



Huairou Commission

The Huairou Commission at the International AIDS Conference

From 12-18 August, 2006, 14 members and staff of the Huairou Commission traveled to Toronto to attend the International AIDS Conference. Members participated in the UNDP/Equator Initiative Community Dialogue Space as Red Ribbon Finalists and facilitators and anchored three events—two satellite sessions on Women's Land, Inheritance and Property Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS, and a Donor Dialogue on Accountability.

13 August, 2006

Grassroots Women Many Steps Ahead in Seeing the Links between AIDS and Land Rights

Few activities at this AIDS conference address the connection with women's land and inheritance rights, besides the panels organized by the Huairou Commission. With their panel discussions, the Huairou Commission and its partners clearly surface the links between women, land and AIDS that have only recently been noticed by the global community. Moreover, the women and their partners are already many steps ahead in finding effective solutions.

The Huairou Commission has organized a team of grassroots women and their partners to participate in the 16th International AIDS Conference, representing the realities their communities face. They lend an essential perspective to this venue dominated by scientists, researchers, treatment activists and large NGOs. At this conference, nearly 20,000 activists, scientists, government officials, development agents, members of civil society, students, researchers, doctors, community members and others from throughout the world have gathered to discuss a way to end the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

14 women from GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission from four countries have come to Toronto for the conference, primarily to participate in the UNDP and Equator Initiative-organized Community Dialogue Space - Gii Maa Moob Min, in the center of the Global Village. This Space, the 11th in a series of Equator Initiative Community Dialogue Spaces, brings together the 25 finalists in the Red Ribbon Award Contest to recognize community leadership and action in responding to HIV/AIDS. Two members of GROOTS International - the Mathare Mothers Development Center of GROOTS Kenya and the Rwanda Women's Network Village of Hope - are here as contest finalists. Additionally, Esther Mwaura-Muiru of GROOTS Kenya and Solome Mukisa of the Uganda Community-Based Association for Child Welfare are facilitating the Dialogue Space along with Jennifer Proudfoot. GROOTS member Limota Goroso-Giwa of the International Women's Communication Center in Nigeria rounds out the delegation.

Besides participating in the Dialogue Space, the Huairou Commission and its partners have organized three events. On the first day of the conference, Sunday, we worked with the International Center for Research on Women to facilitate a satellite session entitled, "Bridging the Gap Between Law and Practice: Grassroots Women, Inheritance Rights and AIDS." The session was moderated by Nata Duvvury of ICRW, and featured speakers from Ntengwe for Community Development, Zimbabwe, GROOTS Kenya and Rwanda Women's Network, all participants in the Women's Land Link Africa Initiative. This session laid out the cross-cutting issues of HIV/AIDS as they intersect with women's land, inheritance and property rights and allowed the community representatives to highlight their successful experiences working to

Network Members: Asian Women & Shelter Network •
GROOTS International • Habitat International Coalition: Women & Shelter
• Red Mujer Y Habitat De America Latina Y El Caribe • International
Council of Women • Women in Cities International
• Women & Peace Network

Huairou Commission
249 Manhattan Avenue
New York, New York 11211 USA
T: 1-718-388-8915 F: 1-718-388-0285
E: info@huairou.org Web: www.huairou.org

enforce women's land rights and to implement national policies at the community level.

On Monday, the Huairou Commission organized a second panel on issues of women's land and inheritance rights in the context of AIDS - this time, with a focus on partnership. The panel, which took place within the Community Dialogue Space, featured representatives of Ntengwe for Community Development, Rwanda Women's Network, GROOTS Kenya and the Girl Child Network, as well as Huairou Commission partners: the Food and Agriculture Organization (Southern African Region), ICRW and UNDP. The interactive discussion highlighted strategies and tools used by community-based organizations to protect and ensure women's property rights as well as ways that partners are supporting community-based initiatives.

Communities are clearly finding solutions to women's lack of secure tenure, particularly as it intersects with vulnerabilities caused by HIV/AIDS, and partners are supporting these initiatives through creating spaces, supporting Peer Exchanges and linking to other stakeholders. Despite these noble efforts, these panel discussions showed that the issue is still dire, the needs are immediate and those that have succeeded in their efforts must scale them up.

14 August, 2006

Donors and Grassroots Women Propose Changes to Funding Norms

"I'm tired of hearing big donors say that 'community-based organizations are doing great work, but we just can't get our money to them'. We need to get mechanisms to channel funding to the grassroots level in place now!" -Jen Astone, Firelight Foundation

"It's a myth that grassroots women's organizations don't deliver, because they do." -Alexis MacDonald, Stephen Lewis Foundation

Today in the **Community Dialogue Space in the Global Village of the International AIDS Conference**, the Huairou Commission and GROOTS International convened a unique and groundbreaking **dialogue between grassroots practitioners and donor allies**. The Donor Dialogue discussed the challenges and benefits of working directly with grassroots organizations and generated will to convene a coalition of grassroots and donor organizations to advocate with major funding institutions for greater recognition and support to go toward grassroots organizations. The proposed coalition would target institutions such as the World Bank, Global Fund for AIDS, UNAIDS and UNDP for greater involvement of grassroots practitioners in their processes and for more direct, sustained funding to grassroots organizations. It is widely accepted that such grassroots organizations provide the major response to HIV/AIDS in the poorest, most marginalized affected communities.

The Dialogue began with grassroots women - home-based caregivers and community organizers - laying out the issues and the context in which they work. It emerged clearly that women shoulder a huge burden of care due to HIV/AIDS, almost entirely without resources or recognition. Rose Omia from the Mathare Mother's Development Center said, "We have all the knowledge and expertise on the ground. But big donors come in and bring their experts to do research and gather data. Why don't they find a way to do it differently? By building the capacity of grassroots women and supporting us?"



Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, founder and director of the African Women's Development Fund clearly laid out the major problem with the dominant mode of funding - the strengths of women's work are not only going unrecognized in funding processes, but are actually being undermined. Grassroots women's strengths lie in their collective approach, in their movement building, in their holistic responses. "People do not live their lives in boxes that can be checked off," she said. And yet most major donors come into communities, select the leaders they want to work with rather than supporting communities to select their own leaders, fund programs rather than providing core support, and fund in cycles that are 5 years at the longest. As Esther Mwaura of GROOTS Kenya put it, "A movement cannot be built in five years."

For the Dialogue, GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission pulled together a strong panel of donor-partners that included Alexis MacDonald of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Suneeta Dahr of the UNIFEM Trust Fund, Julia Greenberg of American Jewish World Service, Muadi Mukenge of the Global Fund for Women and Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi of the African Women's Development Fund. Each of these women likes to do business differently and support grassroots organizations' unique, holistic ways of working.

The Dialogue was attended by conference participants as well as institutional representatives such as Nadeem Mohammad of the World Bank MAP.

Mathare Mother's Development Center and Rwanda Women's Network Village of Hope Honored as Finalists in Red Ribbon Award Contest at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto

The Huairou Commission and GROOTS International are proud to announce that the Mathare Mother's Development Center (part of GROOTS Kenya) and the Rwanda Women's Network Village of Hope were honored at last week's International AIDS Conference in Toronto as finalists in the Red Ribbon Awards Contest: Celebrating Community Leadership and Action on AIDS.

As Red Ribbon Award Finalists, the Mathare Mother's Development Center and the Village of Hope were awarded \$5000 and were supported to participate in the International AIDS Conference as a part of the Community Dialogue Space: Gii Maa Moob Min, organized by UNDP and the Equator Initiative. They were further honored by dignitaries including Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, HRH Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway and Dr. Helene Gayle at an awards ceremony on 16th August at the University of Toronto.

This inaugural award, presented by UNDP in partnership with UNAIDS, is intended to draw attention to the many contributions communities are making in response to the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic and "aims to support creative and sustainable ways to provide care, treatment and support to people living with HIV/AIDS." (www.redribbonaward.org)

During the week-long Community Dialogue Space, these two groups, along with 23 other finalist communities (listed below) were able to present their work to conference attendees, thereby highlighting the extraordinary contributions they are making to the fight against HIV/AIDS.



The Mathare Mother's Development Centre (MMDC) is a network of 30 self-help groups in Mathare—one of the largest slums in Africa—that brings women together for capacity building, to respond to collective issues, and to learn the power of space in governance. This group works within Nairobi's second largest informal settlement and encompasses various community projects, including home-based care and support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS, a daycare centre, and a knitting project for orphaned girls.



Since the beginning of MMDC in 1996, caregivers like Rose Omia and Lucy Marete have been dedicated to the vision of a better future for themselves and their families. Rose Omia is a trained community health worker working full-time with the Baraka Health Clinic in Mathare. As a leader, she assists with the management and development of MMDC and links grassroots caregivers with the services of the clinic.

Lucy Marete is a full-time caregiver and is the chair of the home-based care committee. She also heads the knitting project, volunteering her knitting machine and her time to provide knitting lessons to a group of girls in the community. This project was implemented by five caregivers in 2003 as a response to the growing number of orphans due to HIV/AIDS. With time, the project expanded to include crochet lessons as well as mentoring and spiritual support from other MMDC members. In learning how to design and make clothing, these young women are gaining marketable skills and business experience that will improve the livelihoods of themselves as well as their families.

As part of GROOTS Kenya (*Grassroots Organizations Operation Together in Sisterhood*) MMDC shares experiences, challenges, achievements, and knowledge with women across Kenya. A decade after its inception, Mathare Mothers Development Centre continues to be an example of the capacity of grassroots women to do development work with little or no resources from outside sources.

The Rwanda Women's Network Village of Hope began as a community initiative to respond to physical and psychological trauma being suffered by women who had survived the 1994 genocide. The Village of Hope, in addition to providing housing to 120 women and their families, offers services to over 1000 women in the surrounding community, including medical services, counseling, education and income-generating activities. An emphasis is placed on women living with AIDS, who are treated in a holistic manner.





Peninah Abatoni is the director of the Village of Hope. She herself is a sign of hope, not only coordinating the activities at the VoH, but also providing counseling for women who have been victims of rape and violence, many of them HIV positive. Peninah not only provides them with services, but empowers these women, actively engaging them in the activities at the Village of Hope, thereby providing them with a supportive, secure environment where they can talk, laugh and cry with their peers, and help other women to heal.

Finalist Communities

The 25 Finalist communities were:

- AIDS Care China
- Association African Solidarite (Burkina Faso)
- Kale Heywet Church, Health and HIV/AIDS Department (Ethiopia)
- Fundacion Casa Gami (Colombia)
- Mapilelo Project (Namibia)
- Mathare Mother's Development Center (Kenya)
- Sudanese People Living with HIV/AIDS Care Association
- Thai Network of People Living with AIDS*
- Tanga AIDS Working Group (Tanzania)
- Village of Hope, Rwanda Women's Network
- Enda Sante (Senegal)
- Pt Foundation Mak Nyah (Transgender and Transsexual) Program (Malaysia)
- Spiritia Foundation (Indonesia)
- The All Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS*
- Fundacion Para Estudio E Investigacion de la Mujer (Argentina)
- Girl Child Network (Zimbabwe)*
- Grupo de Apoio a Prevencao a AIDS, Ceara (Brazil)
- Men as Partners Program, Engender Health (South Africa)
- Accion Solidaria (Venezuela)
- Durjoy Nari Shongo (Bangladesh)
- Youth Empowerment and Child Labor Elimination Project (Nigeria)
- Cambodian Save Children Network
- Liberia Orphans of AIDS Foundation
- Mboole Rural Development (Zambia)*
- Mary Joy through Aid Development (Ethiopia)

**Indicates winners of Red Ribbon Award, each presented with \$20,000*

For more information contact: Shannon Hayes, Shannon.hayes@huairou.org



