



HUAIROU COMMISSION

Women, Homes & Community



Land Academy Focuses on Peer Learning Exchange, Transfer of Grassroots Tools, and Development of Future Action Plans

The second annual Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA) Land Academy took place from March 22nd to March 26th, 2009 in Accra, Ghana. There were forty-seven participants from 35 different organizations and thirteen countries, which included Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, United Kingdom, Uganda, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The participants came from all different levels of organization; from grassroots community leaders and participants, to NGO directors, women's lawyers associations, and members of government.

The Huairou Commission (HC) organized the Land Academy in consultation with members of the HC's Land and Housing Campaign and participants in the joint regional partnership project Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA) and the Center for Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE).

The Land Academy had a strong focus on experience sharing and peer learning. The Academy provided a unique space for community-based grassroots leaders to celebrate and share the important knowledge and skills that grassroots women have been employing to fight for women's rights to land, housing, property and other



core productive assets. Participating groups developed a deep understanding of shared and successful strategies, which they took back to their own communities, with a strong emphasis on community paralegal work and the importance of monitoring and evaluation for long-term sustainability and visibility. This event was also important as participants developed a deeper understanding of shared and successful strategies that other women are doing to fight for women's rights to land and property in their respective communities. Methods were developed for individual use as well as for a collective advocacy campaign to guide further work as a network. Finally, the women came together to analyze and plan

how to strengthen the WLLA in the coming years, and to imagine what activities and future partnerships WLLA members wished to engage in.

Grassroots women were the primary participants, as learners and teachers. Professionals, from land coalitions and legal aid organizations, were invited as a bridge to key partnerships and opportunities. During the Land Academy, grassroots women accomplished several objectives, such as sharing on what best practices have worked, checking in on the progress of the community-led paralegal processes and reviewing the Community Paralegal framework, and developing a common advocacy agenda and messages. One new and innovative area of the Academy was

“Grassroots women’s approaches are critical because empowering women working at the grassroots level is essential to increasing poor women’s access to land, housing and property ... the solutions [must be] developed from experiences of the community.”

***- Violet Shivutse,
a grassroots leader of GROOTS Kenya & Shibuye Community Health Workers***

Grassroots Women’s Tools for Securing Land and Property

Many Africans experience high levels of poverty, land tenure insecurity, food scarcity and housing shortages. African women, in particular, suffer under these circumstances and, for the most part, lack ownership, control or even access to housing and land. In the last decade many African countries have gone through, or are undergoing, constitutional and/or land law and policy reform processes. Despite the introduction of new policies and laws, women’s rights to land and housing have not been sufficiently protected. There is a gap between the theory and practice of these laws.

In order to advocate and enforce women’s equal access to land and housing grassroots women’s groups have been developing and implementing a wide array of tools. Women’s land tools are useful in guiding governments, NGOs and local community groups to incorporate women’s specific needs into a variety of arenas related to land, secure tenure, housing and infrastructure. There is a need to intensify and

strengthen the impact of grassroots women’s tools and strategies.

Since 2003 the Huairou Commission’s Land and Housing Campaign and Women’s Land Link Africa (WLLA) initiative has been working with grassroots women’s groups to identify innovative on-the-ground strategies and tools that women are using to fight for land and property at the local, national and international levels. Our focus is to build the capacity of grassroots women’s groups and to highlight the strategies and tools they are implementing to improve women’s social, economic and political status within their communities. The HC recognizes that empowering women working at the grassroots is essential to increasing poor women’s access to land, housing and property. As such, we are focused on grassroots women as the initiators of actions and the problem solvers within their communities, rather than as the recipients of legal or financial aid.

the introduction of a WLLA Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework and process.

Most of all, participants agreed that a crucial aspect of an effective regional network is one that prioritizes participatory events like the Land Academy, as commonalities and solidarity is established across issues and countries. From the experiences shared at the Land Academy, it was evident that grassroots groups have extensive constituencies and capacities to deal with

land and property struggles and securing tenure and ownership. Challenges and priority areas were also identified, for example, the groups expressed the need to develop more effective communications systems with each other, and strengthening how they evaluate their work for long term sustainability. The Academy ended with grassroots women planning the further work of the WLLA project both individually and collectively, and developed a common agenda of how to do so.

For information on the Huairou Commission’s Land and Housing Campaign and the Campaign’s joint regional partnership initiative Women’s Land Link Africa (WLLA) please refer to the back page of this newsletter. For more information on the Land Academy, the full report is available on the Huairou Commissions’ website at www.huairou.org.





Grassroots Women's Tools Emerging from the Land Academy

The Land Academy was a sharing and education platform whereby several important tools and practices emerged, and lessons were learned by all participants. Grassroots women identified their strategies and practices, and how they employed them according to their needs, abilities and local context. The Land Academy demonstrated that grassroots women's land tools directly address women's specific needs in a variety of arenas related to land, secure tenure, housing and infrastructure, and that no one is better at articulating those needs and responses than grassroots women themselves.

- **Regional Network:** *WLLA as a Tool for Communication, Advocacy and Best Practice Transfer*
- **Community Mapping:** *A Tool for Engendering Community Change*
- **Local-to-Local Dialogues:** *A Tool for Engendering Local Governance*
- **Peer Exchanges:** *Tools for Transfer of Grassroots Innovations, Knowledge and Skills*
- **Community-led Paralegal Processes:** *Tools for Enhancing the Capacity of Grassroots Women to Access Legal Systems*
- **Watchdog Groups:** *A Tool for Safeguarding Women's Access and Control over Land & Property*
- **Building Women's Information, Knowledge and Communication Capacities Through Media & Cultural Tools**



Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA): Joint Regional Partnership Initiative

The Women's Land Link Africa is a collaboration of existing initiatives that supports and strengthens women at various levels, with particular focus on communities, to have access to and control over land, housing and property, using both a rights and development based approach.

The WLLA was in its fifth year of operation at the 2009 WLLA Land Academy. Some of the participants had been with the WLLA since its beginning, while others have joined the years following, and some were attending for the first time. During the Academy, most participants agreed that women all have some degree of access to land, whether for the purposes of gardening, livestock or livelihoods, but that it is the lack of control and the insecurity of tenure as well as the threat of displacement and evictions that must be addressed. Participants agreed that the biggest goal is to realize women's land and property rights and enabling women to own land, ensuring gender justice and distribution of resources, such as land and housing rights or equal distribution of land and property.

Grassroots women agreed that the multi-purpose nature and benefits derived from being part of the WLLA, include:

- Linking grassroots women's organizations dealing with land and housing issues to come together to develop and advocate for good policies and practices, and to share lessons and experiences
- Empowering women with information on how they can advocate on land and housing issues
- Strengthening the capacity of grassroots women to get access to land and housing rights
- Transferring and adapting innovative strategies and solutions of grassroots women to resolve the issues, by matching strategies developed to similar problems in other community groups
- Mobilizing women to work with opinion leaders and local authorities to facilitate women's access to land
- Documentation, and monitoring and evaluation skills
- Information dissemination

"Being victims of circumstances, we had to realize what other effects HIV/AIDS were having on women. We were being disowned, not having land or property, not having anywhere to stay, [we were] living on the road. We had to network with other networks to do something about this."

- Maxensia Takirambule,
Grassroots leader and home based caregiver,
Lungujja Community Health Caring Organization & member of UCOBAC, Uganda



Community Mapping: A Tool for Engendering Community Change

A community mapping is a tool that places women at the center of a process of self-documentation in order to assess the situation in their communities, generate awareness of the community's assets needs, and linking community members and institutional stakeholders to support community-based responses to these needs. For the purposes of WLLA, community mapping is focused on land, housing and property for women in communities. Community mappings are a participatory process, whereby individuals or excluded groups who are not normally included in decision-making or research are leading the effort. A community member involves all members going through a community in a structured activity format, talking to community members, learning about

the needs in the community, documenting the findings, and then reporting the results back to all community members in larger community forums and meetings.

Community mappings frequently bring profound issues to the forefront in the work of an organization and in the consciousness of a community, such as land and housing evictions in the context of HIV/AIDS. The information gathered during a community mapping helps to validate and strengthen grassroots women's existing activities around that issue, and can help them provide better services, cre-

ate and improve linkages with government agencies and NGOs, advocate on behalf of the community, and mobilize community members and other stakeholders to address the issues. Each organization devises its own unique methodology, relevant to grassroots communities and groups.



Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID), Uganda

Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID) is a women-initiated organization established to realize the needs of women in the Walukuba slum in Jinja, outside of Uganda's capital of Kampala. SWID leaders trained 10 grassroots women on how to conduct community mapping, and the women carried out semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with 549 grassroots women in two communities. Respondents identified an overwhelming amount of corruption in land distribution and widespread denial of women's rights to land. To

improve this situation, SWID strengthened their programs that aim to build women's capacity, raise their awareness around women's rights to land, and mobilize resources. They have established a strong women's savings club and rotating loan schemes to en-

able grassroots women to make housing mortgage payments and establish credit with banks. This has enabled women to purchase land and access land titles, develop their land, and reduce their economic dependence on men.

"The advocacy gap is on creating awareness particularly in the provision of the Land Act which gives equal opportunity to women to inherit land and own land...we are therefore currently creating awareness on these provisions in the community by developing pamphlets and through local to local dialogues."

- Joyce Nangobi, SWID, Uganda

Action for Women and Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE), Uganda

AWARE began by mobilizing communities through consultation meetings with district leaders including priests, chair people, sub county chiefs, district speakers, women's groups' representatives, CBOs, NGOs, Kraal leaders and village chiefs in the Kaabong district. The community mapping took place in four communities, and was con-

ducted by grassroots women Trainers of Trainers (TOTs), who collected data from 120 women and 60 men regarding women's access to, and ownership of, land and property. Data was analyzed by a team of AWARE leaders as a part of the mapping process. AWARE also held radio talk shows on the topics of women's human rights, women's

land and property ownership, and domestic violence on Radio Karamoja FM. Demand was very high to continue mapping in other regions and the mapping successfully brought greater awareness through radio talk show that garnered many calls, spreading the importance of women's land and property rights in Karamoja.



Lambassa Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA), Benin

To reduce discriminatory practices against women, Lambassa ICA leaders led community mappings in 6 communities in the Donga Region. While there was initially resistance in the communities to their activities focused on women's rights, through dedicated and consistent community meetings and outreach, the leaders of Lambassa ICA were able to break through hostility and skepticism and engage a large number of community members. 210 people were mapped, including over 150 grassroots women and 30 men, 15 local authorities and 10 representatives of local NGOs and 5 journalists. After the mapping was conducted, the leaders held community meetings to discuss the findings and to talk with men about the positive implications of women's control over land. Certain high-level officials, such as the Mayor of the District of Djougou and Ouake, have begun to assist the activities of Lambassa ICA, and have given instructions to their employees to work closely and support grassroots efforts in the future. Additionally, several landowners in the areas mapped have agreed to review their attitudes toward women, and women can now rely on them to help resolve their problems related to land access.

Local-to-Local Dialogues: A Tool for Engendering Local Governance

Policy making occurs at all levels of government, and it is critical that women's voices are heard from the local level to the national and regional levels. Therefore, it is important to build women's voice and leadership in the community, enhance local governance and build democratic institutions. A Local to Local Dialogue starts with the community, and is meant to shift the balance of power to the community, to enable its members to prioritize their issues, analyze the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and ensure that issues are resolved in a transparent and accountable manner. Local to Local Dialogues are unique in that they are community-led and driven. The meetings are called for and hosted by grassroots communities and organizations, who have identified the needs and issues in the community to be addressed.

"The Local to Local Dialogue is meant to add value to what you are doing. 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 leadership roles themselves."

-Wandera Johnstone,
Constituency AIDS Coordinating
Committee,
GROOTS Kenya, Kenya

Grassroots women drive the process, including the negotiations during and after the process, and follow-up actions and issues are taken up by the community. Local-to-Local Dialogues are not a one-day event; instead they facilitate a process for ongoing discussions between members of a local community, local authorities and other key stakeholders.

The Local to Local Dialogue process is a long-term, transformative process, designed to build community leadership and strengthen partnerships. The process is one that promotes harmony, partnership and ongoing collaboration between local communities and their leaders in a sustained and meaningful way. Dialogues have advanced grassroots women's abilities to negotiate with local leaders to increase women's access to resources such as land, housing and basic services as well as increased access to social services such as healthcare and education.



Maasai Women's Empowerment & Development Organization (MWEDO), Tanzania

With little power over land and property and lack of sufficient information, women's voices in Maasai communities are muffled or silenced on the topic of land rights, and they are often unable to make decisions or choices about their control over land. MWEDO has successfully utilized Local-to-Local Dialogues in Simanjiro and Longido districts as an important means of engaging local leaders and empowering Maasai women. The aim of the dialogues was first to cultivate a deeper understanding of

the issues of access to and control over land women face within the pastoralist Maasai community, and secondly, how these can be improved. Working closely with Maasai women, MWEDO leaders aim to address the problems of human rights by engaging community women in political processes and creating a stronger economic and social female representation, a key aspect of the Local-to-Local Process. Local Authorities have been of great value to the initiatives-enforcing strategies

to grant women land through the Village Land Act processes and assisting follow-up activities. Furthermore, traditional authorities have agreed to enforce new community agreements, such as abandoning some of the traditional customs and practices that deny Maasai women opportunity for participation and access to properties. Local leaders have granted over 250 women in Longido land tenure letters guaranteeing their control over land.



Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA), South Africa

LAMOSA aimed to build upon the momentum built during their 2008 Community Mapping process, so as to contribute to the overall effort of creating a better environment for women to access natural resources and livelihoods. LAMOSA targeted local authorities, grassroots women and their organizations, and held meetings with four of the targeted municipalities. Through the assistance of Action Aid South Africa, LAMOSA was able

to host a four-day Local-to-Local dialogue with a total of 45 people in attendance. Discussions were centered on land, housing and tenure issues, and participants were committed to return to their constituencies to deepen mobilization and organizing work, support ongoing progressive dialogue and discussion with stakeholders. Participants left inspired to consider more creative, interactive tactics and organizing methods, and they were

challenged to consider the personal dimension of change, and the importance of transforming within progressive struggle. One of LAMOSA's major successes was their ability to mobilize rural women nationally through the involvement of land sector organizations that presented the opportunity and space for National networking and establishing an alliance regarding gender and agrarian reform.



Community-led Legal Processes: Enhancing the Capacity of Grassroots Women to Access Legal Systems

As women's access to local cultural or traditional legal systems and legal structures are often fraught with obstacles, community-led legal processes become important and essential allies for women. Community led processes include Community Paralegal processes, community-led land tribunals and test cases, and legal literacy courses on will-writing and title deeds. Land tribunals are a mechanism for social advocacy and informal accountability, particularly on the issues of inheritance rights for widows and reversing evictions. Public land tribunals allow widows to raise awareness about their cases and invite community dialogues about solutions that work best for all involved. Stakeholders are involved in all levels of the tribunals, including local leaders and authority figures, opinion leaders, counselors and community members.

Community Paralegals are important figures in grassroots communities as they function as intermediaries between community members and the justice system, and are often the only form of access to justice that communities have. A community paralegal is defined as one who has received legal and advocacy training and is mandated to apply the training in the protection and promotion of human rights values in the community. This person is a volunteer who has been trained in different skills, understands the law but is not a lawyer. Community paralegals, for example, are often able to stand-in for women and operate as first responders during legal disputes over land and property. Paralegals can also offer communities civil literacy and education workshops on women's rights to land and property.

Rwanda Women's Network (RWN), Rwanda

Over the past four years, Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) has worked to document violations of women's land and inheritance rights. In the last two years, RWN has established and strengthened their community paralegal program as an important education, advocacy and prevention tool. This has helped to support and promote good practices in the prevention of evictions and advocacy around it. They finalized a Community Paralegal Training Manual in Kinyarwanda, the local language, so that a wider audience of women and men could learn from it. As of 2008, RWN had trained

213 community paralegals including 74 males and 139 females. Community paralegals act as resource persons and they have advocated at national, regional and international levels for women's rights to own and control land and property. RWN plans to replicate paralegal training in additional communities to develop monitoring and evaluation tools that can be used to document and report on the community paralegal work. They also plan to engage community paralegals in refresher trainings, bringing them up-to-date with current issues relating to women's rights, law reform, and will-writing.

"[Our] cooperative was founded in the North of Rwanda, from 1993-1994. The law used to protect the children and the women but in this framework the women had no rights to manage the work of the house and no succession rights. There was much sexual violation and violence at this time. Our cooperative, supported by RWN, advocates for the rights of women, rights of child and land tenure rights. Having formed the group, we have learned about the laws which protect women. We have been able to help the children learn about what their rights should be. By myself, I have been able to train 50 community paralegals through my cooperative, and they are voluntary members of the community, such as grassroots authorities and women's committees. To date, the community paralegals have been able to solve 20 cases. Women in the organization gather information on women's situations on land and violence, and they present it to government officials to advocate for women's rights."

-Hassina,
Community Paralegal from RWN, gave testimony to her experiences as a community paralegal



Seke Rural Home Based Care, Zimbabwe

Seke has partnered with the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association (ZWLA) for the past few years, and has trained and provided refresher courses to 48 community paralegals. All community paralegals are volunteers and are nominated from the community. They have been capacitated with skills to identify the issues to be addressed and which laws and regulations are in force that relate to the cases brought to them. Community Paralegals tackle several

issues including: women's disinheritance at the time of their husband's death; property registration; and the lack of control women have over the agriculture they produce. Trained community paralegals have become community resource persons who provide leadership and mentorship to other women, as well as men. They take advantage of gatherings, meetings and religious groupings to talk about legal land and women-related

issues. Community paralegals preside at village courts, the chief's court and attend cases of community members at the local magistrate court. Flyers are produced monthly to disseminate information of what has transpired on cases of women and property. Successful cases encourage women to come out and seek information on their own land and property issues.

Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC), Uganda

UCOBAC works in partnership with the Uganda Land Alliance and Uganda Legal Aid to train grassroots women in Uganda on land and human rights laws to enable them to act as community mediators, paralegals and educators, and to follow up on issues identified during community mappings that require resolutions and mediation. Community paralegals were trained to sensitize community members on legal issues / human rights, act as monitors of human rights abuses in the commu-

nity and to provide immediate preliminary solutions in emergency situations. Community paralegals also partner with community leaders, opinion leaders and religious leaders. In their initial stages, they have accomplished raising women's awareness about their rights by holding education sessions and informing them about what steps to follow in seeking justice. They have also been working closely with local leaders on how to best mediate and resolve land issues.

"The community knows who is a paralegal. We're well known in the community. Men have changed their attitudes towards access to land for women. They know we're watchdogs in the community."

- Mastulah Nakisozi,
Community Paralegal from
Kamwokya Christian Caring
Community (KCCC), Uganda

Justice for Widows and Orphans (JWOP), Zambia

A unique tool to bring justice to land grabbers is the Land Tribunal, employed by JWOP in Zambia. As many women are evicted following the death of their husbands, and often do not have the legal documents to prove their ownership, JWOP works closely with traditional leaders in the communities to enable women to own land. They use the tool of tribunals, not only to reverse land and housing evictions or violations against women and orphans, but also as a mechanism for social advocacy and informal ac-

countability. When tribunals are held, community members are chosen to reenact real situations and present both sides of the case. This helps the community think about all sides of the issues, and challenges them to think about the real consequences of evictions and land grabbing and the impact of disallowing women to control and own property. As a result of this, the number of people reporting land

grabbing has increased substantially, indicating people are more aware of their rights. Community meetings are held regularly, and JWOP advocates to both local authorities and community members using publications and community radio stations that detail the cases of land tribunals. Successful cases were followed up in partnership with LADA and the Zambia Police Victim Support Unit, and in three cases, the land was given back to the dispossessed widows.



Watchdog Groups: A Tool for Safeguarding Women's Access and Control over Land & Property

Watchdog groups are community-led processes whereby the land and property rights of women and vulnerable children are safeguarded against evictions. Watchdog Groups provide participatory protection to guard against property-grabbing by monitoring communities for cases of women's dispossession, and raise alarm in instances of eviction and act to stop them. Watchdog groups are comprised of concerned individuals within the grassroots community who have combined their will, expertise and time towards the protection of women and orphans from property-grabbing and disinheritance. They provide information about which documents are important in pursuit of their property, and inform women of the appropriate channels for intervention. Watchdog groups have increased women's visibility in development, brought community issues to the attention of local policy makers, and redirected resources to community based development processes.

GROOTS Kenya, Kenya

When they first began their community watchdog program, it was an urgent measure to reverse or strip the many AIDS-related property evictions they were both witnessing and experiencing. To strengthen the work of the community watchdogs, the grassroots leaders of GROOTS Kenya encouraged community members to identify existing community watchdogs to be trained as community paralegals. Watchdog groups were formed by various community institutions' representatives including grassroots women and widows affected. The watchdog model has become extremely successful, and GROOTS Kenya facilitated monitoring of regional watchdog activities and mentoring of leadership through women experts. The Limuru watchdog groups went for an exchange visit to Gatundu to learn more about the women and property program and the great milestones that they have achieved. Gatundu has managed to have 15 watchdog groups and watchdogs have also spread to the neighboring district. The exchange brought

together about 48 community members; 13 from Limuru and the rest from Gatundu. The group comprised of local authorities such as chiefs and assistant chiefs, women who had been victims of property disinheritance and had been assisted by the watchdog groups, church leaders and some youth.

The program has positively transformed and educated people, so communities and individuals are in a better position and can make more informed choices on issues concerning women and property. Nine new watchdog groups have been formed. The watchdog groups have gained recognition both at local and national levels through the provincial administration. Previously, the provincial administration has been seen as administrators and working within a rigid framework not necessarily dealing with community work. Through their involvement in the watchdog groups they have interacted more freely with community members and have also been helped to fulfill their mandate in safeguarding the well being of the marginalized.



Peer Exchanges: Tools for Transfer of Grassroots Innovations, Knowledge and Skills

Women in poor communities are an incredible storehouse of community experience and knowledge. Furthermore, grassroots women's organizations place a high value on learning from each other. The solutions that women create ensure that everyone recognizes women as a powerful force whose voices and actions cannot be ignored. Women's experiences and skills are the most valuable resource that communities have. It is important to engage the people most directly affected in explor-

ing these issues and engaging them directly in the process of developing effective remedies. Peer exchanges are a learning tool that grassroots women's development organizations have employed for many years to learn from the experiences and practices of each other. Peer exchanges are tools to transfer innovations, knowledge and skills from one community to another. When answers to problems come from people who experience poverty and crisis (rather than those who study

them) communities are prepared to listen, see and take action to test out what they learn. A peer exchange occurs when two or more grassroots organizations believe they have something to share with each other that can increase the capacity of all the groups involved in the exchange. A peer exchange counters the dominant models of teaching and learning development, allowing grassroots women's groups to share their unique talents, practices and knowledge with others.

Association des Femmes pour l'Éducation et le Bien être des Enfants Orphelins (AFESEO) and ITERAMBERE, Burundi

AFESEO and ITERAMBERE set out to raise awareness among farming and rural women on the content of the upcoming Burundian Government law reform on the structural code of succession. Many women do not have access to land in Burundian custom, and the absence of a law on succession aggravates this situation. First, AFESEO and Iterambere members met to formulate questions to elicit information about men and women's perceptions about equality and the problems related to succession for women and women's property. They also discussed the ad-

vantages that the enactment of the law would bring on the successions as well as the risks and the recommendations. Ten investigators were identified and they surveyed 639 people (403 women and 236 men) and included administrators, magistrates, parliamentarians, and grassroots members of Ngozi and Bujumbura regions. As the surveys revealed many negative ideas about women's rights to succession, AFESEO and Iterambere embarked upon widespread awareness-raising and information workshops. They gathered a total of 1633 people (950 women and

683 men) over a two-week period. To ensure this activity would reach a wide number of people, an association of women jurists provided them with the training tools, translated in the national language, containing the structural law project code of succession. AFESEO and ITERAMBERE plan to continue awareness-raising in the community on the content of the law project structural code of succession and reach out to all of Burundi's provinces by placing communal animators in different regions.

People's Dialogue on Human Settlements & Federation of Urban Poor, Ghana

People's Dialogue brought together community women activists, organization members, religious leaders, opinion leaders, youth groups and local authorities in capacity building workshops, and community to community exchanges. Over 500 women and grassroots leaders from slum and informal settlements were brought together in the Community Exchanges in Accra, as well as Ashaiman, Tamale and Central Regions. The exchanges were carried out at two levels, the first being the local level and the second being the regional level. These exchanges were among Federation members from within Accra who met with each other

and Federation trainers who had undergone a capacity-building training on how to develop strategies to promote housing and inheritance rights as well as prevent evictions. A two-day regional exchange program was organized in the Central and Northern Regions, and a total of 54 women leaders of the Federation participated, in addition to community members in the regions. In the Northern Region, the federation team visited Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation in Tamale. It was a good opportunity for women from the North to learn from their colleagues who were making strides at gaining property for their constitu-

ents, and were having success with raising awareness through media programs. In all these exchange programs, poster/stickers, flyers and handbooks were distributed to women and slum-dwellers. As a result of the exchanges, participants have been educated on women's rights to land, housing and inheritance; how to network and negotiate effectively; and the significance of women's movements for development. They have been provided with relevant knowledge on international and domestic laws on women's rights to land, inheritance and property.

Building Women's Information, Knowledge and Communication Capacities through Use of Media & Cultural Performance Tools

Using media tools, such as radio-listening programs with personal testimonies and dramas that incorporate positive cultural messages about women's

ownership over land are critical tools for raising awareness in a short time across large numbers of people. This is particularly relevant in communi-

ties with low literacy rates, and in areas where community gatherings are more infrequent because of long distances. Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation

Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation (GSF), Ghana

magnifies the positive impacts of the Local Dialogues they hold through their strategic use of media tools, including radio dramas and radio documentaries. They broadcast, disseminate and distribute these dramas and discussions to many communities, to raise awareness and initiate discussion. GSF has worked to establish and solidify strong relationships with radio stations around the region to ensure continued radio show spots to discuss important women's issues. Through their radio and media activities, they have been able to successfully engage communities in discussions around the importance of property as collateral for women when going to the banks for

loans. They have also campaigned for Ghanaian women to obtain formalized documents in their names, on such things as land titles, shared property deeds and marriage and death certificates. As a result of these dialogues and tools, a woman from the community is now sitting on the Local Council, and 200 women have been mapped and will receive their title deeds to houses. These results were shared with a number of communities through radio shows, encouraging other communities to engage women meaningfully in community decisions and creating guidelines for land titles.

"In our area it is a great problem with property grabbing but now I am telling people that I will go to the police if I see someone grabbing property and everyone is respecting me now and is afraid to go against the law. I am not afraid of anyone, even though they threaten me with witchcraft. If I go to the chief he will then sort them out."

- Margaret Gamela,
grassroots leader Ntengwe
for Community Development

Ntengwe for Community Development, Zimbabwe

Ntengwe has raised awareness and provided education on women's issues in Zimbabwe around land and housing, such as forced evictions and a lack of access to the formal justice system. They have been advancing watchdog groups, sensitization workshops for community members and leaders and community level training workshops in advocacy skills. Women's communication capacities are further improved by their strong grounding in legal rights knowledge and the docudrama film, *When the Cows Come Home*, produced by Ntengwe for Community Development in 2007. The film records cases of property grabbing in the local community and demonstrates the successful resolution of these cases through traditional and statutory structures. Showing this film has helped

Ntengwe to raise awareness around women's rights to land in a manner that is less threatening to those with traditional or discriminatory views. With the simultaneous use of media in community settings, land cases have been handled at the community level, and six community help centers have been established. 385 cases have been handled where over 600 widows and their families have regained their inheritance and watchdog groups have been established in 36 communities. Ntengwe is encouraged by the results so far and are planning a community-driven expansion of the program within Binga District to ensure that services are available through Community Help Centers and watchdog groups in more communities.



Lessons from Grassroots Women's Practices

- Grassroots women are agents of change in their communities, and when their unique knowledge is shared and exchanged among peers, their marginalization is reduced and sustainable solutions from the ground are transferred.
- When grassroots women document their knowledge, they raise awareness about the issues that need to be addressed, the partnerships that need to be strengthened, and engage community members to monitor their communities for positive change.
- When grassroots women are actively participating in decision-making processes, they are able to confront and alter power relationships that have kept them in inferior economic, social and political positions.
- When grassroots women are recognized as agents of change, their needs and the community's development priorities will be reflected and supported in practices, policies and programs.
- Grassroots women's processes have had considerable success protecting and promoting the needs of women and marginalized groups, and when these needs are fulfilled, the whole community benefits.

Better Housing, Land, Economics for Women and ALL

The Huairou Commission's Land & Housing Campaign and the Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA) initiative focus on:

Increasing voice and visibility to allow women to CLAIM land and housing

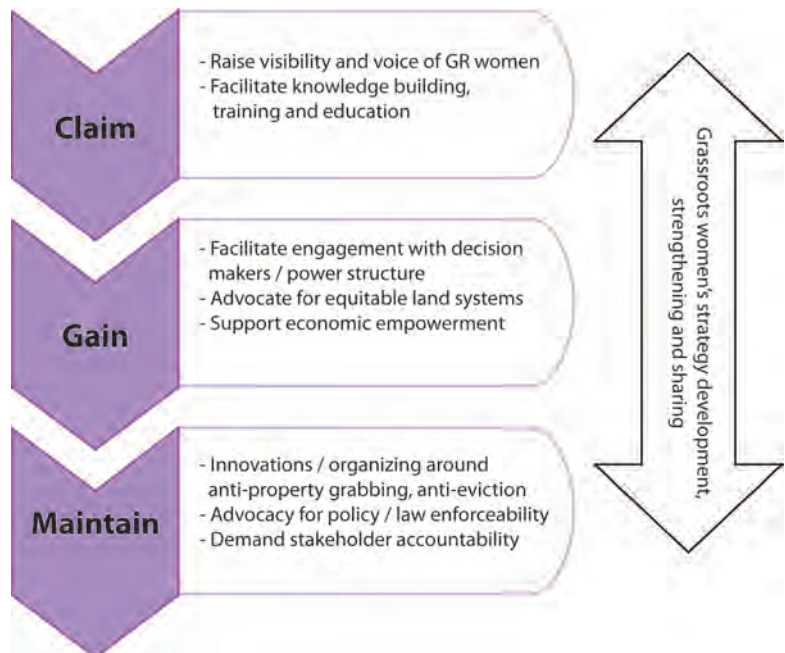
- Build the capacity of grassroots women to communicate and transfer their skills and strategies in reducing women's poverty, improving local housing and living conditions and fostering local governance that is open and responsive to poor communities.

Facilitating opportunities for knowledge building and sharing to allow grassroots women to GAIN land and housing

- Link grassroots women's groups with each other nationally, regionally, and globally in order to increase women's collective power and to strengthen successful strategies.
- Provide resources in the form of small funds, materials and information tools.

Enhancing the capacity of grassroots women to hold stakeholders accountable to SUSTAIN their land and housing

- Develop, facilitate and maintain strategic partnerships, such as legal aid organizations, land alliances, donors, local and national politicians, women's lawyers groups, and influential scholars.
- Forge a direct link to international and regional arenas and mechanisms that may otherwise be out-of-reach for grassroots women's organizations in Africa.





HUAIROU COMMISSION

Women, Homes & Community

The Huairou Commission's Land & Housing Campaign

The Land and Housing Campaign envisions a world where women are able to autonomously and securely claim, gain and maintain land and housing, as a means of empowerment and as a foundation for sustainable, resilient community development. The Huairou Commission's Land and Housing Campaign works with grassroots women's groups to identify innovative on-the-ground strategies and practices that women are using to fight for their rights to land and property at the local, national and international levels. Our focus is to build the capacity of grassroots women's groups and to highlight the strategies and practices they are implementing to improve women's social, economic and political status within their communities. The HC is focused on grassroots women as the initiators of actions and the problem solvers within their communities, rather than as the recipients of legal or financial aid. The Huairou Commission's Land & Housing Campaign seeks to broaden the outreach of its existing work as a part of WLLA as well as to strengthen the impact of grassroots women's strategies and the overall impact of the WLLA. As a part of the Land and Housing Campaign the Huairou Commission is working to support grassroots women's groups that are in the process of community planning and design, overseeing projects, doing construction work, and demanding rights to secure tenure.



Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA)

Utilizing both a human rights and development based approach, Women's Land Link Africa supports, strengthens and increases the visibility of women's initiatives to have access to and control over land, housing and property, at all levels with particular emphasis on the community / grassroots.

The WLLA, as an integral part of the Huairou Commission's Land and Housing Campaign, has adopted the Campaign's mission that grassroots women are able to claim, gain and maintain land, housing and basic services. The Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA) is a joint regional partnership initiative that supports and strengthens linkages between regional stakeholders focused on improving grassroots

women's access to, control over and ownership of land, housing and property in Africa. The joint regional initiative's core partners include the Huairou Commission (HC), the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), and active leadership by participating grassroots women's organizations and partners.

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