

## Women realise their rights too late to save their land

Africa

Biofuels

Land and food

land rights

Womens Rights

Senegal



Sophie Mbodj, fearful of impact of Spanish biofuels company on her community

Sophie Mbodj became concerned over the impact that growing jatropha would have on her community, after the arrival of Spanish biofuels company Plantation Verte in the mid 2000s.

Sophie was particularly worried about the affect a biofeuls platation would have on the women in Mbane, Senegal. "Women face many issues on land - we do not have access," says Sophie, who lives in Ndombo village and is gender coordinator for the local farmer's association.

"When land was distributed in the past, women were not part of the decision making process. We did not have the courage or empowerment to influence decisions and get land. Women are more aware of their rights now but it is too late to claim as the land closest to the water is all taken."

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Plantation Verte (PV) arrived in the area in the mid 2000s and approached the local government who allocated them 20,000 hectares of land. The company has some sort of plan as to what it wants to do with the land; it wants to plant 18,200 ha of jatropha and 1,800 ha of food crops, but no jatropha has yet been planted and some of the land crosses over into the lake and into another rural community.

“The high lands, which are away from the water need irrigation but that can be difficult,” says Sophie. “It is very problematic for women to access land – it would be far better if land was given to families instead of the wealthy. When young people leave, it reduces the capacity of families to farm the land – all this is leading to more poverty.”

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Sophie adds that young people tend to migrate because of hunger and to look for jobs and the community cannot rotate the land because there is not enough land to work with. “We do not want jatropha here,” she says. “Villages need more land because families are growing and more land is needed for future generations.”

Instead they have to watch while valuable land which they need to survive is passed off to foreign investors.