



# Huairou Commission

## *Tools For Securing Land and Property*

### A New Paradigm: Grassroots Women's Avenues to Claiming, Gaining and Maintaining Land, Housing and Property

Securing access to and control over land and housing augments grassroots women's capacity to stabilize and protect their economic livelihoods through income generating activities. It empowers women to enhance food production and food security, increase their ability to provide safe shelter and improve future planning. While women develop and execute self-designed initiatives, they need vertical and horizontal support for their work and a commitment from those in the development arena to facilitate women's rights to access and control land and own and inherit housing and



property. These are fundamental components to ensuring resilient, long-term development, to reducing vulnerability to poverty and risky behavior in view of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and issues of climate change and food insecurity globally. When women have land, housing and property

in their own right (rather than through relationships to male counterparts), they are able to empower and make concrete gains that benefit the larger community.

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*"During our mapping process, we carried out interviews with 160 men and women, who showed a high degree and great interest in land and property rights and were eager to impact changes within their communities. Five open focus discussions were held in the community settings (auction day) which attracted over 200 people, women, children, youth, men, from Kathile, Karenga, Kopoth, disabled and others. A respected elder was leading the discussions and many of the grassroots community, especially women, now have ideas about land as an important resource and have seen the gains from a grassroots women who sold her land and bought a plot in the town of Kaabong township not only that, she is a single mother but sends/pays school fees for her four children."*

-- **AWARE Uganda**

## Grassroots Women's Tools for Securing Land and Property

Without formal ownership of land and property, women do not benefit directly from their own labor. Without tenure security, women are vulnerable to forced evictions and violence. For any country to successfully tackle poverty, women must be capacitated with tools for economic security. Women's struggles around secure tenure are central not only to reducing the incidence of female and children's poverty but also to attaining women's full, independent rights to property and thus full citizenship. In countries greatly affected by HIV/AIDS, the premature

death of a male head of household often means that surviving widows and children are at risk of losing their land, housing and other assets as family members 'grab' property.

In other cases, certain negative traditional and cultural laws treat women as minors and exclude them from decision-making processes. Often times, women are unaware of existing laws that protect them from disinheritance. Women habitually have secondary land use rights to men, while widows and divorced women are often forced to return

to their matrimonial homes empty-handed. The grassroots women's groups that represent the Huairou Commission's Land and Housing Campaign aim to change the dominant social, political and cultural perceptions and practices that hinder or deny women's ownership of land and property. The Campaign works toward a world where women have autonomous and secure tenure over land, housing and property, as a means of empowerment and as a foundation for strong, sustainable community development.

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*"The WLLA network has strengthened the capacity of our organization to improve women's land and housing. It has created local awareness on women's land and property rights within local communities."*

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### Highlights from Year 5 of the WLLA

WLLA groups continue to model holistic development through comprehensive programming to address community challenges and with particular attention on precarious issues confronting grassroots women. In 2009, 446 new Community Paralegals were trained and provided refresher courses from Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria in the West, to Rwanda and Kenya in the East, and Zimbabwe in the South. Enlarging grassroots women's access to justice customary and statutory systems, community watchdog groups were established in Cameroon, Tanzania and Zimbabwe and

the first grassroots women led national Community Watchdog Alliance was formed in Kenya. In Benin, Uganda and Burundi 400 women and men mapped 1,033 people with the objective of documenting grassroots women's foremost challenges, linking with like minded organizations and promoting women driven innovations and solutions to the fight for equal access and ownership to land, housing and property. Local to local dialogues were held in 28 communities across South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana and an estimated 1,992 people benefitted

from new and enhanced knowledge on land rights gained through planning meetings, workshops, field visits or information sessions. Finally, three peer learning exchanges were held in Ghana, Cameroon, and South Africa and the piloting of a new grassroots driven M&E tool, Regional Peer Monitoring Exchanges. Applying principles of participatory development, WLLA members elected one grassroots leader per region to congruently monitor and evaluate the progress and quality of thematic activities, and identify areas of improvement, growth and sustainability within WLLA.

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## The Third Annual WLLA Land Academy

An exchange of knowledge and practice



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

The WLLA Land Academy, operational since 2006, brought together veteran members who have been participants since the WLLA's inception as well as those that joined in subsequent years and first time attendees. From February 8th-12th in Lusaka, Zambia 38 grassroots leaders and NGO partners from 23 organizations in 13 African countries, organized as community-based grassroots groups, women's savings clubs, NGOs and women's alliances, came together for the third Annual Land Academy 2011, organized by Katuba Women's Association (KWASSOC) and the Huairou Commission.

The Land Academy provided an opportunity for participations to share and exchange experiences as well as challenges and strategies to strengthen women's ability to claim, gain and maintain land and housing.



The format of the Land Academy focused on participants taking the time to carefully assess and evaluate previous and on-going work so as to provide a clear vision moving forward to make

A central theme of the 2010 Academy was an in-depth Monitoring and Evaluation exercise, supported by consultant IDL-group, which encouraged individual WLLA groups to reflect

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*“Evaluation is important to me, because it helps us to see if our work is changing peoples’ lives.”*

- **Julianna Muskwe, Ntengwe for Community Development, Zimbabwe**

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certain long-term success for themselves, their organizations and their communities is achieved. The Academy provided a time to comprehensively analyze grassroots leaders and NGO partner's continuum of work on land and housing within countries and across regions in Africa.

internally on their own monitoring and evaluation techniques while also allowing for and capturing the broader scope of grassroots women's strategies that are horizontally adoptable and adaptable to grassroots communities. The Academy featured a Partner's Day Dialogue, whereby representa-

tives of Zambian NGOs and government participated in a candid discussion with Academy participants on controversial issues of customary and state land inheritance. The dialogue drove unrestricted debate and highlighted the importance of bringing a diverse cross-section of partners, global to local, to bear on grassroots women's priorities. The dialogue also resulted in South African, Zimbabwean and Kenyan participants attending a session of Parliament in which Zambia's land reform process was under debate.

The Huairou Commission invited the Institute for Housing & Urban Development Studies (IHS) to facilitate a Land Court Simulation exercise in which participants acted out three mock Land Court Tribunals 'deciding' contentious land and inheritance cases. During each 'trial' participants were forced to resituate themselves and argue for ideas that they instinctively rejected and in so doing were able to more intensely self-analyze. To foster parallel learning, Katuba Women's Association led a peer site visit to Chawama, a slum community located within

Lusaka, to see a community-built and funded housing and sanitation project. The home and pit latrines illustrated the effectiveness of grassroots movement building through collective savings, shared voice and community resolve.

Finally, the Academy served as an organizing and planning platform, in which grassroots women and their NGO partners mapped out their accomplishments, desired long term impacts, and the critical strategies necessary to achieve them.

## Community Mapping



Community Mapping is a grassroots-led, community focused tool whereby grassroots women's groups work to jointly analyze a specific situation or issue in their community and its direct effect on women. Community mapping is also a leadership tool because it positions individuals or marginalized groups, who are normally excluded from decision-making or research work, to lead the effort. A mapping involves community members methodically moving through an area, talking to other community members through one-on-one interviews or focus group discussions, listening to residents' challenges and desires, and documenting the findings for future advocacy and lobbying campaigns.

For WLLA, community mapping is geared towards the land,



housing and property situation for women at the local level. Mapped communities learn new ways to claim, gain, and maintain land and property and how to move towards greater economic empowerment. Women return to

their communities and leaders with their findings and a deepened understanding of community challenges and in turn they are perceived as experts. Mapping, in fact, manifests power through the knowledge it produces.

When grassroots groups are organized, working in coordination, supported to analyze their own contexts, and asserting their exceptional knowledge, they are bolstered to develop and implement solutions to community problems and importantly in partnership with local leaders. Through every stage of a community mapping, grassroots groups report that they raise tremendous awareness about the immediate challenges their community is facing, the resources they have available, and the stakeholders they must engage.

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## AWARE, Uganda

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Action for Women and Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE Uganda) has been operating in two pastoralist communities in remote Northeastern Uganda since 1989. It is the only grassroots organization in the region addressing the three-pronged challenge of land and property, HIV/AIDS and inadequate knowledge of women's rights. In 2009, AWARE conducted a number of inter-locking strategies, including local-to-local dialogues, community mapping, focus group discussions and using the power of media to push forward an anti-land grabbing and disinheritance campaign. This campaign sought to educate women and men, in a post-conflict zone, on the importance of secure tenure for all. As a result of these persistent advocacy efforts, AWARE secured 11 official land documents for women, 20 girls were given cows by their fathers, 20 couples co-wrote wills ensuring the wife would be protected should the husband die, 160 people learned new strategies related to land and property acquisition and long term economic empowerment, and 10 evictions were reversed and property returned to those widows.



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## Lambassa ICA, Benin

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Lambassa ICA, Benin operates in both urban and rural areas of Benin, and was in its first year of the WLLA in 2009 when it launched a community mapping process in six communities of Donga Region with 210 women and men. The mapping process revealed that the idea of women owning land was relatively new to these communities which resulted in initial resistance to Lambassa's women, land and property agenda. By working through their local authorities and local media to conduct and report on the community mapping, the organization gained the support of both officials and community members and were able to reach more Beninese. Lambassa facilitated dialogue between 25 women, previously prevented from building their own homes, and their husbands to grant the women permission to begin construction. This change in attitude was attributed to awareness-raising sessions that encouraged men and local leaders to understand the many positive effects for families and communities when women are allowed to own 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, monitoring and evaluation skills
- Information dissemination

## Balancing the Vertical Divide: Local-to-Local Dialogues

A Local-to-Local Dialogue is a community-led and community driven process, meant to shift the balance of power from elected and appointed officials directly 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. Women leaders and their groups engage in conversation with their elected and appointed leaders to initiate solutions to community issues through col-

laboration, starting from the ground and moving vertically to debate issues and actively problem solve.

Grassroots women from organized groups become even more empowered as they vocalize their concerns, actively engage in debate and are recognized in decision-making processes at all levels-whether by engaging by participation on local community boards, through partnerships with local authorities and religious leaders, or by running for elected office.



Local-to-Local Dialogues provide space for women and marginalized groups to voice their concerns, widen their participation and improve their status within the community.

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## Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation (GSF), Ghana

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Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation (GSF) operates in 27 communities in 3 regions of Northern Ghana. Building on the results from their 2008 dialogues, in which 10 acres of land were granted to women for farming purposes and another 20 women registered land in their own names, this year GSF facilitated a refresher course for 45 community watchdog members and 20 community paralegals (CPL), bolstered by 6 local to local dialogues in 13 communities. Holding the dialogues in coordination with refresher trainings ensured that key community leaders were informed and supportive of the community paralegals work. Since beginning the Local-to-Local Dialogue process in 2007, GSF has reported a visible shift in grassroots women leading decision-making processes in areas where women were almost entirely excluded from these roles. Now, women have become increasingly more involved and more vocal to the extent that 27 women have been nominated to lead community development and leadership committees. The dialogues and awareness-raising work of GSF have also encouraged three influential Imams and two traditional chiefs to write wills and lead will-writing campaigns in GSF's operational area.

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## Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO), Tanzania

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Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO) has been working in Northern Tanzania since 1999 to build the capacity of Maasai women to access land and property. In 2009 MWEDO wanted to scale up their Community Watch Dog Groups (CWDGs) and Local to Local Dialogues. By using these tools in tandem, MWEDO has successfully employed the Local to Local Dialogue method to cultivate a deep understanding on issues of access to and control over land within pastoralist communities and they've utilized the CWDGs to guard against rights abuses. Through an initial community mapping, 90 participants were identified to take part in the dialogue to openly discuss land issues, village land management, land allocation, certificates and settlement disputes originating from the Village Land Act of 1999 that lawfully gave men full right to land and property with no provisions for women. Following the dialogue, CWDGs were formed through a common understanding of the meaning, objectives, responsibilities and principles of the watchdog groups. The groups are expected to strengthen efforts to protect women's property rights and increase access to and management of land.



### Ntankah Village Common Women's Initiative, Cameroon

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Ntankah Village Common Women's Initiative in Cameroon was founded in 1996 to improve long-term social and economic conditions of women through agricultural and rural development activities that improve women's ability to control and manage their resources. Ntankah's empowerment programs have been actualized through awareness-raising workshops, listening to live testimonies, role play and drama, engaging the services of social welfare organizations, women and families and law enforcement officials, creating watchdog groups and working through faith based organizations to join with churches. Ntankah has held a number of Local-to-Local Dialogues to discuss community issues unearthed by their watchdog network. Ntankah works hard to ensure numerous stakeholders are present in these dialogues -- from grassroots women to traditional rulers, municipal councilors, mayors, media practitioners and NGO partners. The Local Dialogues are an opportunity to raise awareness and discuss problems that are both a cause and result of land grabbing, such as gender based and domestic violence and the negative impact it has on women, families and communities. Ntankah's close relationship with local authorities' has inspired these leaders to sensitize fellow men on will-writing and registration of property in the names of their wives and daughters.



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*“WLLA has assisted us to have in-depth understanding of land issues and how land affects the position of women” - Anonymous, in WLLA survey*

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

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Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA) is an independent community-based organization advocating for land and agrarian rights, substantive democracy, and sustainable development. From its inception in 1991, the groups has mobilize dispossessed communities to collectively fight discriminatory colonial and apartheid land laws, racial and gender discrimination, and poverty. LAMOSA works within both the customary and the legal system, working to change discriminatory and harmful customs, policies and laws that disempower women. This past year, they held two planning and awareness raising workshops on Traditional Courts Bill and Customary Marriages and Succession. Following the first workshop, grassroots leaders wrote letters to the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional matters by the participants themselves, press statement and written articles, marches, picketing and petitions, talk shows, learning sessions and debates. LAMOSA members also secured a local radio station in Moutse to host a talk show. As a result of this talk show, LAMOSA put the issue of traditional and customary law onto the national agenda, and stimulated debates in many forums including the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Strong widow's forums have emerged, targeting issues of forced marriages and polygamy through customary laws. **Continued on page 9**

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## Creating Alternative Justice Systems: Eviction Watch Programs and Community Paralegals

In response to the lack of effective and affordable judicial systems, women have relied on, and in some cases been at the forefront of developing informal justice systems in their own communities. These systems are better able to respond to women's realities in real time. Community-based systems provide alternatives to the formal justice institutions that affirm women's position and leadership, and support women's rights. Grassroots women's groups have developed a number of strategies within their community-based justice systems, including community-led paralegals, watch dog groups, land tribunals and test cases.



Community Paralegals are a means through which women are accessing local, cultural and traditional legal systems and legal structures. These institutions are often fraught with obstacles and so it is the community paralegals who become indispensable and essential allies for women. A community paralegal is defined as one who has received legal and advocacy training from a partner

organization, 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 received legal and mediation skills and also understands the law but is not a formally trained 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 and legal literacy in addition to education workshops on women's rights to land and property. While community paralegal systems are spatially different with individual processes and styles, their ultimate purpose is the same – to increase community member's entry to legal systems and to enhance women's access to justice.

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### ***Continued from page 8***

The responses from the Municipality offices were overwhelming, and they indicated their willingness to engage with LAMOSA's processes, and their realization of how ignorant they are on women's land issues. The plan of action to start engaging Members of Parliaments and Section 9 (right to equality) institutions empowered grassroots women to start raising their voices with confidence, so that they may tackle their own issues.



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### **Justice for Widows and Orphans Project (JWOP), Zambia**

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Justice for Widows and Orphans Project (JWOP) is composed of nine self-help groups and was formed by widows and orphans who work to address property and inheritance rights and livelihoods survival. One of JWOP's most successful strategies is to hold mock tribunals, whereby real cases are "tried" before an entire community. Residents of the community play both the role of juror or audience as real examples of rights abuses are presented to traditional leaders or judges. 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.

After the tribunals, JWOP follows up on each case until property is returned to the widows and does not limit its assistance to just those widows who testified during the tribunal. JWOP held a mock tribunal in the Kafue District, whereby 100 people learnt about the Law of Succession in Zambia, 15 widows received professional counseling, and eight widows testified that they had their property grabbed by their in-laws. After the mock tribunal, JWOP worked with the local leadership in the district to continue to pursue cases of property grabbing in the area. JWOP has also strengthened the impact of tribunals by producing a booklet of case studies on disinheritance and the importance of tribunals. Members of the community are using this booklet as a tool in solving cases in their own communities.

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### **Rwanda Women's Network (RWN), Rwanda**

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Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) began operating in 1997 and has grown into a network of 22 grassroots groups devoted to promoting and strengthening strategies that empower Rwandan women. To expand the work from RWN's previous year's activity it was decided that 15 additional CPLs from three districts would be trained and, importantly, a structured M&E mechanism developed to ensure cases of human rights abuse were being properly and promptly documented and followed-up on. The M&E manual was co-written by RWN with the assistance of an external consultant and the final product was tested by 30 previously trained CPLs to make certain it was appropriate for a breadth of contexts. RWN noted that, moving forward, they will track indicators related to availability, type and quality of existing legal services, frequency of CPL reports and supervisor visits, and success stories and lessons learned.

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## **Seke Rural Home Based Care (SRHBC), Zimbabwe**

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Seke Rural Home Based Care (SRHBC) in Zimbabwe is made up of 1,200 volunteer caregivers who are found in every village within the three districts in which Seke operates. Seke Rural HBC has created a strong working relationship with the Zimbabwe Women Lawyer's Association to conduct annual comprehensive community paralegal trainings. Seke Rural HBC have equipped grassroots women leaders with a number of important tools that have steadily increased their capacity to circumvent women's disinheritance, understand the law, and change negative cultural practices that disempower women. Community paralegals have mobilized communities to write wills to protect women after the death of male family members, and this past year, 48 more women were trained as CPLs bringing the total number trained under Seke Rural HBC 97. The work of the community paralegals has brought the communities tremendous benefits. Ten women were given the authority to return to their matrimonial homes by the chief's court after they were evicted and the local council called 50 women to be interviewed for land allocation. The project has enhanced improved women's capacity to claim their rights of women and empowered them by raising their levels of confidence thus reducing the erosion of women's land rights by men so as to maintain sustainable livelihoods for the whole family.

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

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Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC) has been working in Central Uganda for two decades, and was formed in response to the thousands of orphans in Uganda resulting from civil war and the AIDS pandemic. This year, UCOBAC documented the lived experiences of grassroots women through participatory mapping, to better capture strong, locally designed practices that then allowed for a sharpened national advocacy platform and alliance building. Twenty grassroots women and men carried out semi-structured interviews with 300 grassroots people in both rural and urban sub-counties. The findings from UCOBAC's situational analysis were then collated into a Community Paralegal Training Manual which covered topics ranging from "The Evolution of the Land Tenure Systems in Uganda" and "Land Management Institutions" to "Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms" and "Gender and Law in Relation to Land and Property". With this manual UCOBAC will be able to multiply trainings and re-trainings that are consistent and reliable.



## Community Watch Dog Groups

Community Watch Dog Groups are grassroots women led groups that have had a profound impact on protecting women's property and inheritance rights by providing a systematic, community-based tool to safeguard the land and property rights of women, orphans and vulnerable children across Africa. They have also served as an advocacy platform for grassroots women to access governance institutions and influence legal structures. In addition to their

successes, community watchdogs have faced many challenges. During the initiation process, significant advocacy efforts were necessary to convince community members of a woman's right to own property. In some cases local authorities have initially resented the work of watchdog groups. Though dialogue sessions have worked to transform these relationships, still operating on a small scale, many watchdogs do not have the necessary resources

to address the overwhelming number of cases brought to them. However, where partnerships have been strong, watchdogs accomplishments have been ground-breaking. Through watchdogs several groups have settled protracted court cases which are expensive, lengthy and emotionally exhausting. Many communities have applauded the use of the watchdog model and have begun to organize and replicate this powerful tool.

“ *The watchdog group members have been able to come up with local solutions to ensure the rule of law and proper legal processes are observed, in a bid to preserve women's property rights. They have been able to challenge improper practices used by village elders and provincial administrators on handling property disputes, especially around matrimonial property.* ”

– GROOTS Kenya



## International Women's Communication Center (IWCC), Nigeria

International Women's Communication Center (IWCC) has been active in Kwara State, Nigeria since 1993 and serves as a critical link between international women's rights groups, development organizations and grassroots communities. IWCC has focused on building its CPL base to guard against severe land and property abuses experienced by grassroots women. This year's training program was designed especially for members of the Police Community Relations Committee who play a critical role in maintaining peace and order and who act as conduits between the police and community members. From this activity 50 new CPLs were trained with veteran CPLs receiving refresher courses.

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## **GROOTS Kenya, Kenya**

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GROOTS Kenya, with a network of over 1,000 grassroots women's groups, was founded in 1995 to better position women as decision-makers, planners and implementers of community development. GROOTS Kenya is helping to spearhead and define the community paralegal movement through its innovative community land and property watchdog groups. Moving from previous years' work related to CPLs, GROOTS Kenya held an intensive five module course lasting six months, 24 trainees from seven regions in the GROOTS Kenya network learned practical and participatory approaches to identifying women and vulnerable groups' property and inheritance rights violations. The project culminated in the formation of a women's led National Community Paralegal Alliance to provide a support mechanism for emerging and expanding groups.

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## **Ntengwe for Community Development Trust, Zimbabwe**

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Ntengwe for Community Development Trust began its work by establishing support groups in the Binga and Ntengwe districts to provide home based care and counseling to HIV-positive families, and to support women in their struggle for property and inheritance rights. Ntengwe has established six 15 person watchdog groups whose development is monitored through continuous training. To date Ntengwe has facilitated 249 women to regain property and receive housing stand documents for building purposes, 148 women have written wills, 103 women obtained birth certificates for their children, 100 women received their identification documents, more than 600 women learned about their constitutional rights through rights-based trainings, and 60 women were trained as community paralegals. Ntengwe also utilizes the media in each of these spaces to screen their award winning documentary "When the Cows Come Home," Ntengwe's self-produced film on inheritance rights. This film played a central role in conveying that conflicts can be solved at the community level either through the chief's court or through family-to-family negotiations because of the long distances and great expenses assumed during state court proceedings.

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

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Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID) works in the second largest city in Uganda and was formed in 2003 by slum women as a response to systematic housing evictions led by the Jinja Municipal Council. In 2009, SWID used the Huairou Commission's Local to Local Dialogue methodology in an effort to promote democracy and transparency in development and to encourage grassroots women's participation in local governance. Spanning two trainings in one week 58 participants from two grassroots women's organizations learned the importance of the Local to Local Dialogue as a medium to pushing forward the grassroots agenda, how to organize an effective dialogue, and how to improve accountability and partnership. Most profound was participants realization that their collective voices command attention and that through activism their demands could influence national and international political processes. To ensure SWID's trainings were absorbed by participants the organization conducted an M&E exercise to assess how knowledge was being disseminated, acted upon, and how leadership committees were moving forward with promoting a rights and development based agenda. From these two activities SWID estimates that 1,000 urban and rural residents of Jinja District were directly and indirectly benefitted.

### The Huairou Commission Land and Housing Campaign

The Land and Housing Campaign works toward 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 Land and Housing Campaign aims to shift dominant social and cultural perceptions and practices that imply that housing and land are the domain of males, assumptions that men will take care of women with regard to housing and land which force reliance on men in relationships, ignorance of women's critical roles in housing and land – production, management, development, and exclusion of women in decision-making over land (often rooted in the above mindsets). Within Africa, the Huairou Commission supports grassroots network members in countries in Southern, Eastern and Western Africa to enhance a number of community led legal processes and activities, including community watchdog groups; community-based paralegal trainings; the development of training materials in local languages; and support for test cases.



#### Practically, the Land & Housing Campaign focuses 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 MAINTAIN 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.

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## Tracing a Revolution: Locating Grassroots Women's Gains Made through WLLA

Utilizing both a human rights and development-based approach, Women's Land Link Africa, or WLLA, supports, strengthens and increases the women's ability to access and control land, housing and property, with particular emphasis on grassroots communities.

As a central component of the Huairou Commission's Land & Housing Campaign, The WLLA has adopted the organization's larger mission that grassroots women must be 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.



The WLLA, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) since 2004 and an anonymous donor since 2007, supports and strengthens linkages regionally between grassroots organizations and other stakeholders prioritizing women claiming, gaining and maintaining land, housing and property in Sub-Saharan Africa. The WLLA partnership initiative, through the direct leadership of grassroots groups themselves, has recognized that grassroots strategies must not only inform each other through peer learning, but these strategies must also impact higher levels of decision making in order for large scale change to take place.

The overall objective of the project is to ensure the involvement of grassroots women and their organizations as essential stakeholders to any development process and to increase knowledge production and transfer. The role of the Huairou Commission within the WLLA initiative is to involve women-led grassroots organizations and grassroots non-governmental organizations into a regional network and peer learning community focused on housing, land and property issues. As of 2009, the Huairou Commission has involved over 30 grassroots member organizations from thirteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

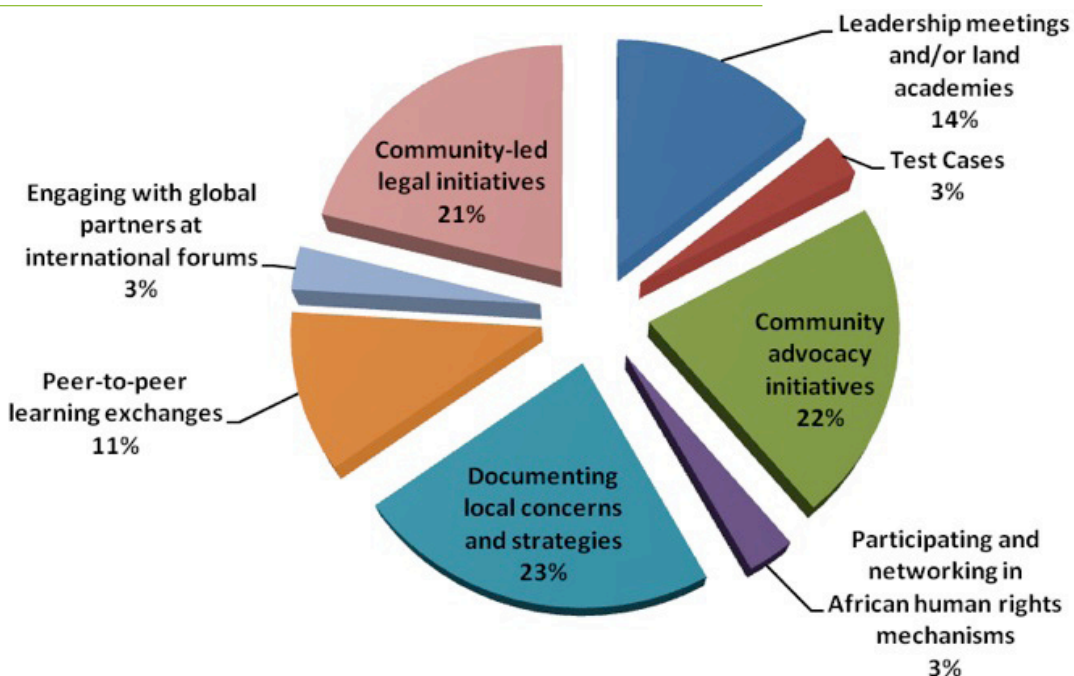
## Grassroots Women's Tools for Securing Land and Property



“ Since all new ideas are a little scary, we encountered a little resistance initially, but through explanation and hard work we finally managed to put the sceptics on our side. WLLA will continue to evolve every day so that one day the situation for women can change in Benin. ”

– Lambassa ICA

### Most effective WLLA Activities According to Grassroots Women:



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