plan first of all to meet the needs of my family, prepare for the weddings of my daughters and ensure that my children have a good education, seeing that my husband never returned after leaving in the exodus. This certificate, which is recognized by everyone, gives me a complete guarantee”.

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