

**FROM BENEFICIARIES TO STAKEHOLDERS
Grassroots Women's Groups Drive the
Demand for Good Governance through
Pro-Poor Development**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Framing Governance From A Grassroots Women’s Perspective.....	4
Principles of Engagement	5
Case Examples	6
Lack of Effective Response to HIV/AIDS: Grassroots Women’s Groups Function as Citizen Monitors of HIV/AIDS Funds in Kenya	8
Decentralized Response to AIDS and the Impact on AIDS on Women	8
GROOTS Kenya: Grassroots Women Building Constituencies as Citizen Monitors	8
Organizing as Home-Based Care Alliances.....	9
Engagement with Local Leaders.....	9
Sustained Collaboration.....	10
Gains and Benefits	11
Challenges and Conclusions	12
Governance in Land Rights: Organized Grassroots Women Develop Innovations to Ensure Land Rights in Kenya	13
An Organized Response to Property Dispossession: Community Watchdog Groups	13
Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare	16
Grassroots Women Organize to Move from Recovery to Resilient Development in India	20
The Role of Women’s Groups as Information Agents, Planners and Monitors in the World Bank Supported Maharashtra Earthquake Emergency Rehabilitation Program.....	20
Sustaining Public Roles in Development.....	21
Improving Access to Health Services After the Tsunami	21
Gathering information and organizing women.....	22
Organizing health camps: bringing health services to women.....	22
Entering formal decision making and planning arenas to collaborate with primary health centers	22
Transferring and scaling up practice	23
Climbing the Sanitation Ladder : Women’s Groups Step Up.....	24
Context.....	24
Women as Sanitation Leaders	25
Learning	26
CONCLUSION	27
Challenges	27
Recommendations.....	27

FROM BENEFICIARIES TO STAKEHOLDERS

GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S GROUPS DRIVE THE DEMAND FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The paper will begin by framing the issue of governance from the perspective of grassroots women's groups addressing settlement development. It will use case examples from grassroots women's organizations working on land and housing tenure, HIV/AIDS, post-disaster recovery and basic services - to present some key principles of engagement that frame grassroots women's efforts to make national and local governments more accountable to the poor. The paper will then pinpoint some of the key challenges for grassroots women's efforts to drive the demand for good governance. Finally it will present recommendations to the World Bank on how its pro-poor development investments can be aligned with grassroots efforts to drive the demand for good governance.

This paper draws on two decades of experience of GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission. GROOTS is an acronym for Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood. Over the last 20 years GROOTS International has been building a global movement of rural and urban grassroots women's organizations who are committed to empowering themselves to improve the quality of life of poor and marginalized communities. GROOTS International is also a founding member of the Huairou Commission which was created in 1995 as a coalition of women's networks and allied institutions interested in addressing grassroots women's settlement development priorities. Both Huairou Commission and GROOTS International have a large grassroots membership base in the Global South and North who have been consistently working to advance community development priorities through thematic programs to scale up development innovations in partnership with government. The lessons and insights shared in this paper are drawn from the experiences of these organizations efforts.

FRAMING GOVERNANCE FROM A GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

Good governance is the exercise of authority with the participation, interest and livelihoods of the governed as the driving force.¹ Poor women are constantly struggling to feed their families, earn income, get clean drinking water and access healthcare, education and shelter. Despite their contributions to the survival of their households and the wellbeing of their communities, grassroots women are excluded from planning and decision-making processes. For the poor and marginalized, governance institutions are considered effective when they deliver resources and services reliably. In order for this to occur, responsive institutional arrangements must be created in through collaborations between organized citizen with local and national authorities.

"For grassroots women governance is not an abstract concept; it is part of their daily lives. Governances is about who gets what, who does what and who decides who gets what. In other words, governances is about rights, responsibilities, and resource allocations, and the processes by which these are decided upon."

- Srilatha Batlimala, Fellow Hauser Center for Non Profit Management, Harvard University

Grassroots women's strategies for good governance address both the practical and the strategic needs of women. On the practical side, they address the material conditions of women, their families and their communities by improving the living conditions of the poor. On the strategic side, grassroots women's efforts seek to ensure that women are seen as leaders and agents of change by their communities as well as by local and national governments. It is also the case that repositioning

¹ Kauzya, John-Mary, "Reconceptualizing Governance." UNDP: Discussion Paper 2, 1997, as cited in "Local to Local Dialogue: A Grassroots Women's Perspective on Good Governance," Urban Governance Toolkit Series, Huairou Commission/UNHABITAT, March 2004.

grassroots women in development processes will raise their political and social status, and this in turn would have a sustained impact on advancing grassroots women's practical, development interests by enabling them to access services as well as gain and retain control over housing, land and other assets.

The following are three key ideas that distinguish the approach of grassroots women's organizations to driving the demand for good governance

1. Shifting women's identity from beneficiaries to citizen problem-solvers

Development policies and programs impacting the lives of women living in poor communities tend to see women beneficiaries. Far from being passive beneficiaries waiting for state handouts, grassroots women are continually organizing to find innovative solutions to their everyday problems of housing, healthcare, childcare, education, livelihoods, water supply and sanitation. Furthermore grassroots women's groups are also demonstrating ways in which they can transfer and scale up effective practices through community to community learning exchanges which shifts their roles from mere recipients of training to knowledge generators, disseminators and trainers. Thus a key element of grassroots women's approach to governance is to reposition women as citizens, problem-solvers and collaborators in the eyes of all development actors.

2. From adversaries to allies

Many civil society organizations are positioned in adversarial roles vis-a-vis the government. Decentralization processes and economic restructuring have dramatically increased the roles and responsibilities of local governments without providing adequate resources to realize them. Thus demands by citizens can lead to hostility or disengagement between government and civil society actors. What is unique about the way in which grassroots women are driving good governance is that while demanding accountability and effectiveness from government through civic education and constituency building, women are also collaborating with government actors to enable effective outreach and delivery of services to the poor. In short, grassroots women are not just demanding good governance they are also partnering with government actors to demonstrate viable, practical ways to "supply" services to meet the demand.

3. Reconfiguring power relationships

Much of the current discussion of good governance emphasizes reforming institutions—a process often accomplished by redesigning administrative and management systems with the 'help' of external technical assistants. This approach—which may or may not improve the 'performance' of governments and reduce corruption --displaces the issue that good governance is built around people and new forms of power and information. Democratic institutional reform requires addressing the human dimension: the redistribution and sharing of power with citizens, across class and gender.

In the real world, marginalization and social exclusion have required grassroots women's groups engaging with governing institutions to empower themselves to negotiate their interests and priorities and to reconfigure power equations by changing how local development is implemented. By acquiring skills, knowledge and assets, by expanding their social capital through citizens' platforms and networks, and building alliances with institutional actors, grassroots women are advancing their ability to influence govern institutions and change the nature of decision making.

Principles of Engagement

Given the power differential between the poor and marginalized people and governments, negotiations between the two entails major investments in the following:

1. Constituency building through organizing and civic education

Grassroots women recognize that they are rarely able to make sustained gains from individual negotiations with authorities. Collective efforts to influence state actors have been far more successful. Thus, the foundation of all grassroots efforts to influence government whether national or local is organized groups, federations and networks which represent constituencies or citizen's platforms.

2. Community owned information and knowledge base

One of the most valuable resources that community based organizations can bring to the table in negotiations and partnerships with government are accurate and up to date information and knowledge on their settlements and communities. This information can also be the basis for ongoing social audits and community oversight. Furthermore, grassroots women often combine the processes of information gathering with mobilizing communities to undertake collective analysis for community agenda setting.

3. Collaborative demonstrations led by grassroots women to initiate and scale up solutions to development problems.

Experiences across the network show that the most effective poverty reduction or development programs are those in which governments partner with those who are directly impacted by the programs. These collaborations resource and formalize women's public roles in development planning, implementation and monitoring. However the major challenge is to institutionalize partnerships and sustain women participation in decision making.

CASE EXAMPLES

The following case examples summarize a set of experiences in which grassroots women's groups working to reduce poverty, respond to emergency and crisis situations, and access essential basic services and productive assets, have organized sizeable constituencies to engage with local authorities, district officials, and a range of public administrations to reframe development interventions and build long term relationships with their governments. Drawing extensively on the experience of GROOTS member groups--GROOTS Kenya and Swayam Shikshan Prayog (India) with additional examples from Uganda, Turkey and other countries, the case studies are intended to ground and provoke a discussion at the **Demand for Good Governance Learning Summit** on principles and policies for facilitating the large scale participation of women's organizations in developing their poor communities and achieving equitable participation in a broad range of social, economic and political processes affecting their lives.

The cases sample a range of strategic interventions to show how development aid funding, policy and program response can foster or impede grassroots women's groups opportunities to partner and play formal roles as citizen priority-setters, planners, and monitors of government initiatives and budgets with their governments. They describe:

4. Alliances of Home Based Care Givers in Kenya and other parts of Africa that have formed to ensure that poor communities direct and receive a fair share of global HIVAIDS monies channeled through National Aids Councils and that home based care givers are recognized and compensated for their work;
5. How these groups have created Watch Dog groups—partnering with government officials and community leaders to reverse the widespread grabbing of women and orphans land and property;
6. Initiatives in Uganda and Turkey to ensure grassroots women's groups are organized across a range of roles to impact decentralization and institutional reform processes;

7. How large networks of grassroots women's groups responding to earthquakes and tsunami in India have built comprehensive relationships with local and district government officials and institutionalized their participation in local development planning (spanning a range of basic services) as the result of the involvement in recovery; and
8. How these same groups have been part of a multi state effort to drive community led sanitation and the end to open defecation campaigns—achieving what top down individual centered toilet schemes could not.

In each case, these initiatives are supported with large investments in peer learning and training among grassroots women's groups within and across countries. Similarly they are a part of, and at the center of, leading regional and global campaigns—anchored by GROOTS International and other member groups of the Huairou Commission—to ensure that grassroots women are organized in federated networks to represent their own knowledge, strategies and priorities in policy and decision making process and to build long term institutional partnerships that can structurally reward and require grassroots women's formal engagement in pro-poor development and democratic governance.

Lack of Effective Response to HIV/AIDS: Grassroots Women's Groups Function as Citizen Monitors of HIV/AIDS Funds in Kenya

Decentralized Response to AIDS and the Impact on AIDS on Women

As knowledge of the scale and impact of HIV/AIDS emerged throughout the 1990s, the World Bank, UN and other development agencies supported national governments in sub-Saharan Africa to establish National AIDS Authorities in order to develop national AIDS policies, spearhead advocacy, build partnerships and lead resource mobilization, among other functions.² In an effort to get resources and decision-making power into the hands of communities these AIDS authorities were established (largely) along decentralized lines.

In Kenya, the government has established the National AIDS Authority with financial and technical support from the World Bank MAP (Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program in Africa). To date, the World Bank and the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have transferred more than \$300 million (US) to the Government of Kenya for fighting AIDS.³ The Kenyan National AIDS Control Council (NACC) is responsible for the implementation of the Kenya National Strategic AIDS Plan and its decentralized agencies—District and Provincial AIDS Control Committees—coordinate the responses in their respective locations. The Constituency AIDS Control Committees (CACCs) are responsible for the co-ordination of efforts at the community level, and are also grant-making bodies, authorized by the Member of Parliament to fund community-driven responses to AIDS. This decentralized structure was established with the intent to ensure that monies for AIDS responses were reaching the community level; that multiple stakeholders, including those representing community priorities, were involved in defining national AIDS policy; and that a strong response was being coordinated at the community level where it was most needed. (World Bank, 2000; UNAIDS 2004). Other bodies working to combat HIV and AIDS at the local level in Kenya include Community Development Funds, the Local Authority Transfer Fund, as well as Provincial and District administrators, and chiefs, who are generally government appointees.

While the HIV/AIDS pandemic is experienced by people all over the world, the impact is disproportionately felt by women in poor rural and informal settlement areas. In response, grassroots women are mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS as caregivers, educators and household breadwinners. For grassroots women living and coping with HIV/AIDS, the epidemic is not simply a health issue. It is an issue encompassing all aspects of daily life – access to basic services including water, sanitation and transportation, livelihoods, food security and governance. Through home-based care, grassroots women are creating a holistic, women-led, community driven response to HIV/AIDS that is both practical and strategic.

GROOTS Kenya: Grassroots Women Building Constituencies as Citizen Monitors

GROOTS Kenya is a network of women linking several thousand self help groups and community organizations in 9 Kenyan provinces. Founded in 1995 as a response to the inadequate visibility of grassroots women in development and decision-making forums that directly impact them, GROOTS Kenya operates organizing and resource strengthening programs that secure women's leadership and social and economic well being. When network members became preoccupied with responding to HIV/AIDS, GROOTS Kenya supported them to demonstrate that the most effective response to the pandemic within poor communities rested in strengthening Home-Based Care. More than six

² For a comprehensive overview of National AIDS Authorities' roles and functions see: Clare Dickinson, *National AIDS Coordinating Authorities: A synthesis of lessons learned and taking learning forward*, DFID Health Resource Centre (London: 2005).

³ World Bank Projects and Operations Database:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,menuPK:41389~pagePK:95863~piPK:95983~tjDetMenuPK:228424~tjProjDetPK:73230~tjProjResPK:95917~tjResMenuPK:224076~theSitePK:40941,00.html> and Global Fund Commitments and Disbursements Database: http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/funds_raised/commitments/

years ago, in recognition that communities were recreating social networks to support and care for the sick and growing number of children orphaned by AIDS—largely through the leadership of women who volunteer their valuable time to care for and train their communities on HIV/AIDS—GROOTS Kenya focused on supporting home based care workers to organize and negotiate to achieve formal recognition for their valuable work.

In 2003, the idea of forming an alliance of home-based caregivers emerged during the 2003 International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. There, home-based caregivers shared their work and experiences and asked donors to target more resources directly to the grassroots level. Representatives of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in attendance claimed that there was no way for them to locate grassroots groups, which they characterized as marginal, small-scale and working in isolation. (GROOTS Kenya, 2003). To counter these false stereotypes and raise the visibility of home-based caregivers' responses, GROOTS worked to facilitate home-based caregivers within its network to federate and organize themselves through mapping and consultation processes.

Organizing as Home-Based Care Alliances

In 2005, grassroots members of GROOTS Kenya launched the *Kenyan Home-Based Care Alliance* pilot with three objectives: build home-based caregivers capacities through peer learning; to serve as a platform for collective livelihoods; and to shift resources and decision-making into the hands of grassroots women who are bearing the burden of response to AIDS in their communities.

The Shibuye⁴ Community Health Workers have worked since 1999 to support and care for HIV-positive community members and led the process of federating caregiving groups to form the Home-Based Care Alliance in Kenya's Western Province, facilitated by GROOTS Kenya. Shibuye began organizing the Alliance through an action research mapping process in which members located, formed relationships and collected and compiled data on caregiving groups in their region they knew already existed. Through the mapping process, grassroots leaders mobilized 17 new groups (1,812 caregivers) to join the Alliance and found out that by federating the group, collectively they cared for 2,276 people living with HIV and AIDS, 6,000 orphans, 2,000 widows and 4,000 other needy people (GROOTS Kenya, 2006). The mapping process enabled Shibuye to clearly articulate to local authorities and other stakeholders the contributions they were making and the positive impact they were having on the community.

Engagement with Local Leaders

Using the data gathered during the mapping process, leaders of the Shibuye Community Health Workers began engaging the community and local leaders both formally and informally. Informally, they regularly arranged face-to-face meetings with local chiefs and CACC Officers in which they shared information on widow and orphan disinheritance, domestic violence and how their group was caring for marginalized community members who are generally outside of the reach of public services. In a more formal process, the Shibuye Community Health Workers conducted *Local-to-Local Dialogues*⁵ in partnership with GROOTS Kenya on behalf of the Alliance, in which they arranged public dialogue sessions between grassroots caregivers and local leaders to share caregivers' perspectives, discuss challenges within the community and develop collaborative solutions.

⁴ Shibuye is a location (an administrative unit similar to a town) within Shinyalu division of the Kakamega District.

⁵ Originally piloted in 2002 by six Huairou Commission members, including GROOTS Kenya, Local to Local Dialogues are locally designed strategies whereby grassroots women's groups initiate and engage in ongoing dialogues with local authorities to negotiate a range of development issues and priorities to influence policies, plans and programs in ways that address women's priorities. Dialogues are convened by grassroots women and used to change the terms of negotiation between communities and their local authorities. For further information, read "Local to Local Dialogue: A Grassroots Women's Perspective on Good Governance," at <http://www.huairou.org/knowledge/resource.html>.

For the community, the main issue was that the CACC was an inaccessible, non-transparent entity. To begin a dialogue process to shift this situation, the group approached CACC officers in an attitude of collaboration, being clear that as citizens of the constituency, that they wanted to support and reinforce what the government was doing, rather than establish an antagonistic relationship. The solution led by the Kakamega District Home-Based Care Alliance was to mobilize all the community stakeholders to come together in a dialogue session, including the Provincial Administrators, District Officers and local chiefs. (Shivutse 2007)

Prior to the Local-to-Local Dialogue, the Alliance consulted with the community to surface some of the priority issues to discuss with the stakeholders. These issues included lack of transparency of who receives CACC funding, lack of sustainability of the project/programs that received CACC funding (short term feeding programs, blanket distribution to orphans, etc.) and ensuring that the funds go to those people who are experienced in home-based care. In addition, many community members were concerned that those within the CACC Committee reviewing proposals are political actors (generally from the elite class and not grounded in community development) who may not be aware of who is active and experienced in the community and therefore were giving funding to groups based in other constituencies. It was important from the community perspective to provide information to the CACC on who the groups are that are working in the area. (Shivutse, 2007)

From the meeting, the community stakeholders agreed to track the resources available, identify existing groups in the area, and to look at the structures that are in place to coordinate with the CACC. The community also demonstrated that they were knowledgeable of the National AIDS Control Council (NACC) Strategic Plan through which the CACCs all operate. They had been made aware of this information through membership in the national and international networks of GROOTS Kenya and GROOTS International, both of which have facilitated grassroots women's participation in policy and networking venues such as the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa and the International AIDS Conference among others. (GROOTS Kenya 2003, Huairou Commission 2007)

The Alliance was able, through the Dialogue, to demonstrate that its members were making clear contributions and were knowledgeable of the priorities of the government, and was therefore recognized as integral to the process of information distribution when the CACC is funding, what their priority areas would be, and who/what groups were being funded to work in those areas. The relationship between organized home-based caregivers and the government is now collaborative instead of operating autonomously without knowledge of what the other is doing. Through Shibuye's leadership, the Kakamega District Home-Based Care Alliance now has official partnership status with the Shinyalu division CACC Officer. The Alliance provides an eye into the community, collecting data, statistics and information on vulnerabilities as well as tracking and overseeing indigenous responses organized by caregivers.

Sustained Collaboration

As a result of the dialogue and on-going engagement, the Alliance has also developed a formal partnership with the Kakamega District Office. This partnership designates the Alliance as official 'community responders' and provides them with office space, occasional funds for local projects, and the use of a vehicle to reach distant cases. The relationship also gives the group authority to intervene on women and children's issues such as domestic violence and land and property grabbing in collaboration with the provincial administration. The caregivers' role in this relationship is important in realizing women's rights as they bridge the gap between the administration and citizens. On the one hand, district officers are generally male, and often from a different region and tribe. This means that they may not understand the local culture dictating relationships between women and men, and that women and children will probably not feel comfortable approaching them on issues as sensitive as domestic violence. On the other hand, women and children very often do not know or understand

their rights or the administrative officials that are responsible for their enforcement. So the caregivers raise awareness of those rights and the institutions and systems in place for redressing grievances, and bring cases of violations from the victims to the administration. (Shivutse, 2008)

The District Officer in particular sees this as a strategic partnership enabling his officers, mainly chiefs and sub-chiefs, to work hand-in-hand with local communities in addressing community problems. (Romo, 2007). The partnership has both simplified and supported his work. The District Officer also holds the authority to enforce the law in preventing land grabbing, denial of care and violence and recognizes that by backing Alliance members with such authority he can both better serve his constituency and validate Alliance members' interventions. For the Alliance, this partnership ensures that they have a voice within the District decision-making structures and enables them to access resources and provides a route for community members who depend on the caregivers to seek recourse for violations of their rights. As a result of their work, several cases of land grabbing and illegal land sales have been prevented, and several cases of child and wife abuse have been redressed.

Gains and Benefits

The Kakamega District Home-Based Care Alliance has directly and successfully dealt with many of the common challenges of decentralization. As the table below makes clear, caregivers have been able to fill the gap between the administrative structures that have been established and the communities, thereby increasing transparency, accountability and disseminating information between communities and officials.

Table 1: What has shifted due to grassroots women' organizing and partnership-building in Kakamega

Prior to Dialogue	Since Dialogue
Lack of funding transparency	Communities know where CACC funding is going
Unsustainable and briefcase NGOs being supported by CACC	Sustainable, local organizations identified by the community, including quality home-based care groups receiving support
CACC and District Officers didn't have information about how many people had AIDS	Accurate statistics being collected and shared by home-based caregivers
Government and community groups working in isolation from each other	Community groups and government working in collaboration

Members of Kakamega Home-Based Care Alliance have demonstrated the capacity of grassroots women to effectively respond to local needs and provide a platform for those most affected by AIDS to voice their needs and concerns from their own perspectives. As Violet Shivuse, founder of the Kakamega District Home-Based Care Alliance expressed it: *“So many people knew that the CACC was ineffective, but they had no way to address these issues. So we thought if we could find a way to mobilize the community to come together and discuss this, that would be a good idea...Now...[the CACC members] look at us like people who know.”*

Grassroots women taking leadership in forming the Kakamega District Home-Based Care Alliance initiated the process without outside resources. Their aim was to meet the un-met needs of the sick, abandoned and dispossessed, through direct support and by making the general public and local authorities aware of their situation. By partnering with CACC and the District Office, they set a precedent for a new way to forge partnerships between civil society and local authorities to improve the AIDS response.

Through the organization and intervention of the Alliance in Kakamega, an increasing amount of public funds now directly reach those in need as identified by the community itself, rather than being diverted to a select few and/or being mismanaged by unscrupulous officials. Caregivers are continuing to educate local authorities on community needs and means of improving the effectiveness of their programs. In addition to forming direct links between the community and the local administration, caregivers are also at the forefront of bringing recognition to grassroots women as key stakeholders in AIDS responses.

Challenges and Conclusions

While this case study provides one concrete example of the type of pilot partnership that could be more widely supported by national and global partners, grassroots women and their networks still face significant challenges in having their capacities and contributions recognized by decision-makers and donors. Women in communities across Kenya (and throughout Africa where similar decentralized structures have been established) face barriers like those the Kakamega District Home-Based Care Alliance faced. As noted in the World Bank's MAP, *Turning Bureaucrats into Warriors*: "The scale of the HIV/AIDS crisis necessitates the fullest possible CSO involvement at all levels. Most people with HIV infection or illness already receive most of their support and care from the community, not from formal institutions. Only through community involvement can programs of sufficient number, scope, coverage and value for resources and effort to be achieved. Yet there is discontinuity between formal and informal responses that has not been adequately addressed. Formal responses seldom reach or provide appropriate support to community initiatives and communities are seldom able to access formal support."⁶

In order to overcome these barriers and to fully take advantage of the opportunities that have been established through these decentralized structures, institutional support is required to mandate grassroots women's groups, particularly home-based caregivers, play a role as monitors and evaluators of resources flowing into their communities through community-level AIDS councils.

National level demonstration projects between grassroots networks such as GROOTS Kenya and the National AIDS Control Council need to be encouraged and financed. Monies to support organizing at the grassroots level so that grassroots women can build constituencies, increase awareness and knowledge of government policy and actions in their community, are vital as is money for transfer of these effective strategies (within and across countries) via peer learning processes that enable grassroots women can learn successful organizing and negotiation strategies from each other. (See concluding recommendations)

⁶ Brown, Jonathan C., Didem Ayvalikli and Nadeem Mohammad, *Turning Bureaucrats into Warriors: Preparing and Implementing Multi-Sector HIV/AIDS Programs in Africa*, (Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ World Bank, 2004), 37.

Governance in Land Rights: Organized Grassroots Women Develop Innovations to Ensure Land Rights in Kenya

Whether in formal land administration or informal tenure arrangements, poor land governance translates to the abuse of a system of great potential wealth (in most countries throughout the world, land wealth represents 2/3 of the national wealth), constrains development and reduces poverty alleviation. Badly managed land reform has continued to serve an elite class in most countries where it has been implemented and land administration has largely failed to serve under-represented and marginalized populations. Urban planning, in particular, cannot provide for the increasing number of urban dwellers, and instead development policies result in evictions for millions of poor urban residents. This further marginalizes the poor, especially poor women.

Women, in most countries, lack ability to access or benefit from land outside of their relationship to a male- they are able to lose such access after widowhood, divorce, desertion or male migration, ending up homeless and destitute. Globally, women headed households represent the highest proportion of the poorest living in both rural and urban areas worldwide, and suffer the most from evictions from informal settlements and displacement from rural homesteads. (UNHABITAT 2006)

One need not look far to see why land governance has failed poor women. Global statistics show that women only hold a small proportion of decision making position at any level, particular in land governance structures. This deficit is a consequence of women's imposed inferior social status, denial of opportunities and lack of resources generally. (UNHABITAT 2007)

This failure to include women's needs and strategies in existing governance structures around land results in loss of benefits derived when women realize their access, control and benefit from land and housing. It has been proven that when women control land, there are greater expenditures on children's education, healthier and better fed families and communities, improved income generation, stronger negotiating power within the household and community and an overall empowerment of women at all levels. Land rights for women make sense for development. (World Bank 2008)

Grassroots women, as seen in the Home-based Care Alliance in Kenya, work most effectively as an organized collective. When grassroots women are organized through community-led processes of identifying needs, they are better able to engage with local authorities and stakeholders to find mutually reinforcing solutions to identified, practical needs around land and housing, working towards long term and sustained engagement with local authorities. The following case example illustrates how grassroots women, when already organized, are able to better respond to a specific need (in the below case, lack of legal assistance in times of dispossession) and to develop governance institutions that are successful locally and replicated elsewhere through further organized networking in the region.

An Organized Response to Property Dispossession: Community Watchdog Groups

Identifying the Issues

In Kenya, women gain access to land through their male relatives, yet patriarchal social practices deny widows and orphans from inheriting and maintaining ownership of land and property. Though laws exist on paper provide for equality in property ownership and give protection to women in succession cases, disinheritance of women in Kenya is still rampant, due, in some cases, to ignorance of the laws - in others, clear disregard for and even manipulation of the laws. In Kenya and most of Africa, the formal legal system remains inaccessible to poor women due to high cost, the amount of time to file (some cases require numerous visits to the courthouse, which is often far from where the women live) and discrimination and corruption in the courts. Many judges and court officials still believe, in contradiction to the laws, that women in Africa should not and cannot own land.

Home-base care givers of the GROOTS Kenya supported Home-based Care Alliance (as illustrated in case example above) witnessed the problem of dispossession to such a high degree, that they could no longer care for their patients. In June 2005, eight grassroots caregiving groups (from 4 provinces in Kenya) created a strategic mapping plan – to verify and specify the magnitude of the problem on the ground and to create collective solutions. GROOTS Kenya supported home-based caregivers in a number of communities, to design and conduct a mapping process. The point of the mapping was to record the situation of women, orphans and vulnerable children with regard to their access to property, access to ownership and inheritance rights, to examine existing community responses and to assess roles and effectiveness of local institutions.

Organizing Feedback

The mapping process built caregivers' capacities to mobilize local institutions and organizations through hands-on, learn-as-you-go experience. Caregivers involved in mapping engaged in dialogues with local authorities and government officials such as chiefs, councillors and planners. Sometimes through formal dialogue sessions facilitated by GROOTS Kenya and sometimes through visiting authorities' offices to present information about the mapping project and solicit support, the dialogue process transformed caregivers' positions in their communities. The dialogues proved critical in identifying the active powers and responsibilities of institutions within the community and evaluating their lack of effectiveness and failure to perform for women, which was then clearly laid out for communities to see, to identify where gaps needed to be filled.

The mapping leaders also facilitated forums in which participants verified data and provided feedback. Participants viewed the feedback sessions as supportive spaces in which they could articulate issues on women, land, housing, property and inheritance rights to the community. Community institutions that address issues of disinheritance and land adjudication such as traditional, cultural, social and religious leaders were invited to attend the meetings. The sessions were educative and they built linkages between resource persons, such as paralegals, and grassroots women.

Overall, the mapping and feedback process enabled grassroots caregivers to point out gaps in institutional protections of women's property rights and create groups of community members prepared to intervene. Communities had previously not recognized the level of damage that property grabbing and asset stripping was causing widows and orphans in their communities, nor had they understood the inability or unwillingness of institutions to help these women. When the findings of the mapping were presented, communities were for the first time made aware of the gravity of the situation, and the need for collective action, and developed a Community Action Plan.

Developing a Response Plan

The plan that emerged as most successful was the formation of *Community Watchdog Groups* – a systematic, community-based tool to safeguard the land and property rights of women, orphans and vulnerable children.

Watchdog Groups form the link between vulnerable community members and local leaders with the power to intervene. Each Watchdog Group includes a Provincial Authority, the elders in the community, community based paralegals (trained by national or local legal organizations), police, church leaders and concerned individuals (both men and women) who have combined their will, expertise and time and are concerned with property grabbing of women and orphans. Watchdog Groups provide institutional and participatory protection to prevent property-grabbing, monitor and report on cases of property dispossession and stop evictions, and are an advocacy platform for grassroots women to access governance institutions and influence legal structures.

The Watchdog Groups fulfill several roles:

- Acting as an information resource (through radio listening groups, community dialogues, forums and workshops) for disinherited women and children concerning documentation and appropriate channels for intervention through paralegal support.
- Directly investigating and determining cases of disinheritance and dispossession, usually in collaboration with local chiefs and other persons of influence within that particular community. *Several groups have settled protracted cases within families, clans, Elders' Courts and in the Land Tribunal.*
- Building the capacity of Provincial Administrators, Constituency AIDS Control Committees, elders, police and church leaders.
- Financially supporting poor widows and orphaned girls through collective contributions toward resolving disinheritance cases.
- Acting as the voice of the community when they advocate against evictions and property grabbing from the most vulnerable community members and draw attention to grassroots women as change-agents.

Successful Replication

The successful up scaling of Watchdog Groups requires strong government support and integration into formal decision-making spaces and leadership by grassroots leaders committed to fighting land and property disinheritance and dispossession. Watchdog Groups have rapidly gained such status. They have been replicated in over 20 communities throughout Kenya. Furthermore, GROOTS Kenya, as a member of the Women's Land Link Africa⁷, a linking mechanism of grassroots women's organizations in Africa enhancing women's access to land and housing, has shared the Community Watchdog strategy, and several grassroots women groups in countries from Ghana to South Africa are engaging in similar activities to replicate its successes. To facilitate the peer learning, two chiefs from localities in Kenya where Community Watchdogs have proven particularly successful have traveled to a number of neighboring countries, such as Zambia, to share their successes with other traditional leaders. Additionally, the Provincial Administration of Kenya, a part of the national government, has recognized, acknowledged and supported the work of the Watchdog Groups, by allowing them to participate in decision-making spaces and processes.

Grassroots women have given prominence to the issues of property grabbing, resulting in community mobilization and action. Where the legal system has failed women, this informal yet now recognized and respected system of regular community members and members of existing influence has assisted women to maintain and benefit from land, as well as shared information on rights and responsibilities *vis a vis* land. One may say that Watchdog Groups represents the formation of a government program that has yet to be created - a program dedicated to effectively assisting women with knowledge on their rights and adjudication of these rights' violations. The demand for and success of its replication, both nationally and regionally, is a tribute to how grassroots women's innovations in ensuring land rights can meet practical needs and be strategically transformative of governance.

⁷ Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA) is a partnership project facilitated by Huairou Commission in partnership with COHRE, that champions grassroots women's efforts on housing and land in Africa, through supporting peer learning and exchange, enhancing grassroots women's innovations, and building partnerships with a variety of stakeholders. It works through a combination of human rights and development based approaches. The WLLA will be discussed further during the Demand for Good Governance Learning Summit.

Engendering Local Governance amidst Decentralization: Grassroots Women Engage in Political Processes in Uganda

Decentralization often provides grassroots women better opportunities to demand and contribute to good governance. Grassroots women are again able to better respond to such opportunities when organized and armed with adequate information. The following example illustrate organized grassroots women using opportunities established by a decentralized system.

Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare

Grassroots women in Uganda have for a long time been left out of processes of local decision making in matters that concern their lives. Decisions that are not responsive to their needs have been made on their behalf leading to wastage and misappropriation of resources and leaving them more vulnerable and marginalized. Furthermore, women and communities have not been empowered or given the opportunity to organize themselves, identify and priorities their own needs as a collective and inform decision makers of these priorities. Marginalization of women from decision making, coupled with widespread poverty, poor access to basic services, ignorance and abuse of their rights, have tied women and children in a cycle of poverty and suffering for a long time.

Capitalizing on opportunities offered by the decentralized system of governance in Uganda (chapter 11 of the 1995 Constitution and amplified by the Local Government Act of 1997), the **Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC)** is an 18 year-old NGO working in 20 districts of Uganda. A core element of its mission is to foster effective collaboration between organized grassroots women groups in the community and local authorities in order to transform the nature and effectiveness of local decision making.

To redress women's social and political exclusion, UCOBAC has implemented a comprehensive governance program to provide grassroots women space and opportunity to interact with and engage with local authority which was unheard of before. For a long time, local authorities have worked as an autonomous entity without any interaction with the communities they serve. This divide led to problems of lack of accountability, misappropriation of funds, corruption, and exclusion from decision-making.

Adapting the Local to Local Dialogue process (please see above), UCOBAC supported grassroots women's groups to analyze and take part in local decisions affecting their lives—helping them to collectively identify and prioritize their needs, present them to local authorities and private sector leaders and negotiate to get services and resources to the most needy in a way that keeps women's groups involved. For example, after women and children continuously engaged local leaders responsible for protecting the rights of children and women through community dialogue sessions and children's radio talk shows, they took responsibility and became strict about protecting women and children. The continued interaction of the community and the local leadership is creating a win-win partnership and this is leading to good relationships between the parties involved thus avoiding misunderstandings, conflicts and bad governance practices.

Grassroots women: Building Capacity of Local Leaders:

UCOBAC has also built the capacity of local council leaders representing vulnerable groups (women, children, etc) through training and capacity building. The trainings imparted knowledge and skills that made the representatives more effective, capable and confident to present the needs of their people in local council. They have succeeded in passing many issues/bi-laws and influencing budgetary allocations to the needs of the marginalized groups during the local council decision making processes, and thus the needs of the people they are representing are being responded to effectively.

“I decided to get involved in politics to be a voice for the women and children who were left behind and not catered for in local decision making because of lack of representation and participation. I contested with a man as a district counselor and I made it. I was a widow, so no one stopped my ambition.....However, my experience in local council as a chairperson on the health committee, was not easy...I was faced with many challenges. Personally I lacked the courage and confidence to speak, I lacked relevant knowledge and skills to deliberate issues effectively, women issues were not given priority and attention in the council. Plus, male leaders and other men intimidated and called us names—they booed when we spoke! The pressures were too much: high expectation from the community, deliberate under budgeting of women’s code, disunity and intrigue in the local council. Sometimes invitation letters to council meetings were withheld or deliberately sent late so that we were not prepared enough; minutes were altered if what was discussed did not favor the corrupt officials and the like..This meant that we women and other marginalized groups were not getting what we wanted by participation in leadership. It is at this time that UCOBAC carried out a mini study on effectiveness and challenges faced by local leaders representing vulnerable groups in local council. They later trained us—sharing information and skills that built our capacity and confidence., Through this we became more organized with a stronger united voice and we were able to ensure that policies and programs that benefited the poor especially women and children were given due consideration and priority. We got safe water to poor women and families through the provision of boreholes and protected wells in the community; we made sure the construction of schools included pit latrines and many other basic services. ...Based on this experience, my recommendation is that local council leaders representing vulnerable groups need to be assisted to effectively participate and influence policy in favor of the poor people. They also need to be encouraged to interact with there electorate so that they can be informed of the most priority needs.”

Florence Engoyu, UCOBAC

Challenges

Nevertheless challenges remain. Corrupt officials and local leaders who are the custodians of services and goods that should benefit communities see good governance work as a threat and fear and resent efforts to empower communities to monitor, evaluate and question abuse of office. Ignorance of laws, policies and human rights by communities especially women is also a major constraint to UCOBAC governance work (as there cannot be authentic popular participation where ignorance reigns). Gender discrimination and insensitivity due to cultural and traditional beliefs also undermine women and children’s right to participate in these kinds of programs and family members often pressure women to stay away from such initiatives.

In light of these challenges, it is very important to plan and implement programs that build the capacity of local council representatives of marginalized groups (women, children, people living with AIDS etc) in legislation and advocacy so that they can effectively influence policies, plans and programs in favor of the groups they represent. Funding should be extended to promote programs that promote good governance practices at grassroots level where people are tied in a cycle of poverty and suffering due to bad governance practices like corruption, lack of transparency, sectarianism, and marginalization from decision making. Programs that promote interaction or engagement of poor and marginalized groups with their local and national authority should be promoted. Such programs ensure good governance in the sense that they ensure community inclusion in decision making in matters that affect their lives, which in turn leads to proper allocation of resources to programs that are responsive to poor community groups’ needs. Through such interactions the capacity of the community is built to monitor and evaluate programs. Communities are also able to hold their local authority accountable. It thus leads to transparency, good and sustainable relationships between the two parties (win-win partnerships).

**Grassroots Women Promote Good Governance in the Face of Institutional Reform:
Grassroots Women Collectivize in Turkey**

The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (FSWW) is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 to enable grassroots women's groups (formal and informal) in Turkey to organize collectively to improve their everyday lives in partnership with local government. Today FSWW works with women's cooperatives in poor communities in Istanbul, the south eastern regions and the Marmara (earthquake struck) region who provide or take the lead in childcare and early childhood services, savings and micro credit groups, business/product development, and marketing – increasing women's access to affordable housing, and community information collection.

In a political environment characterized by both a highly centralized state favoring top down planning and service provision and by formal commitments to gender equality and legal reforms in civic codes and administration without practical mechanisms for implementing them, FSWW and the network of women's cooperatives with whom it works face a public and NGO culture largely indifferent to citizen participation, community involvement or pro-poor/women-centered local development strategies. Although the EU accession period has increased public and EU resources to NGOs these funds haven't reached grassroots community based organizations (with financial and capacity building needs).

Against this background, FSWW has partnered with grassroots women's groups to promote democratic engagements using several strategic approaches, including:

Providing for Immediate Needs: Women and Children Centers

In 12 cities and towns, in three regions of Turkey, grassroots women manage 22 public centers for their own empowerment, with minimal professional involvement. Women design and implement a range of activities for their children and themselves. They offer high quality, affordable early education for children which focuses on respect for diversity and parent involvement and illustrates women can provide essential public services in the serious area of “education” (recasting and transforming their traditional roles in child rearing). In these spaces, women are empowered, equal and in charge - (running a range of economic and political empowerment programs for themselves. Women often invite their elected officials in to discuss and solve community problems and improve basic services. Operating in very diverse localities, the centers commonly legitimate women's public participation, leadership, and associations - formalizing women's knowledge, skills, and community contributions. They also operate at scale, engaging more than 10,000 women and children each year.

Engaging with Local Authorities: Grassroots Women's Local Gender Budgeting Projects

To support poor women to understand municipal planning and budget processes, FSWW received an EU grant and signed a MOU with the Mayor of the Beyogulu district in Istanbul to organize grassroots women and develop tools to help them engage in local budgeting processes. In each neighborhood, a core group of interested women were organized into ‘community women's committees’ where they learned to analyze gender roles and translate them into claims on municipal resources as well as to understand how municipal budgets were prepared and negotiated. These ‘committees’ in turn spoke with more than 700 women about their opinions on the quality of municipal services—especially those related to poverty reduction. Participating women were full of opinions and creative suggestions about how to identify and support the poorest members of the community and tailor assistance to meet their real needs. They were thoughtful proponents of structural investments to create jobs and income generating programs and decried government's reliance on short term ‘handouts’ (e.g. food and charcoal distribution) that kept people dependent and poor. These dialogues triggered women's interest in learning what the municipality spent its money on and what line items were the biggest and smallest. They created a community women's

agenda reflecting their priorities and compared it to municipal spending patterns. Over time, women developed their own set of proposals and budget recommendations that corresponded to their priority areas. They also made very practical suggestions on how the quality of municipal services would improve if the government partnered with grassroots women's groups to do community awareness and information campaigns preparing for garbage collection, etc) and identified other areas where municipal services could be delivered by creating job and business opportunities for women's collectives.

Women put their solutions and alternative policies together with the relevant budget items and prepared a report and submitted it at a Beyogulu Council meeting (headed by the Mayor). Officials said they were impressed by how the grassroots women's budgeting tool and process had helped them talk with constituents about municipal services and local poverty- the engagement, however, did not change their priorities or approach.

Women, empowered by the process if not the result, said the local budgeting process had increased their awareness about how to think about and frame community issue and priorities and linked them to the municipal budget. They learned they had rights as tax payers, residents, and citizens to examine and have opinions about municipal plans and spending and to lobby officials to respond to their priorities and plans. A collective self confidence among Committee members had emerged when neighbors validated they had brought important information and a new form of dialogue to the community. *The Beyogulu women, with FSWW support, are now training women in SE Turkey in this approach, in a more cooperative political situation.*

Federating and Upscaling: Facilitating a national network federating 50+ women's cooperatives

In Turkey, cooperatives are legal entities that formalize women's participation in civil society allowing them to raise and collect monies, undertake community development and family support activities and to dialogue with local authorities and present action plans that will improve low-income women's living and working conditions. Currently FSWW is supporting 50 women's cooperatives to federate through a national network and thereby scale up their ability represent themselves, undertake horizontal peer learning, and institutionalize partnerships that will help expand women's leadership and resource base. By focusing on public space, public monies, and the large scale organization of women working to reduce poverty and strengthen their communities, the cooperative network and FSWW are demonstrating their long term commitment to work for gender equitable good governance.

Benefits and Conclusion

In a country where governance structure largely ignores civil society involvement, grassroots women have organized to meet their needs and to engage directly with specific aspects of governance (budgeting) to gain influence. Often, the process of grassroots women led governance is as valuable as outcomes, and provides an opportunity for developing cooperative political situations.

Grassroots Women Organize to Move from Recovery to Resilient Development in India

Disasters destroy already fragile systems that serve the poor. However post disaster processes also represent a window of opportunity to foster strengthen grassroots women's abilities to demand greater accountability and improve democratic practice in the context of restoring and upgrading community basic services, infrastructure and housing. This element is often under emphasized and under resourced, resulting in missed opportunities to build community build community resilience.

The two case studies below present two instances of major disasters first the earthquake in Latur (1993 and then the tsunami (2004). When the 2004 Asian tsunami occurred, Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) a Maharashtra based NGO focused on facilitating organizing and peer learning for community development among grassroots women's groups, had already been partnering for over ten years with communities affected by the Latur earthquake in Maharashtra in 1993.

Disaster relief and recovery in both cases, represented opportunities for grassroots women's groups to organize themselves to address practical community needs by leveraging resources and engaging with governments. Keeping collaboration at the centre, grassroots women's groups have emerged as winners in demonstrating that community resilience can be achieved by targeting citizen driven governance. In the case examples that follow, member organization –SSP and - grassroots women's groups in India, belonging to the GROOTS International intervened in formal decision making processes and engaged government officials in collaborative activities, thus demanding greater accountability in delivery of services by reconfiguring the relationships between grassroots women and government.

The Role of Women's Groups as Information Agents, Planners and Monitors in the World Bank Supported Maharashtra Earthquake Emergency Rehabilitation Program

As the government appointed Community Participation Consultant charged with engaging large numbers of local home owners in the repair of their earthquake damaged homes, Swayam Shikshan Prayog concentrated on two strategies:

- training local government officials to facilitate community access to government programs and identifying community groups to engage local residents (home owners), and
- reviving and reoriented the women's groups (mahila mandals) as information disseminators and community assistants for mobilizing homeowners to participate in the Repair and Strengthening Program

After more than a year and a half of corruption and stalled reconstruction, the state government and World Bank were receptive to SSPs request that the government recognize and pay women's organizations to function as official public communication facilitators in the government's program. Between April 1996 and March 1998, 500 communication assistants were appointed to reach and educate 200,000 beneficiary households on entitlements and construction methods for repairing and earthquake proofing their homes.

Women's groups were required to provide feedback to government officials/engineers on progress in reconstruction. These regular meetings provided for monitoring and feedback by women on the challenges faced and possible solutions.

The dramatic increase in women's interactions with engineers and government officials; and women's participation in the village assemblies and meetings helped to reduce and expose corruption and promoted greater public disclosure of information.

Prior to the earthquake women were mostly excluded from decision making processes. Women did not attend village assemblies where village council members consulted the community. However as part of their organizing and civic education efforts– the women’s groups mobilized community women to attend and actively participate in village assemblies, preparing them to use these public forums to demand procedural changes and government accountability.

For the women’s groups, their participation in the earthquake rehabilitation program was their first opportunity to undertake public roles. Since then the women’s groups organized in savings and credit groups and have sustained their public roles in development in the two affected districts as federations of self help groups and expanded across 5 districts of Maharashtra. The groups moved on to monitor health services and the civil supplies programmes empowered by the district authorities who recognized their power to tackle corruption and leakage of resources.

Sustaining Public Roles in Development

For the women’s groups, their participation in the earthquake rehabilitation program was their first opportunity to undertake public roles. Since then the women’s groups organized in savings and credit groups and have sustained their public roles in development in the two affected districts as federations of self help groups who have expanded their work across 5 districts of Maharashtra. The women’s groups moved on to monitor health services and civil supplies shops(through which the Government provides subsidized food grains, fuel and other essential items) - formally supported by district authorities who recognized the role of women’s groups in tackling corruption and leakage of resources.

When SSP was appointed Community Participation Consultant in the Government’s Water Sector Reform Program in 2001 it worked with the women’s groups and leaders to engage 100,000 households on water and sanitation issues. Using their community education skills, women conducted mapping exercises and community dialogues to show how families were affected by water problems and how expenditures to access water could be reduced through collective solutions. Already experienced in partnering with elected officials, women’s groups gained appointments to the Village Water and Sanitation Committees and claimed a share of the budgeted resources to address women’s priorities.

Improving Access to Health Services after the Tsunami

ASHAA⁸ women’s groups in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam - the two districts in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu most severely affected by the Tsunami in 2004 - organized themselves during the post-tsunami recovery phase to improve community health and sanitation in collaboration with local and national government institutions. By promoting community access to government-run healthcare facilities and simultaneously collaborating with the primary health centers to effectively deliver services to tsunami-hit communities ASHAA women’s groups on one hand as consumers of basic services drive the demand for affordable and effective delivery of quality services; while on the other they are positioning themselves as collaborators, working with government to improve their ability to reach poorest of the poor. When analyzed through the lens of resilience building, the improvements in community health and sanitation along with the increased responsiveness and accountability of health service providers both represent gains in terms of reduced health risks and losses in the face of disasters.

Within the first month after the tsunami, Swayam Shikshan Prayog convened a ten-member team including grassroots leaders who had been active in the post-earthquake recovery processes in

⁸ ‘ASHHA’ literally means hope in several Indian languages. The acronym ASHAA stands for Arogya Sakhis for Sanitation and Health Actions.

Maharashtra and Gujarat to undertake a rapid assessment with community based organizations and disadvantaged groups – i.e. women’s self-help groups, youth groups, fishermen’s cooperatives; and widows, elderly and children - to assess the extent to which relief processes were responsive to their priorities of shelter, housing, livelihoods and basic services. One of the main objectives of this action-research was also to identify strategic entry-points for grassroots women’s intervention in the recovery process.

They found that there were 30,000 self-help groups in the area who had not been mobilized or recognized to participate in formal relief and recovery processes. While they could recount numerous instances of women’s roles in relief distribution, organizing health camps, availing emergency credit and supporting livelihood recovery, they could not find a single instance of formal recognition. The visiting team found that while the government had done a good job containing the outbreak of epidemics, women and children were being underserved in many situations. The distance from healthcare centers also made it to avail of health services. Public health in over all was identified as a priority issues among the women.

Gathering information and organizing women

Active women from communities in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam were identified during local meetings and trained and oriented on public health issues. These women undertook village settlements mapping and did household surveys to understand major health problems, health related expenditures and access to health services. They found that \$100-120 per annum was being spent on fees, medicine and transportation to access health services. This was in addition to wage losses incurred. A strong preference to private clinics over primary health centers (PHCs) and reported due to perception of quality of services being poor, corruption and also being ill-equipped to handle their health needs. This was information was effectively used by leaders to organize and form ASHAA groups in their villages.

ASHAA leaders called village wide meetings to convey the importance of working collectively to improve community health and sanitation. In each village 15-20 women, many of whom were already actively involved in community development, volunteered to form ASHAA women’s groups and began to meet regularly. In the meetings, the leaders who were equipped with information on major diseases and their causes, starting educating others. Using this information, ASHAA members analyzed major health problems and situations relevant to their village. They subsequently planned to take preventive actions such as cleaning streets and shelter surroundings, ensuring chlorination, promoting consumption of nutritious food and better food habits.

Organizing health camps: bringing health services to women

A key challenge was to get grassroots women to access the primary health centers and to ensure that women received the attention and services they needed. Initial requests from ASHAA women to district health officers to organize village level health camps met with major resistance based on the poor turnout in instances. However the first health camp organized by SSP-in partnership with ASHAA and local women’s self-help groups brought 280 visitors for check ups thereby demonstrating the ability of grassroots women to mobilize women to access health services. Today the health department and primary health centers have begun holding health camps every week in villages where at least 200 people regularly turn up for check ups. ASHAA groups also organize needs based camps and special camps for women with private doctors at significantly lower fees.

Entering formal decision making and planning arenas to collaborate with primary health centers

Utilizing this new relationship, ASHAA representatives started attending weekly PHC planning meetings. They were able to understand and educate their communities on government’s health

related programs. For example, they accessed information on government subsidies on toilets, schedule of PHC activities like nurses and health worker visit to villages, and also the government mandated role of PHCs. Apart from education, they began working with outreach workers coming to their village by directing her to pregnant women, nursing mothers or any other specific cases of ailments. On themselves, they did follow up visits to ensure that they were attended to and they have received the necessary care. One other major visible role they played was in containing the regional out break of Chikun Guinea, by effectively managing most of the village level preventive activities, under the instructions of the public health staff.

Transferring and scaling up practice

In 2006 GROOTS began its global initiative to develop community trainer teams on resilience. Under this organized grassroots women's groups affected by different kinds of disasters are analyzing their practices through a resilience building lens to understand how they can best transfer their knowledge and practices to others living at risk. Among many ASHAA women were also presented with the opportunity to analyze their processes, develop tools and methodologies and systematize the process of transfer and scale up. Over time they have developed a polished methodology and there are 120 ASHAA trainers who are engaged in transfer the practice.

A linear process explanation, starts with ASHAA women holding meetings with local leaders to get their support for local ASHAA groups. Next, ASHAA leaders call first women's and then public meetings to mobilize community support for addressing health and sanitation issues in their village. The community identified leaders, form the new ASHAA group and they are trained on functions and roles of ASHAA groups and also on strategies and methodologies.

ASHAA women's groups now have 400 women leaders across 43 of the 80 worst affected tsunami hit communities in Tamil Nadu. With its membership largely belonging to Self-Help Group movement in the region, this represent the potential for these groups expand their work beyond micro-credit.

Climbing the Sanitation Ladder: Women's Groups Step Up

Community led total sanitation (CLTS) in India is an example of how communities, particularly women's groups redefine governance in action by taking the lead on community engagement on the issue of sanitation with local governments. Sanitation is viewed by communities and women as not only a one time basic service provision agenda, but as a long term development goal that is closely linked to their dignity, health, productivity and well being.

Conventional approaches have viewed sanitation largely as a problem of lack of demand and infrastructure; and therefore focus on information, education and communication (IEC) as a means of changing sanitation behavior. Investment and incentives promote increasing coverage through the supply of toilets to individual households. A decade later, experience has exemplified that sanitation is not about technology and infrastructure, but essentially about collective behavior change on the sanitation ladder...

CLTS positions sanitation as a community good to be created by community efforts and ingenuity. Women as the primary stakeholders are positioned as community leaders and sanitation activists. This is in sharp contrast to the widespread notion that public goods are largely a responsibility of governments with subsidy playing a significant role in the process.

Context

Around 6,000 people, usually infants, die of water and sanitation related illnesses globally on a daily basis. Out of this more than 1,000 die only in India every day⁹. About 40% of the people in the world, mainly in the global South live without 'improved' access to sanitation – that is about 2.6 billion, around one third of the people inhabiting the earth. As Human Development Report (UNDP 2006) says no act of terrorism generates devastation on the scale of the crisis in sanitation and water.

The Government of India (GoI) has an on-going country wide program called Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). TSC seeks to create open defecation free (ODF) and fully sanitized communities in rural areas by creating awareness and demand on the one hand and by strengthening the supply chain on the other. It also has a component of hardware subsidy for poor households. The actual program monitoring, however, tracks sanitation coverage and not open defecation free communities. National incentives for communities include the post achievement reward called Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP) or the Clean Village Award for over 1000 communities every year. The challenge is often the sustaining efforts after the competition.

Water and Sanitation Program-South Asia (WSP-SA), technical assistance agency of the World Bank has supported the transfer of practice through training and technical assistance. This policy adopted by the State governments such as Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh instead of granting hardware subsidy that undermines collective spirit, seeks to promote community ownership of sanitation agenda. This form of institutionalization has worked exceedingly well in forwarding not only the sanitation coverage in these states, but has also resulted in reported positive public health outcomes.

There is potential for the demand for good governance program to lobby with the infrastructure division of the World Bank in India and other developing countries to adopt the community led total sanitation approach that will enhance good governance initiatives.

⁹ As per Human Development Report, 2006, 450,000 children die of diarrhea every year in India.

Women as Sanitation Leaders

This case study is based on the experience of community networks and facilitating organizations such as SSP Swayam Shikshan Prayog and Knowledge Links in India, partners of GROOTS International.

In this strategy, women's collectives are instrumental in engaging local governments as partners in resource mobilization for creating sanitation infrastructure and services. As a result, the total sanitation strategy, which is spearheaded by women's groups in partnership with their local governments, is the model operating successfully across 270 villages' covers 40,000 households in Maharashtra and Gujarat and across more than 400 villages in Himachal Pradesh at the moment. The model is scalable and replicable as efforts are on to roll it out successfully in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu on a larger scale.

Grassroots women's collectives, positioned as the primary stakeholders, take the lead to:

- Engage women and their communities in participatory analysis of their sanitation situation.
- Create plans and community resolve to end open defecation and adopted safe waste management practices
- Work closely with the local levels of political leadership and government to create space for community decision making

The process of mobilizing at the grassroots begins with participatory mapping. This is to trigger analysis and action involving all households. Women's groups lead the process and emerge as leaders, as they are the most urgent about the change. Walks to open defecation areas, quantifying faecal material, flow charts of transmission route are all exercises that outline the risks that communities face. The connection between drinking water and contamination by open defecation, rise in incidence of water borne illnesses, productive time and wages lost are reasons which push poorer households into the poverty cycle.

The community analysis and findings are crucial to building a collective information repository. Widespread practice of open defecation, particularly in rural areas, increases the vulnerability of women as they can go out only before dawn and after dusk to avoid public gaze and embarrassment. They can go only in groups to feel more secure and safe. They have to wait for others for company to go for open defecation, resulting in loss of their productive time. They have to walk long distances following shrinkage of open spaces in many areas. All this and many more factors make women relatively more susceptible to the ill effects of open defecation; their privacy, safety and dignity being at risk, besides considerable loss of their productive time and energy. Through the process of mapping, women realize they are specifically affected and they make the links between water, health and sanitation and its links to poverty.

The participatory process also reveals local champions who are ready to volunteer time for building momentum and sustaining it through the early stages. Based on the findings, women's groups step up efforts to educate all households using neighborhood and group meetings to build community consensus. Community resolve is demonstrated when the entire community decides enough is enough and work to end open defecation. This is an important milestone for women's leadership as it is no more seen as a women's issue, but as a problem that requires community solutions.

The shift in public roles for women's groups and their role in decision making occurs when they are mandated to take lead in preparing action plans that begin with stopping open defecation. Early adopters are identified and *usually women become the change they want to see*. New knowledge frontiers are crossed and skills developed as women identify sites for toilets at households, work out design and technology requirements, sources for materials and masons and mobilize savings and provide small

loans wherever needed. They organize enterprises for collective procurement of materials resulting in huge savings for poor households.

In this approach, both demand and supply sides of sanitation are addressed by women and community groups in partnership with local self -governments. Creation of consensus to end open defecation is the first step in the collaboration. Next step is to ensure the smooth functioning of the supply chain in terms of access to materials, labor and supervision etc is taken care of. Local governments have come forward to provide water, transport and storage depots and in some cases have negotiated materials with suppliers.

The impact of this approach is the faster and sustainable results in terms of coverage and behavior change. This includes increased number of villages which are 100% open defecation free, the number of villages which have overcome the problem of water scarcity and the sustainability of the approach where communities continue to monitor and maintain its water and sanitation facilities.

Experience of the GROOTS network members suggest that women's active involvement in improving the delivery of services and the critical engagement with local authorities results in enhancement of their agency as citizens and development actors. The experience in grassroots mobilization to inform its policy recommendations to the government as GROOTS continues to advocate for a community led and gender sensitive approach in state and national policy and programming.

Learning

The community led approach is cost effective. It requires resources for initial external facilitation for triggering processes for a collective analysis of the sanitation situation and action and for community innovators/ champions to scale up the strategy and processes to new communities. The role of the government is limited to that of a distant facilitator in creating a policy environment and institutional arrangements to make CLTS happen.

Community led approaches have led to the creation of facilities at the local level. They have the potential to reframe service delivery agenda as an issue of community empowerment and engagement resulting in strengthening of governance processes at the grassroots. Structurally, governance is about institutional arrangements and functionally it is about setting the agenda, making decisions and guiding the processes that determine people's lives. CLTS experience in India underlines the significance of decentralized delivery of basic services with the involvement of communities, particularly women groups, as a critical governance function.

Demand for good governance invariably entails building local level institutions, positioning people as participants and agents of change. CLTS experience confirms that women invariably emerge as community leaders and change makers in these processes at the grassroots. Women and girls are able to continue schooling and enjoy privacy and dignity, especially in cultures where women are restricted by social and cultural norms. The gains for women are not only practical in terms of improved health status, but also strategic in terms of their enhanced agency and recognized public role as active citizens and development actors.

The empowering element of the CLTS process and practice lies in the power of collective analysis and action. It enables community ownership and maintenance of basic services and enhances transparency and accountability of local governments. Women's groups function as partners in local governance as they take on new public roles as information providers, planners and monitors of development and governance processes.

CONCLUSION

CHALLENGES

- Project deliverables are associated with visible outcomes, primarily hardware and infrastructure. The processes and relationships which need to be in place for community based organizations of the poor to influence governance are seen as less significant and thus there is a low investment in organizing citizen's platforms and enabling them to negotiate with government.
- Incentive structures promote an instrumental approach to community based organizations.
- Participation of community based organizations and particularly women's organizations are usually restricted to their provision of labor as part of reducing costs.
- Collaborations with government that open up opportunities for women to undertake formal public roles in development planning, implementation and development often do not get institutionalized or sustained beyond projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The experiences of the GROOTS and Huairou networks as well other large scale global networks of grassroots organizations such as StreetNet and Shackdwellers International demonstrates that in order to advance community-led approaches to governance, it is critical for grassroots organizations to function collectively through large scale coalitions and networks rather than individual organizations. Networks enable organizations to leverage regional and global partnerships to engage national governments. At the same time networks and coalitions also offer a pool of knowledge and practices and enable rapid cross-fertilization and transfers of knowledge and practice through community-led learning processes. The recommendations are illustrated through specific examples from the experiences of the GROOTS International and Huairou Commission networks.

1. Create incentives and institutional arrangements that formalize grassroots women's public roles as planners, implementers and monitors of development programs

Grassroots women's organizations are playing a range of public roles in planning, implementing and monitoring development to promote accountability and democracy and protocols need to be instated to institutionalize these functions and continuously consult with citizen groups from poor communities. In turn, incentive structures need to shift to formalize and institutionalize these public roles. Incentives may include rewarding or requiring women's participation in decision making as well as incentives for continuity of leadership and long term use of effective procedural mechanisms to involve grassroots women in development programming.

Following the Marmara earthquake in 1999, Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV) a Turkish foundation supported grassroots women to run their own women and children's centers in the relief camps and later in the temporary settlements. In 2001, a six year protocol signed between KEDV and the Social Services and Child Protection Administration (SCHEK). The protocol allowed grassroots women's groups beyond the emergency conditions of the disaster region, to set up and govern their own community childcare centers without having to hire expert administrators. Therefore this protocol was an important step towards mainstreaming the establishment of community run child care centers throughout Turkey that would be monitored and assessed by KEDV and the Social Services Ministry. By endorsing community driven service provision, the

Government was both responding to the practical needs of the community while formally acknowledging women's public roles in delivering services for the community.

In the Maharashtra Emergency Earthquake Rehabilitation Program the requirement for community participation created the opportunity for grassroots women to formally undertake the role of information disseminators. However, this policy was never institutionalized in subsequent disaster recovery programs.

In Honduras, it took the Comité de Emergencia Garífuna 10 years to get government attention and support to relocate a community from a flood prone. As an organization of marginalized Afro-indigenous people it was impossible for the Comité to engage the government. It was not until the Comité was honored by UNDP's Equator Initiative that Government began to dialogue with Comité.

2. Invest in community-driven initiatives to scale up effective practice

Given the Bank's stated interest in promoting good governance and government functioning, and in light of its substantial investments in research and institutional reform, we recommend broadening the strategy to feature investments in a platform of pro-poor, citizen-driven demonstration (not projects)—where women are equitably involved—to scale up successful development efforts to increase accountability to the poor and robust analysis of their results.

Despite the millions of dollars being invested in disaster risk reduction, a disproportionately small amount is being invested in identifying strengthening and scaling up existing community resilience practices. If at all they are engaged in DRR, it is only to train them in emergency response. Government programs on disaster risk management tend to be top down, excluding the poor who are worst affected by disaster from setting their own agendas for reducing risk. Therefore the Community Disaster Resilience Fund instituted by ProVention Consortium in partnership with GROOTS International will provide flexible small grants for communities living in disaster prone areas to set their own risk reduction agendas, leverage resources from government to jointly address these and scale up successful risk reduction practices.

3. Develop policy frameworks and operational guidelines to reconcile development investments and policies with strategies to drive the demand for good governance. The ability of the poor to drive the demand for good governance can only occur if this notion of good governance is embedded in the design and monitoring of development programs and policies. This means that the poor have to be recognized as key stakeholders in development and their priorities must drive development programs.

The World Bank also has in place anti-corruption guidelines which include mechanisms such as social audit and community oversight. However in practice these mechanisms are often dissociated from the communities most impacted by development program thus missing the opportunity to institute mechanisms enabling communities to drive the governance of development programs.