



# **HUAIROU COMMISSION**

*Women, Homes & Community*

## **The Local to Local Dialogue: A Tool for Strengthening Women's Capacity to Negotiate and Partner with Local Authorities**

### **A Report from the African Regional Local to Local Dialogue Training**

March 17th to 20th, 2009 | Accra, Ghana

Organized by: **The Huairou Commission**

Facilitated by: **GROOTS Kenya and UCOBAC**

Supported by: **The UN-Habitat, Huairou Commission and  
the Government of Norway**

REPORT PREPARED BY: **Sarah Silliman, The Huairou Commission**



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Huairou Commission Local to Local Dialogue Initiative has been a process developed and supported over the past ten years by a number of individual grassroots women leaders, civil society groups, local authorities and institutions. The Huairou Commission would like to recognize the efforts and leadership of the African women leaders and their organizations who have worked to make the Local to Local dialogues part of the on-going effort to ensure local development works for communities.

In particular the Huairou Commission would like to recognize GROOTS Kenya, International Women's Communication Centre (IWCC), Ntankah Village Women Collective, Rwanda Women's Network, and the Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC) for their efforts in piloting Local to Local Dialogues from 2002 to the present. In addition, the Huairou Commission would like to thank GROOTS Kenya, with the leadership of Esther Mwaura-Muiru, Everlyne Nairesiae, Violet Shivutse, Ann Wanjirou and Helen Kimiri, and UCOBAC, with the leadership of Solome Mukisa, Frances Birungi Odong, and Alice Kayongo Mutebi, for their hard work in developing, teaching and promoting the Local to Local dialogue processes. Without the hard work of these dedicated women this training and the lessons and work derived from it would never have been possible.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is the Local-to-Local Dialogue process? How can it be used to build women's voice and leadership in the community, enhance local governance and ultimately build democratic institutions? Who is it that takes this process forward? From March 17th to 20th, over forty women leaders, representing grassroots women's self-help groups, and women-focused CBOs and NGOs from twelve countries across West, East and Southern Africa took up these questions and others during the Community Facilitators Training on the Local to Local Dialogue. Organized by the Huairou Commission, with facilitation by GROOTS Kenya and UCOBAC, Uganda, in partnership with the UN-Habitat Gender Mainstreaming Unit and supported by the Government of Norway, the training was a part of an on-going initiative of the Huairou Commission to support women's leadership, community organizing and partnership building at the local level using the Local to Local Dialogue process.

Recognizing the unequal balance of power and decision-making in many countries across the world, the Huairou Commission has been supporting the development of processes at the local level that building women's leadership, community coalitions, ability to advocate with local authorities and build democratic structures over the past ten years. The Local to Local dialogue is one such example. Initially piloted in 2002 as a means to build women's ability to engage with local leadership and authorities, the Local to Local dialogue process has developed into an effective strategy to enhance women's leadership and create sustained partnerships with decision-makers at the local level.

Everyday in communities across the world, meetings are held with varied stakeholders to discuss pressing issues, but these meetings aren't necessarily a Local to Local dialogue. Often, such meetings are called by individuals or institutions that have an interest in issues that affect a community, such as local government, NGOs and local businesses, but only bring the community into the process after needs and issues have been identified. These discussions can result in a solution to a particular issue, but frequently, agreements are not followed up and/or the relationships between the community and partners are not sustained. In contrast, participants of the Local to Local dialogue training learned that a Local to Local dialogue starts with the community - communities are the ones that identify their shared values, prioritize their needs, map the resources (both within and outside the community) and identify key stakeholders and al-

lies to dialogue and partner with. A key element of the Local to Local dialogue process is to shift the balance of power to the community, to enable members of the community to table and prioritize their issues, analyze the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and ensure these issues are resolved in a transparent and accountable process.

The Local to Local dialogue training held in Ghana was an opportunity for grassroots women leaders in Africa to build their skills and to enhance their ability to lead and drive such as process. The training focused on developing leadership support skills- key elements of the Local to Local dialogue- identifying and shifting power relationships, and creating community coalitions and grassroots women's networks. The participants were excited and inspired to take back what they learned from the training and go back to their home communities.

As the Local to Local dialogue is a process that is designed to strengthen the on-going work of grassroots women's and community organizations, each of the groups represented in the training took on different types of activities for their follow-up. Many of the groups realized that they needed to go back home and organize a community-led mapping and prioritization of the issues that affect them. Others had already been through this mapping process, baselined their priorities, and were ready to implement a dialogue in their communities. The third action group, comprised of leaders who had already conducted dialogues, planned and prepared to organize community leaders for the follow-up plans. Participants also committed to share their successes and lessons with the other members of their action group and with the group as a whole as they move together to scale up women's leadership and partnerships within their communities. Importantly, this ensures that there is a knowledge transfer within and between communities as leaders are turned into trainers.

Over the next year, the Huairou Commission has committed to facilitate communication between a resource group, comprised of experienced leaders throughout the networks to provide feedback, expertise and technical assistance to all the participants as they implement their action plans and engage in dialogues in their own communities across Africa. Ultimately the Huairou Commission is working to support grassroots women's organizations to link to each other, build coalitions with common agendas developed from the bottom-up, and demonstrate how to strengthen democratic processes ensuring they are accountable to citizens.



## BACKGROUND OF THE LOCAL TO LOCAL DIALOGUE

When the Huairou Commission was established, many within the network had observed that organizations, both inside and outside the network members of the Commission, have been steadily advancing grassroots women's agendas in institutional and policy arenas since the 1980's. Nearly ten years ago, the United Nations Development Programme Urban Governance Initiative (UNDP-TUGI) provided seed funding for grassroots women's groups in India, Malaysia and Nepal (who made up the Asian Women and Shelter Network, AWAS) to initiate local dialogues between community groups and local authorities. The lessons and experiences of these groups led to the collaboration between the Huairou Commission and the UN-Habitat.

The Huairou Commission has partnered with UN Habitat on the Local to Local dialogue process since 2002. Beginning with pilots in six countries, UN-Habitat supported the Commission to fund member organizations to pilot and test the Local to Local Dialogue process. Over the following years the Commission continued to support organizations within the network to develop and scale up the process, which has resulted in sustained and effective community and local partnerships in several communities. In 2007, UN Habitat supported Huairou Commission member organization GROOTS Kenya to develop and test a Local to Local Dialogue training program that was piloted as a regional training for grassroots women leaders in Africa. Building upon this training, the Huairou Commission and UN-Habitat made a joint agreement to develop a Regional Local to Local Dialogue program to train grassroots women leaders on the process in their own communities.

The first regional training was held in March 2009 in Accra, Ghana for grassroots women leaders in West, East and Southern Africa. The Huairou Commission selected

a team of facilitators from the network to act as lead facilitators in the process. These facilitators included: Violet Shivutse, Helen Kimeri and Esther Mwaura-Muiru of GROOTS Kenya, Alice Kayango Mutebi of UCOBAC, Fati Alhassan of Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation, Constance Mogale of LAMOSA and Sarah Silliman of the Huairou Commission Secretariat. This team facilitated and shaped the process in Ghana and will continue to act as a resource team for groups implementing Local to Local dialogues in the region. The Commission intends on building a training team in each region where trainings are conducted (the next region will be Latin America in June 2009) that can continue to act as regional support to grassroots women leaders who are engaging in the Local to Local dialogue process.

The primary objectives of the training were as follows, to:

- Strengthen and promote leadership support, development and organizing skills of grassroots women
- Facilitate learning of key elements of the Local to Local process and strengthen the ability of grassroots women to conduct the Local to Local Dialogue
- Facilitate capacity of grassroots women to identify and shift power relationships and build strategic partnerships in their communities
- Learn to build community coalitions and strengthen grassroots women's networks
- Create a support and learning network for grassroots participants to engage in the Local to Local process

Over forty women leaders, representing grassroots women's self-help groups, and women-focused CBOs and NGOs from twelve countries across West, East and Southern Africa participated in the Ghana Community Facilitators Training on the Local to Local Dialogue.

## TRAINING PROGRAM

Contrary to common assumptions, the Local to Local dialogue is not a one-day event; it's an ongoing process that can take months or even years to be successfully implemented. Realizing that every country's political, economic and social climates are different; the Local to Local process is not a uniform process. Notwithstanding this, there are a number of key skills and processes that can be learned and used to ensure a successful Local to Local dialogue. Based on these concrete concepts the Local to Local dialogue training program for Ghana was developed.

The Training facilitators highlighted five key elements that are crucial to building a Local to Local dialogue process in any community.

1. Visioning and valuing a community that works for grassroots women
2. Community mapping to generate information, priorities and partners
3. Strengthening grassroots women's leadership and organizing to realize visions and plans
4. Key elements in planning and conducting a Local to Local Dialogue
5. Creating action plans for launching Local to Local Dialogue processes back home

Recognizing that each community is different, and each organization represented in the training would be at different stages of their work and implementation, it was important to build the capacities of participants to be able to recognize the key elements and strengthen the one that is most pressing to their own work in their community. The following section summarizes the session focusing on each key element and provides the lesson learned as a result.

### Story 1 – Kenya

**“Kiamworia Village is located in the Gatundu district in the central part of Kenya. In the year 2003 the community was ranked the highest in HIV infection in the country. Factors contributing to this high infection rate were idleness, low wage day laborers, and commercial sex work. GROOTS Kenya, a national NGO, trained grassroots women to provide home-based care to prolong the lives of people infected with HIV/AIDS. The women caregivers faced a lot of challenges because they were unable to take the sick people to health facilities due to poor roads, particularly during the rainy season, and also the lack of transportation to facilitate the delivery of these people to the health centre.**

**The number of orphans and vulnerable children also increased in the households affected by HIV/AIDS. Many orphans lack basic items including school fees. There was an increased drop-out rate in the community. As much as the government has put appointed representatives like the District AIDS Control Coordinators, local district officers, and the chief, there wasn't a change in the situation.”**

**- Story told by Helen Kimiri, GROOTS Kenya**

## 1. Visioning and Valuing a Community that Works for Grassroots Women

A community can be described as a group that lives together in the same well-defined area, speaks the same language, and shares the same amenities, problems, and commons in a certain boundary. The boundary could be defined by government or authorities (i.e. sub locations, wards, districts, etc.) or could be self defined (wealthy community, poor community, community of shared values or beliefs). Participants of the Local to Local dialogue training began their four-day training by beginning from the perspective of a community - one that shares values and envisions changes for the future - one that is essential and necessary to advance the Local to Local dialogue process.

*"In terms of responsibilities and mutual resources, there is an issue of inequitable sharing of power and resources among citizens, not just for women, but for all members of the community. To see equal [distribution] we need to carry out education campaigns on the responsibilities and rights of citizens."*

*– Visioning values-based change from the sharing group*

Within the Local to Local Dialogue process, particular assumptions are made about the community: there are community members, particularly women, living in the community who are directly facing the problems of the community, and while they recognize the issues, they may not have the capacities to address the problem alone. They need an organized group and people within the community to support their efforts. Therefore, the goal of the Local to Local dialogue is to deepen the understanding of the community as a whole by identifying the values of the community, understanding and sharing common problems facing the community, and finding possible common solutions.

Participants explored the core shared values of their communities by participating in an exercise called, "What makes us a community?" which involved collecting objects or drawing symbols that in their opinion reflects the values of their communities. Participants used objects such as leaves, charcoal, and tree branches to reflect values of togetherness, women's work, and leadership respectively. As a group, the participants came up with the most common/frequently mentioned values which were shared amongst the group: solidarity, love, sharing, unity, respect, diversity and hard work.

Using these shared values that were reflected in the small community and were created in the training, the participants then engaged in a reflective group activity, "When I envision my community in 5 years, I see..." This activity allowed participants to brainstorm their visions of change within a community setting based on shared values versus shared problems. Participants envisioned redistribution of resources within the community. This was based on the value of sharing, increased access and improvements in basic services and on the values of solidarity, improved sanitation through utilizing each others' strengths based on the value of diversity.

### Lessons Learned:

The lessons derived from these sessions were the importance of going beyond an individual or group when organizing a Local to Local dialogue. That is, it is important to have a common vision, from the shared values of the community, in order to be able to shift and change power relationships in the community, and claim space. Building coalitions between women and community based groups at the local level is essential to build collective power and influence. Working from a core set of values enables the entire community to come together over a sustained process versus a temporary problem from which they can disengage once the issue is redressed.

## 2. Community Mapping to Generate Information, Priorities and Partners

In the Local to Local dialogue, the community is required to map the resources the community has and requires to make the change they want, and/or need to see happen in their communities. It is also necessary to identify the community stakeholders and allies who will work with the community in the dialogue and who will also have a 'stake' in the process.

After a discussion on the difference between stakeholders and allies, the value-based groups were asked to go back to their small-groups and brainstorm on the scenario of change they had proposed in the previous session, to answer the following questions:

1. What are the resources you have in your community to address this particular problem/issue?
2. What are the resources you require?
3. Who are the stakeholders that you feel you need to engage in order to make the change happen?
4. Who are the allies in the community that will work with you and support your organizing?

Beginning with the resources that already exist in the community that can be utilized in the Local to Local dialogue process, participants identified resources such as: human resources/labor (skilled and unskilled), land, local materials, water, knowledge and skills to map, community mobilizers and volunteers. Participants reflected on the range of resources that can be utilized that already exist in their respective communities. They also identified resources that they would need ranging from monetary and physical resources such as, banners and flyers to services such as documentation and media.

To identify communities' allies and stakeholders, there

was much discussion on the distinction between the types of partnerships and collaborations that a community needs when conducting a Local to Local dialogue. Allies were identified as friends, people who 'dream your dreams', who support your values and vision, but do not necessarily have a stake in the outcome. Stakeholders can also be allies, in supporting the communities' work, but also have a vested interest in the issues and outcomes. Stakeholders typically have physical investments in the process or, if the process fails, they could lose something in the process.

The next step in analyzing and mapping the resources and partners in a community is to go through a process of collective needs prioritizing. Participants in the Local to Local dialogue training engaged in an exercise designed to mirror real-life scenarios by listening to stories from two communities and analyzing the situation, issues and challenges these communities faced.

Participants divided into two 'communities' or groups and discussed the following questions as if they were facing the issues faced by the communities in the stories from Zimbabwe and Kenya. The questions were designed to look at community needs and priorities, analyze stakeholders and allies, and determine who and what is required to participate and contribute to the dialogue in order to achieve the collective desired outcome of the community.

- I. What are the issues we want to raise in the Local to Local Dialogue?
  - a. What are the issues that people in our community largely agree requires addressing?
  - b. Which issues can be addressed through community based solutions?
  - c. Which issues need to be raised for the attention

### Story 2 – Zimbabwe

**“Zimbabwe is going through a social and economic crisis. There are huge impacts on women and girls, especially in poor communities. There has been an increase in HIV and access to hospitals has become an issue. The costs for health care and education are also prohibitive. For the past two years food insecurity is very common because there has been a significant drop in the production of crops. Malnutrition and poor nutrition has been a result.**

**Resettlement areas are isolated and not easily accessible to information. Communications with local authorities is essential, but women have generally been less involved in positions of responsibility. They have not been able to represent themselves in issues to do with politics or violence against women. As a result of HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children have become common.”**

**- Story told by Colleta Zinyama, Rozaria Memorial Trust**



and cooperation of local leaders and local government officials?

d. Are we aware of the types of actions that are being taken in different localities?

II. Who are the other stakeholders?

a. Are other people including local leaders affected by our situation?

b. Who are our appointed or elected representatives?

c. Do we know other people and/or institutions that are officially responsible for the particular issue area that we want to pursue via the Local to Local Dialogue process?

d. Who do we know who are working on the same challenges?

e. What needs to be done to improve the situation or address the issues raised?

After the community discussions, participants returned to the plenary to discuss lessons from the exercise. Participants were asked to share their thoughts on consensus building and prioritizing issues within their groups. Participants were also asked to discuss the strategies they used to arrive at consensus. What were the skills required to ensure a participatory process where each 'community member' felt included and listened to? Some participants shared the strategy of listening to participants' feedback in a circle, that way no one dominated discussions and all voices were heard. This strategy worked well, but it was clear, that in order to achieve consensus and maintain a participatory process, a lot of time is required. Community mapping, planning and consensus-building takes time, but the investment in the beginning goes a long way to realizing community visions.

### Lessons Learned:

Before a Local to Local Dialogue can be planned, it is crucial to go through an extensive community consensus-building and analysis process. Starting with the values and vision a community holds, to analyzing resources and partners, a Local to Local Dialogue can only take place when there is a committed group of leaders working together in a coalition with other actors in the community. All members must be clear about what each participant brings and cares about in the process. Once this information is gathered, a community can begin to look toward planning and preparing for a Local to Local Dialogue.

### 3. Strengthening Grassroots Women's Leadership and Community Organizing

One of the five objectives of the Local to Local Dialogue training was to strengthen grassroots women's leadership skills. As homework for the first day, participants were asked to work on an exercise called "Tree of Life" to think about how they see themselves as leaders, the core values that define them, and those that they share with the community. Beginning from early life 'the roots' to the 'fruits of our life work' participants drew a tree and shared the descriptions of the tree to begin day two of the training.

Many participants were able to link their experiences to the values and visions they also hold for their communities. Reflecting on the coal nut tree in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Beatrice Bisewo linked her tree, her identity, with the traditional cultural practices related to women in her community. Many also saw the fruits of their life story as fruits that contribute to the community as well, such as, women's empowerment, resource mobilization, property access and poverty eradication. It was clear that nurturing women as leaders leads to progress and gains for the community as a whole.

"I'm Mary from Uganda. What made us to become who we are? My family and schools, CBOs and NGOs in the community have made me strong. The trunk is what has made me to be who I am, where I got my experiences. The fruit is that I am an empowered woman. I know my rights. I'm able to help my children to [go to] the university. I already built a house but I want to build a bungalow on a plot I have purchased."

– Nyadri Mary Licoru Pario,  
Capacity Enhancement for Improved Livelihood

While it's clear that supporting women's leadership and development in the community has a ripple effect for the community as a whole, there are many obstacles women face in developing and realizing their leadership. Participants were asked to divide into small groups and examine the challenges that women face and how grassroots women can be supported as leaders using the following questions as a guide to their discussions:

1. What are the obstacles to grassroots women's leadership in the community?
2. As grassroots women, what must we do to support grassroots women's leadership?

3. What are the strategies to overcome obstacles to grassroots women's leadership in order to prepare and conduct a Local to Local dialogue?

First and foremost, to strengthen women's leadership and build empowerment, women must be supported as leaders. Participants identified networking, experience sharing, building confidence among grassroots women, mentorship, skills building and awareness raising all as effective activities grassroots women can engage in to support each other in their leadership.

"The Local to Local Dialogue is meant to add value to what you are doing. Some people are talking about people bringing the Local to Local. We are saying that women have not been seen as leaders. We want women to take leadership roles. We can't assume someone else is going to take leadership, women have to start assuming that leadership roles themselves."

- Wandera Johnstone,  
Constituency AIDS Coordinating Committee  
(Kenya)

Despite these supportive activities, participants also related stories that identified shared challenges and obstacles to women's leadership in the community, such as lack of transparency in leadership, lack of confidence, resistance from men, harmful traditional practices, undermining of women's leadership, and limited resources. These issues considered, participants came up with a number of strategies to overcome these challenges and support grassroots women's leadership. These included:

- Documenting positive work done by women leaders and use it as bargaining tools
- Capacity building to empower women with leadership skills (confidence, communication, experience

sharing, public speaking)

- Increasing transparency of resources and information (including networking, sharing donor information, new technologies, etc.)
- Build leadership coalitions and networks to mentor each other and share experiences

To continue to put women's leadership support at the forefront of the Local to Local Dialogue process, participants were encouraged to reflect and continue the dialogue on how they can build these activities in their own work back home by considering a grassroots woman they admire and documenting the leadership qualities and attributes she possess that are key to her leadership.<sup>1</sup>

#### Lessons Learned:

Building grassroots women's leadership starts with individual leadership recognition and support, otherwise the power balance will remain stagnant. It's necessary to analyze how women leaders are supported in the community and how their leadership is undermined. It is also necessary to invest in strategies that enable women to overcome obstacles to their leadership. Without the support of women as leaders, communities are challenged to sustain development processes such as the Local to Local Dialogue.

<sup>1</sup> The National Congress of Neighborhood Women, a member of GROOTS International, has developed the Leadership Support Process methodology and is in the process of developing a curriculum, manual and training program. For more information, please contact [dahlia.goldenberg@huairou.org](mailto:dahlia.goldenberg@huairou.org).

#### Scenario:

**Imani is a community-based organization located within a poor community that struggles with the negative impact of HIV/AIDS. The leaders of the CBO, together with the community members have already mapped out community needs and priorities and have reached a consensus on the priority issue they would like to address in a Local to Local Dialogue is the issue of orphans in their community. They have mapped the resources they bring as a community and identified those they require for a resolution. It is now time to plan the logistics and process for the next steps.**

#### 4. Key Elements in Planning and Conducting a Local to Local Dialogue

Everyday across the world, communities are engaged in community meetings, dialogues and debates that are convened to solve a particular issue that are affecting the members and stakeholders of a particular community. While these dialogues have been quite effective, and continue to be, there are some fundamental differences between a community meeting or dialogue and a Local to Local Dialogue.

To better understand the distinction and understand what is unique about the Local to Local Dialogue, Helen Kimiri, a grassroots women leader from Kiamouria Women’s group in Kenya, compared and contrasted the differences for participants. A summary of her presentation is listed below. (See Table 1)

While there are similarities between community dialogues and the Local to Local, the importance of community process and participation is emphasized in the Local to Local Dialogue. The Local to Local Process fosters the community as a collective, and mobilizes the community around core issues and problems. While this doesn’t necessarily mean the entire community will agree, the emphasis is on participation and mobilizing to build

community leadership.

Once participants had identified and gone through community mapping, organizing and leadership development processes, it was time to review the logistical details of the day of the Local to Local Dialogue, or the big day. To spark the conversation, participants were presented a scenario and asked: What arrangements need to happen before the Local to Local Dialogue? Who or which persons should make these arrangements? Participants worked in pairs to address the questions. They outlined the following as issues to be addressed in preparation for a Dialogue:

- Hold a planning meeting and create planning team
  - Select a core leadership team to spearhead the Dialogue, should include widows, CBOs, community facilitators, allies (planning team will be responsible for carrying out tasks below)
- Identify key local leaders, stakeholders and other intermediaries to invite
- Make the program
- Identify the venue
- Select a date
- Prepare invitations (where possible include basic information in the letters such as the number of orphans in the community)

Table 1: Summary of Presentation

The Local to Local Dialogue	Other community dialogue processes
Community leads – the meetings is called for and hosted by grassroots communities	NGO/government/partners call for the dialogue – defined by their assessment of the community needs
Community collectively identifies the values, needs and issues in the community	Individuals and/or small groups bring the value/issue/needs identification to the community
Conversations and negotiations are driven by the values of the community	Driving force of the dialogue is based on community need and how to address the need
Dialogue is hosted within or near the community (focus where the needs are so you can see them firsthand)	Community members have to travel far away from their community for the dialogue
Grassroots women are the ones that drive the process, including the negotiation process during the dialogue	Often dominated by men, they are the ones leading
Follow-up actions and issues are taken up by the community	Dialogues are one-time only, collaboration may end after the task is complete

- Identify resources in the community
- Find an assembly member or councilor in the community to agree to participate and use that person as an anchor for other invitees

There are a number of logistical issues that need to be taken into account when planning and preparing for a Local to Local dialogue. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a clear planning process with roles and responsibilities designated and agreed upon beforehand. Not only will this ensure that all the details are taken care of to hold a Dialogue, but ownership of the process by the community is secured by involving multiple leaders and community members.

**Lessons Learned:**

There are many types of community discussions/ negotiations, however what makes the Local to Local dialogue different is there is a high level of leadership, contribution and participation from community members. The Local to Local Dialogues emphasizes the community as a collective, even if all are not participating in the dialogue itself, they have been consulted prior, so their values and voices are represented and a rich discussion is held.

Table 2: General Action Plans of Each Group

GENERAL WORK PLAN (GROUP 1)	GENERAL WORK PLAN (GROUP 2)	GENERAL WORK PLAN (GROUP 3)
Step 1. Community organizing and consultation (April – September)	Hold meetings w/respective groups (April-May '09) – train on L2L	Community self-assessment (2 mos.) refer to action plan that led to the dialogue
a. Community members most affected by problem will hold consultation (April – May)	Est. a planning meeting committee to execute action plans (April-May '09)	Reach out to those, assign roles, reach out to those from prior dialogue
b. Invite traditional leaders, NGOs, CBOs, women groups and others that can influence process	Issue invitations w/a timeframe for confirmations (May-June '09)	Find out what has happened. Physical evaluation. If these things have been done (April-May)
c. Identify resources (money, people, time, venues, etc.)	Design draft programs w/ confirmation from the participants (June-July '09)	Organize Community Meeting (June)
d. Identify people who will take lead/responsibility	Meeting w/ community to do checklist, design pgm. For the day, assign roles (Aug '09)	Follow-up w/relevant authorities to ensure they are doing what they've committed (July-August)
Step 2. Community Mapping – identifying community needs and values	Big Day (Aug-Sept '09)	Continuity of community networking (Sept)
a. Identify stakeholders i.e. domestic violence FIDA, Police, legal/HR institutions, traditional council, women groups	Evaluation meetings/Generate final report (Sept '09)	Responsible parties are the community and local leaders
b. Identify Allies (i.e. NGOs)		
c. Identify resources we need (legal docs, time, money, case studies, venue, refreshments, police and docs.)		
d. Identify resources we have (community people, women groups, venue, food, etc.)		

## 5. Creating Action Plans for Launching Local to Local Dialogue Process

To conclude the training, each participant identified the process that their group at home would focus on as an entry point to the Local to Local dialogue process. Each of the groups were at different stages, so they divided according to the process or element in the Local to Local dialogue that they felt most needed strengthening. The action groups identified were: 1) Community organizing, consolidation and mapping; 2) Planning and conducting the dialogue; and 3) Community-led follow-up with local authorities and other stakeholders.

In addition to the group work plans, each group agreed to provide feedback and exchange experiences with the other members of the group. The group facilitator or main contact person, would be responsible for summarizing the groups' progress and act as a feedback mechanism to the resource group (HC Secretariat and Trainers). This process is intended to be an experiment in horizontal learning. The Huairou Commission has agreed to act as a facilitator and link together the participants and groups to ensure the information is both shared and disseminated across all participants.

### LOCAL TO LOCAL DIALOGUE LEARNING NETWORK

The Huairou Commission committed to keeping up general communication and act as an overall resource as each group develops the Local to Local Dialogue in their own communities. In addition, experienced groups and leaders volunteered to act as resource people for the learning network. They can be called upon to answer questions, get ideas and even make field visits if necessary. The Huairou Commission has committed to help facilitate this process where needed through communication on the Huairou Commission website, listserv, and email groups.

### CONCLUSION

The Regional Local to Local Dialogue Training was a useful exercise for participants and for the Huairou network as a whole. Through participatory processes and engagement, the elements of the Local to Local dialogue process were transferred and action plans were made based on local contexts. By learning the key elements of the process, participants were able to recognize how their on-going work can be strengthened and how to develop a more participatory and inclusive relationship between

the community and local leaders and stakeholders for positive change. The key elements of the Local to Local are summarized below:

- The Local to Local Dialogue process is a long-term, transformative process. It is designed to build community leadership and strengthen partnerships with local leaders which can take months from the beginning to end stages.
- Those engaging in the Local to Local Dialogue process must recognize that communities have different political, social and economic climates (including values). However, in order for the process to be empowering for communities and to transform power relations, the process must be participatory and not led by only a few.
- The Local to Local Dialogue process enables communities to claim space in local governance in decision-making, thereby transforming the balance of power so that grassroots women take a lead and are recognized as key stakeholders of the process - instead of beneficiaries they are owners of community development.
- Unlike other community dialogue processes, the Local to Local emphasizes organizing and coalition building for long-term change, therefore it is essential that shared values and visions for change within the community must open and shape the process.
- Although communities may experience a range of issues, to conduct the Local to Local process effectively, communities must prioritize their needs through participatory consultation and mapping of partners, allies, stakeholders and resources in order to move forward.
- Leadership development and skills building are essential for the Local to Local Dialogue process to be effective. Long-term and sustained change cannot come from individual relationships with individual authorities but through coalition building and the creation of mechanisms for long-term civic engagement.

**APPENDIX: I. Participant List**

1. Sare Marie, ICA Lambassa - Benin
2. Clara Woba Gnakou, CREPA - Burkina Faso
3. Theresia Fonjia Morfaw, Ntankah Village Women Collective - Cameroon
4. Beatrice Bisewo, SEPROFED - Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Comfort Ali, Women in Leadership - Ghana
6. Ruhia Bawa, Mabiligu Association - Ghana
7. Rosina N. Awuni, Malimang Women's Association - Ghana
8. Fati Al Hassan, Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation - Ghana
9. Janet Adu, Ghana Federation for the Urban Poor (Ashiman) - Ghana
10. Rashida Mahammon, Ghana Federation for the Urban Poor (Ashiman) - Ghana
11. Salifu Abdul-Mujeeb, Ghana Federation for the Urban Poor - Ghana
12. Margaret Naa Ayelley, Ghana Federation for the Urban Poor - Ghana
13. Hawah Dawada, Ghana Federation for the Urban Poor - Ghana
14. Naomi Cobblah, Ghana Federation for the Urban Poor - Ghana
15. Elizabeth Afua Quarshie, Ashaiman Women in Progressive Development - Ghana
16. Hon. Jane Amerley Oka, A.M.A. - Ghana
17. Hon. Theresa Mensah, A.M.A. Accra - Ghana
18. Hon. Emma Dei Adams, A.M.A. Accra - Ghana
19. Hon. Comfort Awinya, Assembly Member - Ghana
20. Violet Shivutse, GROOTS Kenya (Trainer) - Kenya
21. Hellen Kamiri, GROOTS Kenya (Trainer) - Kenya
22. Esther Mwaura-Muiru, GROOTS Kenya (Trainer) - Kenya
23. Ruth Kihio, GROOTS Kenya - Kenya
24. Wandera Johnstone, Constituency AIDS Control Committee (CACCC) - Kenya
25. Everngelista Mutandi, UN-Habitat Gender Mainstreaming Unit - Kenya
26. Susanne George, Independent Consultant - Malaysia
27. Paulina Naquene, NGO Kulima - Nigeria
28. Iruka Nwokedi, Center for Legal and Dialogue Development - Nigeria
29. Rehab David, CBD NGO Forum - Nigeria
30. Aduke Abudullahi, IWCC - Nigeria
31. Mohammed Balqis Bukola, IWCC - Nigeria
32. Peninah Abatoni, Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) - Nigeria
33. Constance Mogale, LAMOSA - South Africa
34. Alitubera Madina, Uganda Community Based Organization for Child (UCOBAC) - Uganda
35. Alice Kayongo Mutebi, UCOBAC - Uganda
36. Nyadri Mary Licoru Pario, Capacity Enhancement for Improved Livelihood - Uganda
37. Grace Loumo, AWARE - Uganda
38. Joyce Nangobi, Slum Women in Development (SWID) - Uganda
39. Nicole Ganzekaufer, Huairou Commission (WLLA) - USA
40. Sarah Silliman, Huairou Commission (Governance) - USA
41. Birte Scholz, Huairou Commission (Land and Housing) - USA
42. Shorai Chtongo, Ray of Hope/Girl Child Network - Zimbabwe
43. Colleta Zinyama, Rozaria Memorial Trust - Zimbabwe





# 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.

**The United Nations Urban Settlements programme (UN-Habitat)**, is the agency responsible for coordinating human settlements issues within the United Nations system. It promotes economically productive, socially inclusive and environmentally liveable cities, towns and rural settlements, as well as adequate shelter for all. In 1996, 171 member states gave their support to the Habitat Agenda, one of the main documents defining UN-HABITAT's mandate. The Habitat Agenda stated seven commitments, one of which is to gender equality.

UN-HABITAT has had a Gender Equality Programme since 1991 and has made considerable gains promoting gender equality and implementing programmes that bring real benefits to the lives of urban women.

The Gender Mainstreaming Unit, part of the Monitoring and Research Division of UN-Habitat, strives to broaden gender equity and women's rights into all areas of the UN-Habitat work programme. The Gender Mainstreaming Unit has partnered with the Huairou Commission since 2002 on the Local to Local Dialogue process, including funding pilots in six countries and three trainings in Kenya, Ghana and Ecuador.

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Federación de Mujeres  
Municipalistas de América Latina y El Caribe FEMUM/ALC  
GROOTS International | International Council of Women  
Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF)  
Latin American Women and Habitat Network  
Women and Cities International | Women and Peace Network