



HUAIROU COMMISSION

Women, Homes & Community

**The Huairou Commission MDG 3 Accountability Initiative:
Centre-Staging Grassroots Women in Realizing the MDGs
“The Grassroots Challenge Grants”**



Funded By: MDG 3 FUND of the Dutch Development Cooperation,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Winter / Spring 2010



Development Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Acknowledgements

The Huairou Commission would like to acknowledge the grassroots women's organizations that took on the 'Grassroots Challenge'. We appreciate your hard work and continued commitment to building sustainable and livable communities. We would specially like to thank the that grassroots women and men who took leadership in this initiative including: Clotilde Márquez Cruz, Félix Gutiérrez Matta, María Condori, Carmen Griffiths, Lana Finikin and Arlene Bailey, Veronica Kini, Mirelle Tchaptchet, Fany Azong, Jane Nyokabi, Hellen Kamiri, Margaret Wairimu Njunge, Marling Haydee Rodriguez, Helen Arline Toruno, Ajilong Margret, Auma Josephine, Rose Nakong, Ana Lucy Bengochea, Balbina Chimilio, Juan Arzu, Ruth Serech, Shiv Kashi Bai, Laxmikant Malvadkar, Rajabhau Jadhav, Shivkashibai Mahagaonkar, Dikle, Savita Runje, Amrapali Adekar, Estrella Casin, Nerisa Lascano, Josephine Castillo, and many others.

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) recognize the multiple dimensions of poverty including disease, hunger, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion, while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. Of the eight goals, MDG 3 'Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women,' is widely considered crucial to achieving all of the other Goals, principally through equal access to education for girls.

Despite a target date of 2005, progress towards MDG 3 has lagged considerably behind the other Goals. In response to this situation the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation launched the MDG 3 Fund in 2008, committing €70 million over three years to advance gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. The Huairou Commission was awarded one of 45 grants for our *MDG3 Accountability Initiative: Centre-Staging Grassroots Women in Realizing the MDGs* to demonstrate community-based approaches to realizing the MDGs. The Huairou Commission initiative focuses on strengthening women's empowerment through leadership development and participation in decision-making and increasing women's access to land and housing.

The Huairou Commission works from the perspective that grassroots women are experts on their communities' needs and innovators in developing solutions to the problems their communities face. They are the ones who have firsthand experience of what works and what does not work in their communities and are therefore crucial to achieving change. However, grassroots women's knowledge is rarely recognized or utilized, prohibiting their ability to influence institutions and other stakeholders to ensure that development agendas reflect women's and communities' real needs and priorities.

From this perspective, the Huairou Commission launched the *MDG3 Accountability Initiative* with 'Grassroots Challenge Grants,' awarded to 10 grassroots groups across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, to promote recognition of grassroots women's work and demonstrate their effective development practices. The Grants were designed to position grassroots women's organizations as key holders of good practice and knowledge that contributes to achieving the MDGs, and to demonstrate the significant impact grassroots women can make in their communities with minimal financial resources. These Grants were implemented during a short period (from March to July 2009) and conducted activities in a creative, non-project oriented manner.

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Discussion

While grassroots women's experience unique challenges living in poor communities in Africa, Latin America and Asia, grassroots women face a number of similar circumstances. Often they are marginalized and isolated geographically, socially and/or economically. Poverty and insecurity of assets prohibit women from influencing local decisions and policy-making that impacts their daily lives. Social and cultural barriers can further isolate women from the public sphere. For example, the Garifuna women of El Comite in Honduras have faced marginalization and exclusion from decision-making spaces and have rarely been able to build relationships with those in power due to discrimination against indigenous groups. Similarly, women in the Kaabong communities in Uganda and the Northwest region of Cameroon have struggled to overcome customary and traditional laws that prohibit women from owning land which not only limits productivity but increases their vulnerability to loss of assets, income and food.

In addition to marginalization and isolation, grassroots women are challenged to cope with multiple crises further compounded by poverty. From the growing negative impacts of climate change, to agricultural collapse in rural areas, to the on-going challenges that the HIV and AIDS pandemic has brought to communities, grassroots women are forced to cope and develop strategies to address these challenges in the short and long term. To address immediate issues, grassroots women organize to protect basic needs and generate income. For sustained and long term challenges grassroots women organize to overcome marginalization, protect rights and advocate as decision-makers.

Grassroots women from across the world have common strategies they use to address community challenges, both immediate and long term, and to contribute to sustained community-led development. These include:

- organizing and building grassroots women's networks
- advocacy to have community knowledge and expertise recognized
- developing and nurturing local constituencies, and
- strategically engaging and partnering with decision-makers

The Grassroots Challenge Grants were intended to demonstrate and advance grassroots women's strategies for community-led development and make linkages between local solutions,

decision makers and resources. The Grants were designed so that each group could use their own experience and address local issues while undertaking a few common activities. Across the Grants, groups focused on introducing the MDGs to their communities, reviewing community problems within the MDG framework, and establishing or advancing relationships with stakeholders.

The flexible design of the Grassroots Challenge Grants enabled grassroots women to:

- continue to build upon and develop their on-going activities
- obtain information and establish relationships they wouldn't have otherwise
- make significant advancements in their community development work

Challenge Grant groups addressed a range of community issues such as women's exclusion and marginalization from decision-making, basic services and health provision, and extreme poverty and food insecurity. By linking diverse issues to the MDG framework and reaching out to relevant community stakeholders grassroots women's groups across continents and contexts were able to:

- use the MDGs as an accountability framework and platform for dialogue for stakeholders and local authorities
- enlarge and strengthen their own process and organizing (by networking across villages, creating coalitions, etc.), and
- convince community members and/or stakeholders to see grassroots women's work differently, as contributors to poverty reduction and women's empowerment in their communities

These initiatives demonstrate how big changes can be made with flexible investments to organized grassroots women's groups. In this short period, grassroots women's groups reached out to 47 communities to raise awareness and knowledge on the importance of women's empowerment to achieving the MDGs, built capacity and leadership skills of roughly 2,113 grassroots women, and engaged or built partnerships between at least 11 local authorities and grassroots groups. The following section outlines the diverse experiences of each organization that participated in the Challenge Grant process.

Lessons and Achievements of the Challenge Grants

Organizing, awareness raising and building grassroots women's networks

The Challenge Grants demonstrate how grassroots women organize to protect basic needs, generate income to overcome marginalization and protect women's rights, and advance grassroots women as citizens and decision-makers. For groups in Bolivia and Jamaica, the Grants provided an opportunity to focus on international frameworks, such as the MDGs, to mobilize community members and consolidate organizing structures of grassroots women.

For Mujeres Candelaria in Bolivia, where women are isolated and facing daily struggles related to poverty and food insecurity, the Challenge Grant provided an opportunity to link their struggles to global poverty reduction targets and press for accountability from local authorities. In Jamaica, GROOTS Jamaica used the Challenge Grant to inventory the strategies of their emerging network and build a common agenda for future organizing.



Mujeres Aymara de Candelaria – Aymara, Bolivia

Due to the geographic location of the Aymara community, residents face harsh environmental conditions such as droughts, hailstorms and frost, which threaten food production and livelihoods. In addition to environmental conditions, traditional attitudes exclude women from participation in local decision-making. El Centro de Mujeres Aymara de Candelaria formed in response to these pressing issues to strengthen indigenous women's abilities to improve community food production, combat hunger and generate steady incomes. Candelaria also focuses on the eliminating discrimination against indigenous women through training and education on human rights and local decision-making skills.

For the MDG 3 initiative, Candelaria conducted workshops for over 300 men, women and youth from three provinces on poverty alleviation and women's role in the development process. For participants the meetings sparked interest in taking action, however many questioned why the MDGs

were not introduced to the rural communities nine years earlier. They also questioned who was accountable for the implementation of the Goals. While participating local weren't able to reconcile this gap, they were able to offer some logistical support for Candelaria's follow up actions which include:

- conducting grassroots women's needs assessments
- providing on-going information on the MDGs, and
- supporting community income generating projects by providing technical assistance and economic resources

Candelaria was able to use the MDG3 initiative to press local decision-makers to address the concerns of the Amayra community. Women felt that by utilizing the MDG framework, they were able to legitimize issues they have consistently raised in their community from food insecurity to gender equality. The initiative has also attracted women and men to join Candelaria and strengthened solidarity among existing members.

Groots Jamaica – Torrington Park, Barbican / Grant Pen, Fletchers Land, Trench Town and St. Thomas, Jamaica

GROOTS Jamaica is an emerging network comprised of six grassroots organizations and women's self-help groups. While each organization has their own history and track record of addressing local concerns and priorities, the network is coming together with grassroots leaders from rural and urban communities to address common priorities such as violence in communities, building sustainable communities resilient to natural disasters, fostering healthy parenting practices, ending food insecurity, and using artistic expressions as a means of development.

For the MDG3 Initiative, GROOTS Jamaica focused on strengthening grassroots women's constituencies within their own organizations. Each network member held reflection workshops for women to identify issues that exist in their communities, make linkages to the MDG framework, and analyze their perceptions of local and national governmental efforts to achieve the MDGs. As a result over 100 women were engaged in developing an advocacy agenda for the network which includes ensuring women's safety, honoring their rights, building food security, and initiating poverty alleviation projects at the local level. In addition, the initiative enabled network members to develop organizational strengthening plans for each network member.

Lessons and Achievements of the Challenge Grants

Building constituencies and engaging local authorities

The Challenge Grants were designed to highlight grassroots women's knowledge and strategies and support them to link up and build relationships with stakeholders for greater impact in addressing community concerns. Grassroots women in Kenya and Cameroon used the Challenge Grant to identify cultural and institutional barriers that block women's participation in local decision making, specifically violence against women. Both organizations brought community actors together to address these community issues and succeeded in getting concrete commitments from

stakeholders for follow up action.

In Nicaragua, women producer collectives in Jinotega used the advancements they've made in addressing poverty and promoting women's empowerment to negotiate with local authorities and stakeholders to commit to future collaborations. Each of these of three organizations used informal decision-making processes and relationship building to get grassroots contributions recognized and attain commitments from local government officials.



Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group – Bamendnkwe, Kumbo and Mankon, Cameroon

Located in the Northwest Province of Cameroon, Ntankah is comprised of women producer cooperatives who focus on strengthening livelihoods and reducing asset vulnerability within a male dominated culture where traditional values strongly discourage women's leadership. Ntankah strengthens women's assets through savings and credit schemes and supports women to lobby for increased political participation to combat underrepresentation in decision-making.

Ntankah used their Challenge Grant to build general community awareness of socio-cultural and political factors that keep women in the margins of political participation through surveys, workshops and discussion forums with local authorities.

Ntankah conducted a survey of women in politics and decision making at village, district, regional and national levels with another non-governmental organization, Cameroon Women in Positive Action (CAWIPOA). Results indicated only one woman is represented of twenty parliamentary seats in the region. They also found that there are no women Governors, Mayors, Senior or Sub-Divisional Officers, or Police Commissioners in the region. While women constitute almost 52% of the population, evidence revealed that less than 3% of leadership positions in the region are occupied by women. The two organizations used this data to reinforce their claims in the community forum.

Workshops for grassroots women held in Bamendnkwe, Kumbo and Mankon identified domestic violence as one of the barriers that impede women's empowerment and prohibit more women from participating in decision-making. Findings from the survey and workshops were brought to a community forum where ninety men, women, youth, traditional leaders, administrative and municipal officials, opinion leaders and church leaders convened a lively debate. Participants were enthusiastic about the MDG3 initiative as it represented legitimate support and global pressure to promote and build women's empowerment.

Gatundu Mwurituri Women Initiative (GAMWI)

- Kiamwangi, Kairi-ini, Kiganjo, Munduro, Ndaruagu, Ngenda North and Ngenda south Gatundu, Kenya

Though the state has launched few initiatives to advance gender equality in the Gatundu district, women and girls still remain underrepresented in the political sphere. Gatundu Mwurituri Women Initiative (GMWI), recognizes that until women and girls are fully represented in decision-making bodies, they will suffer disadvantages in education, in preventative HIV and AIDS treatment services, and will have limited opportunities to climb out of poverty. GAMWI has therefore committed to increase grassroots women's participation and visibility in local governance through strengthening women's capacity and leadership to engage local government.

For the MDG initiative GAMWI engaged over 40 women and men leaders from the region. They focused on barriers to women's political participation, specifically

gender discrimination and violence. In appreciation of the work grassroots women do themselves, they questioned how the governments could begin assessing national progress on the MDGs without first learning of the work grassroots women do.

"It was very encouraging to see grassroots women realize that they can create a supportive process that is driven by them and not by politicians to ensure an increase in quality and quantity of leadership."

- Esther Mwaura-Muiru, Director GROOTS Kenya

GMWI held a community forum with grassroots women, health care professionals, school heads, committee members of national devolved funds office, land tribunals and youth groups to transform participants' views about women, promote women in leadership, and to help participants understand the causes and consequences of gender violence.

As a result, agreements were made by grassroots

women to take further actions with the support of participating stakeholders. These actions include:

- create awareness on gender issues in Gatundu through mobilizing community at bazaars and other open spaces
- visit schools and give talks
- act as mediators of conflict in the community "persistence breaks resilience" and keep talking against negative cultural practices, and
- form a response team of gender defenders to undertake to issues of GBV

The Challenge Grant enabled grassroots women in Kenya to build a broad constituency within the community committed to addressing barriers to women's participation in decision-making. The initiative also functioned as a pilot for the GROOTS Kenya network (which GMWI is a member) to replicate the initiative in two other Kenyan districts: Kakamega and Nanyuki.

Union de Cooperativas de Produccion Agrícola Las Brumas

- Jinotega, Nicaragua

Union de Cooperativas de Produccion Agrícola Las Brumas is an association of 25 grassroots agricultural cooperatives from the Jinotega region of Nicaragua. This region is traditionally a highly productive area in coffee, cattle, staple grains and vegetables. Despite its fertility, it has suffered from government negligence. The association, therefore, helps members develop sustainable agricultural practices while also promoting social justice, democratic decision making, and strengthening the political voices of women farmers.

Through the Challenge Grant Cooperativa Las Brumas used the MDGs as a framework to press for government accountability. During workshops over 180 women brainstormed about the meaning of each MDG and analyzed how the work that they do in cooperatives relate to the realization of the Goals. According to the

Haydee Rodriguez, director of Las Brumas, the activity was empowering for the women to see the far reach and implications of their contributions to community development and reduction of poverty.

"The State sees us as a third category, but they should prioritize us, since we are the ones who have been doing all of this work toward achieving the MDGs!"

- Marling Haydee Rodriguez, Director Las Brumas

Las Brumas also held two dialogues through their MDG 3 initiative. The first was held with the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, CEPREDENAC (Center of Coordination for the Prevention of Natural Resources) which is the regional disaster management agency for Central America, and 62 women leaders from the cooperatives. The dialogues provided grassroots women with the opportunity to learn about natural disasters and community resilience

and to use their knowledge of the MDGs to press for commitments from stakeholders. As a result of the first dialogue, CEPREDENAC committed to provide further training and capacity building workshops on resilience-building for members of Las Brumas.

A second dialogue was held in San Rafael del Norte and Wiwili bringing together 59 women from Las Brumas and several Municipal officials to discuss soil conservation and agriculture, political advocacy, and minority rights. This process was an opportunity for women to learn from each other in building partnerships and engaging with local leaders, to voice their needs and concerns to local government, and open the door for future engagement. Immediately following the dialogue two cooperatives members were invited to join the local government in representing grassroots women's concerns in their gender roundtable.

Lessons and Achievements of the Challenge Grants

Building capacity and knowledge of decision-making processes

Even when local mechanisms exist for citizens to participate in governance processes, grassroots women need to have knowledge of the process and capacity to engage to make an impact. In Uganda, Honduras and Guatemala grassroots women conducted leadership and advocacy trainings, held

workshops with political candidates, and facilitated Local to Local dialogues with community stakeholders to ensure women are empowered to participate in local decision-making processes.



AWARE

– Kaabong and Karamoja, Uganda

AWARE is a grassroots organization based in Karamoja, one of the poorest regions of Uganda. Due to customary laws that do not regard women as equal members of society, women in Karamoja have limited access to resources, particularly land. AWARE trains women in vocational skills, community paralegal processes, and organizes savings and loan groups to build asset security and improve livelihoods.

“The MDG Challenge Grant has strengthened the relationship among community members who have recognized through working together with respect and common interests, they can change and empower communities. Among all, it has helped the grassroots women and communities find possible solutions for common problems facing women and improve on the existing one or utilize the natural resources.”

- Grace Luomo, Director AWARE

Despite AWARE's on-going support for grassroots women in Karamoja, traditional and cultural belief

systems have acted as barriers, particularly in participating in decision-making processes that impact their lives. Through the Challenge Grant AWARE trained 150 grassroots women on leadership and skills to engage local authorities and participate in local decision-making processes. Women identified priority areas in the workshops to present to local authorities:

- eradication of extreme poverty and hunger through their initiation of income generating schemes (MDG 1) and
- combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases from their work to care for HIV and AIDS positive people in their communities (MDG 6).

AWARE held six workshops for 150 women and men where participants were asked to reflect on how grassroots women could contribute to the development of the region, linking their initiatives to the MDG framework.

Grassroots women leaders applied the lessons learned in decision making skills during a Local to Local dialogue held with elders, traditional leaders, district counselors, local police and other key

stakeholders in their community. Participants raised issues of traditional practices and enforcement of laws that negatively affect women and the elimination of bribes in hospitals and land procurement procedures, which challenge women's ability to access services and land assets.

Grassroots women were able to bridge the gaps between their experiences and community stakeholders. As a result, stakeholders made a number of commitments to redress women's concerns which include:

- 100 land titles were granted to women by traditional leaders of the community
- Election of 5 women into to the local council - for the first time in Kaabong
- 50 women started processing their documents for land ownership with the support of community paralegals
- Gender-based committees comprised of grassroots women and community paralegals were formed to address issues of women's secure access to and control over land in all the 9 sub locations participating in the initiative.

El Comité de Emergencia Garifuna – Santa Fe, Trujillo and Colon, Honduras

Historically indigenous Garifuna communities in Honduras have suffered from political and social seclusion which has resulted in poor access to basic services and viable economic opportunities, and marginalization from political processes. El Comité de Emergencia Garifuna de Honduras therefore was founded to build sustainable and resilient communities that are economically self-sufficient, able to protect and manage their ancestral lands, and empowered to defend their indigenous rights.

In response to prolonged marginalization from political and decision-making processes, El Comité used their Grassroots Challenge initiative to strengthen grassroots women's skills and capacities to voice their concerns and build relationships with Honduran candidates for Mayor and State

Representatives. Within a community forum with electoral candidates, grassroots women identified and presented core community concerns of poor access to basic services, limited income generating opportunities, and health issues, particularly rising rates of HIV and AIDS.

After questions were presented by the grassroots, each Candidate presented his agenda on MDGs 1, 3 and 6 and proposed solutions while include:

- building strategic alliances with health institutions
- creating information centers, improving health clinics
- building awareness among youth, and facilitating access to affordable antiviral medication

On the topic of gender equality, candidates acknowledged the need to increase women's

participation in decision making and one of the candidates proposed providing extra support to single mothers and institutionalizing economic and social support to these women.

Since this political forum, two candidates have been elected: Noel Ruiz from Santa Fe from the National Party and Thelama Gotay, vice Mayor of Trujillo. Both have committed to supporting the Guarifuna community by making micro-financing easily accessible to women, increasing women's participation in decision-making, and improving Guarifuna community's access to health services and HIV/AIDS prevention services. Due to the economic status of the country, projects have yet to be enacted, however this process has shifted the position of Garifuna men and women in public space and has opened doors for partnership with governments that have long been closed.



Coordinacion de Desarrollo Integral de Mujeres Mayas (CODIMM) – San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala

For Kaqchikel women, empowerment is reflected in their ability to be economically independent, able to stand as equals to their male counterparts and have an active role in decision making. Therefore CODIMM, an indigenous women's group in Guatemala, supports Kaqchikel women to take leadership in civic processes, develop saving and credit schemes for microenterprises, and create sustainable agricultural practices that promote food security.

CODIMM used the MDGs as framework to mobilize indigenous women around civic participation and political

advocacy. CODIMM facilitated 'social audits' with grassroots women leaders to explore issues in their communities that most affect their lives such as poor maternal health, HIV and AIDS, gender discrimination and unequal rights for women. They used the results of the audits to develop 'grassroots indicators' that enable grassroots women to track local government progress on the eradication of HIV and AIDS, improvement of maternal health, and address women's unequal rights and gender discrimination.

The Challenge Grant initiative enabled Kaqchikel women in Guatemala to develop an advocacy tool to press for accountability from the municipality of San Juan Comalapa.



Lessons and Achievements of the Challenge Grants

Partnership and Negotiation with Local Government

Using the MDG framework, grassroots women pushed for accountability and transparency from local government and other community stakeholders by:

- demonstrating community-based approaches that contribute to the MDGs and
- analyzing government commitments and progress in comparison

Grassroots groups used the MDGs to build women's empowerment and put a spotlight on how local and national government addresses the issues in their communities.

In India, Shikwa, a grassroots women's self help agricultural producer group, used awareness of the MDGs to dialogue with government officials on mainstreaming women as agricultural producers. In the Philippines, DAMPA, frustrated by the lack of government response, used mandates to localize the MDGs and their own bottom-up solutions to negotiate commitments from the local government agencies.



Shikwa

- Nanded and Osmanabad District, India

Shikwa, a community-based organization working in the Nanded district in Maharashtra, is comprised of women agricultural producers who have struggled to generate profits with limited access to credit, information and technology resources. To increase production, exchange knowledge and ensure sustainable incomes, they formed organic vegetable cooperatives uniting 500 women from 20 villages in 2 districts.

"It is power over resources and their ability to demonstrate successful initiatives that adds leverage to the voices of women, who are in turn recognized by government authorities for their strength and capacity to act as community leaders."

- Prema Gopalan,
Director of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), India

For their Grassroots Challenge Grant initiative, Shikwa organized a workshop with women and men from ten

different communities to examine how the MDGs are related to the socio-economic development of their communities. Special focus was given to building livelihoods, increasing the quality of education, and improving access to information related to the Goals.

After the initial workshop, Shikwa organized monthly community forums to review action plans and provide feedback to community entrepreneurs and federation leaders. Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), a Mumbai-based NGO that provides support and links grassroots women to stakeholders, joined the forums with village government leaders and representatives from the Department of Agriculture. The forums enabled women to identify government programs that provided opportunities for the cooperatives such as trainings on organic farming, vermin compost, and sanitation (toilet and waste water management). Discussions centered on the importance of women taking on community leadership and moving beyond savings and credit to address development issues and build resilience in their communities. Women collectively agreed that in order to educate the younger generation about the issues that plague them such as food crisis, climate change, and poverty, they must first become leaders beyond

the confinement of their communities.

As a result of the community forums, each village has committed to designing their own development project according to the specific needs of the community such as water and sanitation, income generation, health, disaster risk reduction (DRR). A team of specialists from Shikwa will be assigned to each village to support and track the progress of the initiative. Each month, leaders should come to federation meeting and share with one another what they have accomplished and where they face challenges. Federation and grassroots leaders have agreed to call officials to the federation meeting if there are any gaps that need to be addressed by government.

Through the Challenge Grant initiative both men and women were able to learn about the MDGs and how it connects to the socio-economic development of their communities, particularly related to livelihoods, increasing the quality of education, and improving access to information. Grassroots women were empowered to take leadership through community forums to generate concrete follow up plans for grassroots women to collaborate with local government on community development initiatives.

DAMPA

- Manila (Novatas, Silangan and San Mateo), Philippines

DAMPA is a large federation of 110 grassroots organizations working in partnership with 30,000 household members throughout metropolitan Manila and neighboring regions in the Philippines. DAMPA began in 1986 to stop forced evictions and negotiate for community-led relocations. Recognizing women's leadership in this process, DAMPA began to focus on issues that directly affect women such as education, health care, and access to credit and basic services. Grassroots women pooled their resources to build community pharmacies, and provide reproductive health and cancer detection and prevention services. They also run land acquisition projects that include community mortgages, direct land purchase and resettlement programs.

A large part of DAMPA's achievements are a result of women's knowledge and skills. DAMPA documents each member's profile to match her skills set to the needs of the community. Regular monthly meetings, general assemblies and board meetings also provide grassroots leaders with space for women to bring together ideas, analyze common challenges and develop solutions.

DAMPA used the MDG framework to highlight women's contribution to the Goals and press Barangays, the most local form of government, to respond to needs in the community. The Barangay Development Councils and the Local Development Councils were mandated by the National Government in 2000 to develop projects that would localize efforts to realize the MDGs, however community members were frustrated by lack of response. DAMPA held local forums in three communities to

present their contributions to addressing health and livelihood concerns in the community and press local government to make their own commitments.

This strategy generated direct results:

- Barangay officials in Novatas committed to allocate resources for women's livelihood initiatives and the Council committed to funding a feeding and maternal health program and make regular garbage collection
- Barangay officials in San Matteo led to commitments in the deployment of village peacekeepers and
- Barangay officials in Silangan committed to regular garbage pick up, access to medical services for community members and to partner and provide support to DAMPA's on-going work



Lessons Learned

While grassroots women's communities across the world are diverse, grassroots women often face common challenges such as insecurity of incomes and assets, discrimination and marginalization from decision-making spaces, and increased burdens brought by periodic crises in economy, environment and health. The Grassroots Challenge Grant generated lessons from grassroots women's direct experiences and demonstrated how they build leadership and women's promote empowerment.

- Grassroots women are empowered when their contributions and concrete actions to community problem-solving is recognized by themselves, peers and stakeholders. When grassroots women are able to link with others to exchange information across communities they see the value in their own work and are recognized as experts by others.
- Grassroots women's ability to respond to community needs and priorities is strengthened through their organizing structures. Developing organizations, networks and federations of grassroots self-help groups supports women's leadership development and ensures community initiatives are sustained and not lost when projects or programs end.
- Grassroots women expand their reach in the community and strengthen the power their voices through linking to organizations and stakeholders with similar agendas. Building constituencies enables grassroots women to incorporate their agendas and concerns into a wider political agenda with more stakeholders and increased opportunities for impact with decision-makers.
- When grassroots women's contributions to community development are recognized by local authorities and decision-makers their identities are shifted from beneficiaries and clients of government programs to citizens. Supporting grassroots women to be monitors and community resource persons increases governmental accountability and builds democratic process.

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HUAIROU COMMISSION

Women, Homes & Community

The Huairou Commission, established in 1995 at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, is a global coalition of networks, non-governmental and grassroots organizations, institutions and individual professionals that links grassroots women's community development organizations to partners for access to resources, information sharing and political spaces. The Huairou Commission fosters grassroots women's groups' participation in decision-making processes focusing on promoting urban and rural livability and sustainable development, local to global, and promotes the awareness of a pro-poor, women-centered development agenda among key bilateral and multi-lateral institutions.

The Huairou Commission members focus on network building, knowledge sharing, and advocacy activities associated with:

- Sustaining grassroots women's leadership in redeveloping families, homes, communities, and economies in crisis situations (disaster, post-conflict, and HIV/AIDS);
- Local governance and asset-securing approaches that anchor grassroots women's participation;
- Collaborative partnerships that strengthen and upscale grassroots local knowledge and advance alternative development policies.

Huairou Commission network members and organizations organize through four campaigns: Governance; Community Resilience; AIDS; and Land & Housing. These Campaigns, identified bottom-up from the work of grassroots women's organizations, concretize and advance the contributions poor women are making to reduce poverty, meet basic needs, re-establish collective self-help approaches, and change local decision making to include them. The Huairou Commission's core goal is to win the development community's recognition that grassroots women's groups' participation in local planning, implementation, and evaluation is a prerequisite for effective poverty reduction and decentralization.

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