



IPAR Putting farmers' needs on Senegal's national agenda

The 2012 presidential elections in Senegal opened a window of opportunity for *Initiative prospective agricole et rural* (IPAR) to put agriculture and rural development on the political agenda.

SETTING THE SCENE —Senegal's economy depends heavily on agriculture – it's an important source of export earnings and employs 60 percent of the economically active population. In rural areas, farming continues to provide the main share of household incomes, but farmers face significant challenges in making their farms viable. The majority work at a subsistence level and the country struggles with food security. However, despite the central roles agricultural and rural development play in Senegal's economy, these issues have traditionally been excluded from public debate.

WHAT IPAR DID —IPAR quickly saw the opportunity Senegal's 2012 presidential elections provided to put agricultural and rural issues at the heart of the electoral debate. Collaborating with diverse actors – including farmers in 28 peasant federations, a platform of 178 national NGOs, policymakers, political candidates and the media – IPAR identified four strategic themes to guide the debate: food security, agricultur-

al employment, land reforms and agricultural funding. It then implemented a four-phase influencing strategy:

Phase 1: Mobilizing media with a training workshop to raise awareness of the issues among journalists.

Phase 2: Organizing an electronic forum, based on the four strategic themes, to bring together stakeholders.

Phase 3: Organizing a citizen's forum, in collaboration with farmers' organizations and the platform of NGO Council Development Support, to facilitate direct discussions with representatives of the presidential candidates.

Phase 4: Conducting interviews with candidates through various print, radio and TV media outlets.



In order to reach decision makers, political candidates and their representatives, IPAR established alliances and contacts with candidates through IPAR's executive branch and its board members.

THE OUTCOME —IPAR facilitated a multi-stakeholder dialogue that enabled public discussion of the candidates' programs and proposals on agricultural and rural issues. As a result, many of the candidates refined their proposals to address the issues raised by IPAR and its partners. IPAR also designed a media interview questionnaire for the two presidential candidates that resulted in

renewed commitments from each of them to address the issues.

Since then, the new government of Senegal has made food security its top priority and called on development partners to respond to the crisis more effectively. The work has also made IPAR more visible as an institution, able to disseminate its research results to – and to build relationships with – members of the president-elect's campaign team, who now play key roles in the new government.

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