

Learning from a ‘paralegals’ intervention to support women’s property rights in Uganda

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Restrictions on women’s property rights (WPR) prevent women across the world from achieving their full economic potential. Without comprehensive rights to own, sell or make key decisions about land and other property, women often face difficulty in earning an adequate income and in providing for themselves and their families. On a global scale, despite supportive legislation in many countries, women’s limited rights over property in practice hamper progress in economic growth, poverty reduction, and gender equality.

Limitations in WPR are especially salient in sub-Saharan Africa, where there remains a large gulf between statutory laws that protect women’s right to property and long-standing customary land tenure practices that favor men’s ownership of property and patrilineal inheritance. A number of social and economic constraints are often associated with preventing women in the region from fully claiming their legal rights to property. These include women’s lack of awareness about their legal rights, weak access to funding for legal and dispute resolution services, women’s fear of violence from husbands or other family members as a result of claiming property rights, and a mistrust of local law enforcement and legal institutions.^{1,2}

To address these challenges, over the last two decades there has been a rise in public and NGO-supported community-based legal aid programs.^{3,4} These programs typically train community members to educate others about existing laws on property rights in order to increase knowledge and change norms related to women’s ownership of property. In many cases, these community volunteers also help to mediate disputes related to land and other property.

This brief discusses lessons learned from an evaluation of one such community-based legal aid program in Uganda, carried out by the Uganda Land Alliance (ULA) in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).



¹ International Center for Research on Women (2007). *Women’s Property Rights as an AIDS Response: Lessons from Community Interventions in Africa*. International Center for Research on Women: Washington, D.C.

² Strickland, R. S. (2004). *Working Paper - To Have And To Hold: Women’s Property and Inheritance Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*. International Center for Research on Women: Washington, D.C.

³ Warren, C. S. et. al. (2010). *International Legal Aid and Defender System Development Manual*. National Legal Aid and Defender Association: Washington, D.C.

⁴ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2011). *Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems in Africa: Survey Report*. United Nations: Vienna, Austria.

Background on the Luwero Paralegals Program

Since 2009 ICRW and ULA have partnered to design, implement, and evaluate a program to establish and build the capacity of a legal rights worker organization in Luwero District, Uganda. The program aimed to support WPR by training a group of male and female community members to become legal rights workers. Referred to as “paralegals”, these legal rights workers provide legal advice, mediation services, and education about WPR and other property rights issues to people in their communities.⁵

The pilot phase of the program began with an ICRW-led assessment to identify the major needs and challenges of community-based legal rights organizations in Uganda. The assessment found that these types of organizations provided critical access to legal resources and services, but that legal rights workers did not typically receive training in or handle WPR cases. To address this gap, ICRW and ULA developed the Property Rights and Gender Training Toolkit⁶ to serve as a resource for practitioners in developing gender-responsive training curricula for legal rights workers. The toolkit addresses various issues including: human rights; women’s rights; Ugandan laws on marriage, inheritance and land ownership and provisions that protect WPR; land tenure systems in Uganda; local land administration; and dispute resolution institutions.

Soon after, ULA selected the first cohort of 20 legal rights workers to work in nine sub-counties in Luwero District.⁷ The selection criteria consisted of being literate, having a working knowledge of English, and being well-regarded members of their community. ULA also helped organize the paralegals to form a new community-based legal organization—the Luwero Land Rights Activists Association (LLRAA). Together, ICRW and ULA used the Property Rights and Gender Training Toolkit as the basis for delivering a comprehensive set of trainings, delivered in English, to the paralegals between 2009-2012. In between these formal trainings, ULA periodically met with the paralegals to discuss their work and any challenges, and to provide them with technical assistance on their legal services to clients.

The program’s monitoring system

In close collaboration with ULA, ICRW led the creation of a monitoring system to track key aspects of LLRAA’s activities. The monitoring system collects data through several monitoring forms to be completed by the paralegals. These forms capture key information pertaining to paralegals’ client cases and sensitization activities to educate community members about property rights and WPR. Types of data collected in the forms include: the nature of cases paralegals handle, the services paralegals provide to clients, the final outcome of cases, topics paralegals discuss in sensitization events, and involvement by any leaders in casework or sensitization events. ICRW trained paralegals on the monitoring forms and provided training and ongoing technical assistance to ULA staff on data entry and analysis using Excel.

⁵The legal rights workers did not meet Uganda’s legal definition of a “paralegal”, which entails holding a law qualification recognized by the Law Council.

⁶International Center for Research on Women and Uganda Land Alliance (2010). *Property Rights and Gender: A Training Toolkit*. International Center for Research on Women and Uganda Land Alliance: Washington, D.C., and Kampala, Uganda.

⁷Of these 20 paralegals, two eventually dropped out of their role towards the end of the pilot phase.

Early Lessons Learned and Revised Program Strategy

ICRW’s earlier evaluation of the nine-month pilot phase revealed that the intensity of the paralegals’ efforts to educate community members about WPR was much lower than anticipated. Specifically, paralegals’ sensitization activities focused on too many different topics, and were too diffusely spread across a wide geographical area to be likely to influence knowledge or attitudes about WPR at the community level. When paralegals held sensitization events, they often discussed property rights issues that community members wanted to know about, but that were not directly related to WPR (e.g. landlord-tenant relations). Although educating community members about WPR had been a major aim of the program, the evaluation found that ULA and ICRW had not clearly enough emphasized this area of work to the paralegals. Some paralegals also seemed to lack sufficient skills and confidence in carrying out sensitization activities.

The evaluation also shed light on attitudes toward WPR among men and women in the communities. Men and women were most supportive of single and married women’s rights to own property. However, attitudes were less favorable toward women and girls’ rights to inherit land, and women’s rights to property in cases of separation or divorce. A substantial portion of respondents did not know that women and girls could inherit land from their husbands or families. There was also limited knowledge of what constituted a legal marriage and the related implications for partners’ rights over property.

Based on these key findings, during Phase II of the program (see Figure 1 for program timeline), in mid-2012 ICRW and ULA developed a new strategy to strengthen paralegals’ efforts to sensitize their communities about WPR. The strategy consisted of the following main elements:

- 1. Targeted messaging:** Each paralegal was to commit to holding sensitization activities in three “focus villages” they selected on three specific “key messages” on WPR. ICRW and ULA developed these key messages based on the WPR topics on which the evaluation had found there was limited understanding or less supportive attitudes among community members. The key messages are:
 - ▶ Women can own land
 - ▶ Widows and girls can inherit property
 - ▶ Protect your family by writing a will
- 2. Increased educational interactions:** Paralegals were to focus more of their work to educate community members on WPR by conducting *formal* (i.e. group meetings) and *informal* (i.e. conversations with individuals, families, etc.) community sensitization activities. ICRW and ULA developed several “sensitization tools” to provide paralegals with ideas on how to facilitate discussion about the key messages with community members, beyond simply explaining laws or relaying information. These tools included: posters on the key messages; smaller illustrations or “pictures” that depicted scenarios related to WPR; discussion questions about actual WPR cases in Uganda; and “quick chat” ideas to start conversations about the benefits of protecting WPR.

Figure 1. Paralegals program timeline



¹Of these 20 paralegals, two dropped out by the end of the pilot phase, leaving 18 paralegals from the first cohort.

*Time I and Time II represent the first and second wave, respectively, for qualitative data collection for the evaluation of Phase II.

3. Engagement with “persons of influence”: Paralegals were to identify “persons of influence” (POIs), who were influential leaders or members of their communities, to support their work. Paralegals were expected to meet with their POIs to teach them about WPR. In turn, POIs were to work with paralegals to help conduct sensitization events on WPR, as well as to amplify the reach of positive messages about WPR by informally speaking to community members.

Earlier in Phase II, ULA had also identified a new cohort of 20 paralegals, who received their first training on property rights and gender in July 2011. Of the total 38 paralegals who remained for the duration of Phase II of the program, 21 were male and 17 were female. Both the original and new cohorts of paralegals received a “refresher” training from ULA in October 2011, and another one from ULA and ICRW in July 2012. The latter training also formally introduced the paralegals to the three elements of the new strategy related to their work on community sensitization. Following these various training workshops, ULA would continue to provide ongoing technical support to the paralegals, as was done in the pilot phase, during visits with individual or small



Process Evaluation of New Program Strategy

In Phase II, ICRW designed and carried out a process evaluation to assess the strengths and challenges of the new strategy. The evaluation sought to understand how the program could better support paralegals’ community education efforts to promote WPR. In particular, it assessed how well the new strategy was working in developing paralegals’ understanding of WPR and their capacity to carry out community sensitization events, in addition to strengthening their collaboration with local leaders. The evaluation also explored the knowledge and attitudes of paralegals on WPR, and community members’ awareness and perceptions of paralegals and the key messages on WPR.

The evaluation largely relied on qualitative data collection at two points in time: one month after the July 2012 training (Time I), and ten months later at the end of Phase II of the program (Time II). In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with paralegals, POIs, other local leaders (including local councilpersons—LCs—, religious and traditional leaders) and ULA staff. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with male and female community members. During data collection at Time II, the research team also interviewed several female clients of paralegals. Table 1 indicates the type and number of respondents interviewed at both points in time.

Table 1. Qualitative data collection tools

Respondents	# of interviews, FGDs
Paralegals	Time I: 12 (7 female, 5 male) Time II: 12 (5 female, 7 male)
Persons of influence	Time I: 5 (1 female, 4 male) Time II: 6 (2 female, 4 male)
Other community leaders (i.e. government, religious, traditional/clan)	Time I: 4 (1 female, 3 male) Time II: 4 (1 female, 3 male)
Community members	Time I: 2 FGDs ⁸ (1 female, 1 male) Time II: 4 FGDs (2 female, 2 male)
ULA staff	Time I: 4 (3 female, 1 male) Time II: 2 (1 female, 1 male)
Clients of community paralegals	Time II: 4 (all female)

⁸Each FGD at both points in time included between 6 to 12 participants.

At both points in time, paralegals were sampled purposively from several sub-counties to ensure diversity by sex, experience (i.e. first and second cohort), and other community leadership positions paralegals may have held. Five of the paralegals interviewed at Time I were also interviewed at Time II.⁹ The remaining half of paralegals interviewed at Time II were selected purposively using the same strata as noted above, as well as to capture variation in paralegals that had engaged in a low, medium and high number of sensitization events after July 2012.¹⁰

For ease of logistics, as well as to facilitate triangulation, POIs, other local leaders, community members and clients were purposively selected from those who had worked or interacted with the sampled paralegals. All of these respondents were selected to ensure diversity by sex. Local leaders were also purposively selected if they had previously supported the client case or sensitization work of paralegals. Community members for FGDs were sampled if they had attended sensitization events held by the paralegals. These approaches were intended to provide richer insights about how and why paralegals and local leaders collaborated to address WPR issues, and about the experiences of people who attended paralegals' sensitization activities, respectively.

In addition to IDIs and FGDs, the evaluation also utilized the program's monitoring data and administered a short survey to paralegals to assess their knowledge and attitudes regarding WPR.

Limitations

A process evaluation focuses on understanding successes and challenges in program implementation. Consequently, the evaluation does not systematically assess outcomes such as changes in community attitudes or behaviors related to WPR. However, the IDIs with local leaders and FGDs with community members shed light on some areas of change that the work of the paralegals may have contributed to.

Given that only leaders who had been supportive of paralegals' work, and community members who had attended paralegals' sensitization events were interviewed, the interviews did not capture the direct views of other leaders or community members who did not interact with paralegals. However, respondents were asked about why some leaders were unsupportive of paralegals, and why some community members may not have known about the paralegals or attended their sensitization events.

Another limitation of the evaluation is an interruption in the collection of the monitoring data due to higher than expected costs related to ULA's monthly visits to the paralegals. These visits had changed after the July 2012 training from one-day meetings with all the paralegals together, to more resource-intensive support over a full week with individual and smaller groups of paralegals. Thus, project funds were inadvertently expended too quickly and were not sufficient to support ULA's capacity building work from November 2012 onwards. This was a major shortcoming, as the program had planned for ULA to provide support to the paralegals through April 2013. As a result of this early cessation of ULA's capacity building support, ULA was also no longer able to collect monitoring data from paralegals or to administer the survey to paralegals at Time II. As a result, the evaluation is based on the qualitative data, and the monitoring data collected over a four-month period from July to October 2012.

⁹ This sub-set of paralegals was selected based on having provided rich information at Time I about their experiences conducting community sensitization events.

¹⁰ The program's available monitoring data was used to determine the number of sensitization events paralegals had conducted.

¹¹ The number of sensitization events and client cases is likely much higher than these figures indicate, given that some monitoring data are missing from paralegals in several sub-counties.

Findings on Program Implementation and Outcomes

This section presents the findings and main lessons learned about the implementation and outcomes of the new strategy undertaken in Phase II of the Luwero Paralegals program. During this time, the LLRAA paralegals continued to provide legal services and advice to clients on property rights disputes. Between July and October 2012, monitoring data reported for 22 of the 38 paralegals indicate that they conducted 124 sensitization events that reached 3,232 community members, 60 percent of whom were women. On average, each paralegal conducted just over five sensitization events in this time period, or more than one sensitization event per month. During this same period, available monitoring data for 16 paralegals indicate that they provided legal assistance to 94 clients,¹¹ of which 53 were women. Data collected at Time II of the evaluation also revealed that all of the paralegals interviewed had continued their work even after the cessation of ULA's monitoring and capacity building visits in November 2012. Conversations with the LLRAA chairperson also suggested that most of the paralegals as a whole had continued their work after this time.

This section first presents findings related to the implementation of the program's new strategy. It begins with a discussion of the approaches paralegals used in carrying out sensitization activities on WPR, and the ways in which local leaders and POIs collaborated with paralegals. This is followed by an analysis of paralegals' knowledge and attitudes on WPR, the role of ULA and ICRW in the program, and some of the individual and community benefits of paralegals' work. The findings also discuss challenges related to the paralegals' community sensitization and client work, as well as lessons learned from the program's monitoring system.

Key Lessons Learned

- ▶ Targeted sensitization messages help to support the intensity and reach of community education efforts on women's property rights.
- ▶ Two levels of training and technical support for paralegals have been critical: 1) formal, structured trainings on the law and women's property rights; and 2) ongoing, more personalized assistance on handling property rights disputes/cases and delivering sensitization messages on women's property rights.
- ▶ Strengthening relationships with local leaders and institutions — whether with local councilpersons, religious leaders, or law enforcement bodies — is critical for the successful implementation of a community-based legal aid program that aims to strengthen women's property rights.
- ▶ Implementing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system enabled the program to identify challenges and formulate new approaches to help increase its effectiveness.

Implementation of new program strategy

Paralegals' sensitization work and messaging on WPR

The strategy of using discrete key messages has helped to strengthen the focus and intensity of paralegals' community sensitization work on WPR.

Interviews with paralegals and available monitoring data suggest that paralegals carried out more frequent community sensitization events in the first few months of the new strategy in Phase II, than they had during the pilot phase.¹² Also, in the first month of the new strategy, many paralegals sensitized community members about the key messages of women owning land, and widows and girls inheriting property. However, they most often discussed the topics of writing wills and landlord-tenant relations. By the end of Phase II, interviewed paralegals reflected on spending most of their time sensitizing community members about WPR, and specifically, all three key messages.

We tell people to learn to write wills and to know that women and widows or any other woman can inherit her father's property. No one should grab property from widows whether the husband had or did not have a will, the law is available... Even a girl child can inherit her father's property. That message has also been clearly taught.

(Female paralegal, Time II)

The paralegals at Time II also mentioned more frequently teaching about the different types of legal marriages, an area with clear implications for upholding WPR, and one that had been a common and longstanding area of confusion among community members.

While not explicitly articulated by paralegals, it seems likely that the program's increased emphasis on paralegals' role to sensitize community members on WPR, along with the development of discrete WPR sensitization messages, better equipped paralegals to deliver more frequent and targeted content on WPR. The findings also suggest that ULAs' monitoring visits with paralegals following the training in July 2012 helped to reinforce the importance of sensitizing community members about the key messages.

Paralegals' approach of sensitizing people during existing community meetings allows fairly diverse audiences to be reached and overcomes challenges to mobilizing attendees.

Both at Time I and during the pilot phase of the program, paralegals expressed that mobilizing people to attend sensitization events on land issues and property rights was a major challenge. One of the ways paralegals have attempted to overcome this hurdle is to sensitize people about WPR during existing community meetings such as village savings and loan association (VSLA) sessions or during religious services. Although the paralegals have used this approach since the pilot, by the end of Phase II, most seemed to clearly favor it to holding stand-alone events on WPR. Several paralegals mentioned that one of the added advantages of discussing WPR at existing meetings was that it enabled them to reach more diverse audiences, particularly men, who were typically less likely than women to attend stand-alone events on WPR.

Paralegals sensitize communities together

The six paralegals in Zirombe sub-county have taken their own initiative to collaboratively carry out sensitization activities. These paralegals have not only planned sensitization events together, but have also jointly delivered them in all of their assigned villages. Collaborating in this way enables the paralegals to complement one another's knowledge of WPR and to support each other during sensitization activities. Each paralegal focuses on discussing particular topics that he or she is most knowledgeable about or comfortable with, and as a group they work together to address any questions community members may have.

We work together, help each other and also one can supplement what the other has said... That is the benefit with working together as a group.

(Female paralegal, Time I)

Integral to initiating and helping to sustain this level of collaboration has been the strong leadership of one of the paralegals in the sub-county, who is also a village counselor and a church leader.

After [finishing other proceedings in VSLA meetings], I always talk to people about [women's property rights]. The advantage is that I get a chance to speak to both men and women. It gives me a platform to speak to the people.

(Male paralegal, VSLA facilitator, Time II)

Sensitization tools for conveying WPR messages have helped paralegals to facilitate dialogue with community members about WPR.

Paralegals most often deliver sensitization events on WPR in lecture format, followed by question and answer sessions. However, since data collection at Time I, as paralegals became more familiar with the sensitization tools offered by ICRW and ULA, and as a result of ULAs' ongoing capacity building on these tools, many paralegals began to use them. During interviews at the end of Phase II, paralegals reported that they most frequently utilized the following tools: the picture on will writing, posters on the key messages, the "quick chat" ideas, and WPR "case study scenarios" that ICRW and ULA provided and that they had developed themselves. Several paralegals noted that pictures and posters were particularly helpful in initiating discussions on WPR topics, especially given low literacy levels among some community members.

We pinned [the posters and pictures] up and gave all the people who attended a chance to read and see them, and to explain to each other what they understood, so as to get everybody involved.

(Female paralegal, Secretary for Women's Affairs on village-level council, Time II)

Although many paralegals valued the tools, some also raised the need for additional materials. Suggestions included handouts on WPR and templates for wills in Luganda that could be distributed to participants, as well as larger pictures that would be easier to see in bigger groups.

¹² During the pilot phase, each paralegal conducted on average less than one sensitization event (0.72) per month, while paralegals conducted an average of more than one sensitization event (1.25) per month in the four months following the July 2012 training.

A few paralegals also mentioned that they would themselves benefit from handouts from the program that provided updates of any revisions made to Ugandan property rights laws.

Informal conversations with community members enable paralegals to discuss WPR issues in greater depth, and with those who might not otherwise be exposed to messaging on WPR.

While for the most part paralegals at Time I had not yet begun to hold informal conversations on WPR, by the end of Phase II of the program most of those interviewed had. These paralegals largely engaged in conversations with people at their homes, and in some cases at informal gatherings in order to promote awareness of WPR and to learn about specific concerns or questions people had.

Sometimes I use the door-to-door [method], which I have found very useful because sometimes people have problems that they do not open up about in community meetings. But when you go to their homes they are able to share their stories and problems.

(Female paralegal, VSLA chairperson, Time II)

Several paralegals also found that informally speaking with individuals about WPR enabled them to reach people who might not typically attend sensitization events, such as those with disabilities and others who could not attend because of work.



Support of local leaders and POIs for paralegals' work

ULA's efforts to introduce local leaders to paralegals have helped the paralegals to become better known and accepted in their communities. ULA undertook several efforts to foster linkages between paralegals and local leaders. For one, it held formal introduction meetings between paralegals, sub-county local councilpersons (LC3s) and chiefs, and the police in some instances. ULA also carried out one-on-one discussions with a range of local leaders (village and parish-level local councilpersons — LC1s and LC2s, respectively; religious leaders and traditional leaders) to gauge their awareness of and interactions with paralegals. These conversations indirectly helped to raise the profile of paralegals before these leaders. Several paralegals at both points in time expressed that ULA's efforts helped to improve awareness of their work among local leaders, and as a result among more people in their communities. These paralegals also believed that being seen as associated with and supported by a well-regarded organization such as ULA helped to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of leaders and other community members.

This support from ULA has enabled the leaders to get reassurance that the paralegals have an organization that helps to fund their activities at the community level. First these officials are responsible for these areas, so if you do not work with them or if they do not get to know what you do in the community, it becomes difficult to mobilize people, because leaders have to be informed about any activities in their areas.

(Male paralegal, Time II)

Collaboration between paralegals and both POIs and other local leaders helped to effectively mobilize communities for sensitization events and mediate disputes on property rights.

During both rounds of data collection, paralegals expressed that a wide range of leaders supported their work, including LC1s, LC2s, defense secretaries and religious leaders. Some paralegals also mentioned the support of clan leaders. Paralegals have had a diversity of experiences with local leaders, but in general have sought out a range of supportive leaders to help primarily with mobilization and client casework. In particular, the strategy of identifying and collaborating with POIs enabled paralegals to forge stronger relationships with influential people in their communities, many of whom held other leadership positions. Factors that several paralegals mentioned as having influenced their decisions about which leaders to work with included: geographic proximity of the leaders, leaders' approachability, and paralegals' perceptions of leaders' commitment to property rights issues.

Local leaders supported the paralegals' work in a number of ways. Most commonly, a variety of leaders, especially but not only POIs, helped to mobilize community members to attend sensitization events. Many paralegals described this support as highly valuable. Leaders also assisted paralegals by allowing them to speak about WPR in leader-run meetings, and in a few cases, helped maintain order at sensitization events.

Although the new strategy had intended for POIs to help paralegals sensitize community members about WPR, the evaluation found that almost all POIs were reluctant to teach others about WPR given that they had not been trained on the issues. Rather, POI support for paralegals' work most frequently took the form of mobilizing people, as described earlier. However, POIs who were also leaders on local councils (specif-

ically LC1s and LC2s) were more active in supporting the paralegals' work than those POIs who were not, especially in terms of helping to resolve client cases. This is due to the LC1s' and LC2s' mandate to and influence in addressing property issues, which requires them to interact often with community members facing disputes.

Paralegals and LCs (LC1 and LC2 chairpersons, and other positions) who worked together to handle property rights' disputes and client casework reflected positively on the nature and outcomes of their collaboration, and demonstrated a mutual respect for each others' roles in the process. Local leaders noted that being able to collaborate with paralegals increased the confidence of both the paralegals and leaders. Supportive leaders valued paralegals' knowledge of the law, particularly because it helped to inform and substantiate the decisions they made in resolving disputes. Leaders also noted that working together with paralegals to mediate disputes made the process seem more impartial in the eyes of the parties involved. In some instances this enhanced their ability to reach a resolution, sometimes averting the need to refer cases to the police.

... [When the paralegal and I work together] we both give our views and the people see that we are impartial. It also helps to strengthen each other's confidence. (Male leader, LC1 chairperson, Time II)

Despite the positive examples of paralegals' collaboration with LCs, some paralegals at both points in time noted less fruitful experiences with these local leaders, particularly LC1s. Some LCs were either unhelpful or uncooperative in working with the paralegals, or in a few examples, even acted as barriers to the paralegals' work.

When the LCs have understood what we do and are supportive, it is very helpful because the people believe in them and they can easily mobilize. But when you don't cooperate you can easily clash. (Male paralegal, Time II)

Paralegals mentioned several factors that might explain why some LC1s were not supportive of their work: incorrect perceptions among leaders that paralegals received payment when helping to resolve disputes; leaders' desire to do the mediation work themselves to derive economic gains; leaders' perception of paralegals as potential political contenders; and limited support among some leaders for upholding WPR.

Paralegals' knowledge and attitudes on WPR

Capacity building efforts and paralegals' increased experience in handling client cases have strengthened their understanding of WPR and related statutory law.

Paralegals continued to develop a stronger understanding of WPR since the training in July 2012, and better grasped the key messages on WPR than they did directly after the training. For example, all paralegals interviewed at Time II knew the key messages on WPR and demonstrated an understanding of the main tenets of statutory law that substantiated them. Paralegals best understood the key message on writing wills at both points in time, and a number of them attributed their improved knowledge as compared to earlier, to the training by ULA and ICRW. By the end of Phase II, most paralegals also had strong knowledge of the laws related to women's ownership of land and widows' and girls' ability to inherit property, and were able to explain the nuances of the law in a range of scenarios. This contrasts with a month after the training in

2012, when several of the paralegals did not remember the key messages, and more of them did not fully know how they applied to different practical situations (e.g. that single or childless women could also own land).

Based on interviews with paralegals and ULA, it seems that ULA's monthly capacity building visits during the latter half of 2012 helped to reinforce for the paralegals both the key messages they were to promote, and more importantly, how Ugandan laws supported the related rights in a variety of situations.

While paralegals have developed a stronger understanding of the key messages on WPR, there are still gaps in their knowledge of related laws.

Although paralegals have a more solid overall understanding of key WPR issues, there are still some areas of confusion related to inheritance and property rights in different types of partnerships. During both waves of data collection, several paralegals did not know that widows and daughters have the right to contest a will if they believe it wrongfully denies their rights to property. More so at Time I immediately after the training than at the end of Phase II, paralegals also had some misunderstanding around what property rights women in different types of partnerships have (e.g. cohabiting couples, polygamous marriages).

These findings, as well as those above, suggest that the training in July 2012 may not have adequately covered some WPR issues, or that it was deficient in other ways. Interviews with several paralegals at Time I seemed to indicate that the training did not sufficiently connect the key messages on WPR to relevant stipulations in statutory law that upheld women's rights to property. Another likely shortcoming mentioned by a few paralegals was that the delivery of the training mainly in English (as was also done in earlier trainings), made it difficult for some with lower levels of English comprehension to fully understand the nuances of discussions about WPR. The existing areas of misunderstanding among paralegals also indicate the need for further capacity building.

Most paralegals are generally supportive of WPR, and some may have developed more favorable attitudes over time.

The views on WPR among those paralegals interviewed at the two points in time were highly favorable in both instances. On the whole, paralegals' attitudes about the key messages were slightly more supportive at the end of Phase II than at Time I. At Time II, all of the paralegals, both male and female, expressed general support for all of the key messages on WPR, particularly when they themselves had positive personal experiences in which women's rights to property had been upheld.

You see my mother inherited land from her father. When she died, she left this land to my siblings and me and we shared it. So I am a beneficiary of a woman owning land and I therefore don't see any circumstance where a woman should not own land.

(Male paralegal, Time II)

There was still some resistance among a few male paralegals to the idea of widows and girls inheriting property in certain circumstances (e.g. when a widow has not borne children with the deceased; girls should inherit only if they are responsible). While a handful of paralegals at Time I raised similar caveats, overall fewer paralegals at Time II expressed such pre-conditions to women's and girls' rights to inherit property.

Role of ULA and ICRW

ULA's ongoing support to the paralegals was an important supplement to the formal trainings, and helped to enhance paralegals' knowledge of WPR and ability to address related issues in their work.

As mentioned earlier, potential deficiencies in the July 2012 training may have resulted in inadequate understanding among some paralegals of the key messages on WPR. Interviews with paralegals and ULA staff, and improvements in paralegals' knowledge of WPR at Time II, suggest that ULA's ongoing technical assistance to paralegals following the training helped to overcome some of these gaps. During visits to Luwero and in phone calls, ULA reminded the paralegals about how various laws upheld WPR in given situations, provided advice on handling property rights cases, reinforced the use of sensitization tools to facilitate discussions about WPR, and stressed the utility of the three key messages. All of these efforts supported the paralegals' learning and ability to effectively carry out community sensitization and mediation work. In some instances ULA staff also provided support at the paralegals' request to assist them in resolving difficult cases. Many interviewed paralegals noted that this type of technical support from ULA was instrumental in helping them to be effective in their work.

ULA has helped us with cases that we cannot handle. We inform them about cases that we attempt to resolve and at a certain point when we discover that the case needs more expert advice. They have also helped us to ensure that cases that are beyond mediation at community level are referred to relevant authorities.

(Male paralegal, Time II)

ICRW and ULA's collaboration in Phase II of the program was particularly effective in devising the program's new strategy. However, the program would have benefited from closer collaboration to ensure more systematic knowledge management.

Several ULA staff noted that ICRW's leadership in working with ULA to help to shape the new program strategy, including ICRW's input in identifying key messages on WPR and developing sensitization tools, effectively helped to strengthen the program's approach to community sensitization. While this area of collaboration between ICRW and ULA was a clear strength of the partnership, the program performed less well in systematically documenting its approaches to implementation. For example, some respondents recalled that in a few instances of staff turnover in Phase II, the implementation of activities was slowed down in part because of the time required to onboard new personnel. A more systematic approach of storing and sharing workplans and documentation of program activities across ICRW and ULA might have helped to facilitate a more efficient process of knowledge transfer to new staff.

Personal and community benefits of paralegals' work

Paralegals derive self-confidence and social standing in their communities as a result of their work.

On the whole, paralegals from both cohorts enjoy their work and express having derived much from it. One of the primary benefits they cite is the increased knowledge they have gained about property rights and the law. Many male and female paralegals also said that they felt respected by community members and have earned greater social recognition from their work. In turn, paralegals derive a sense of pride when they are approached

for advice, which further increases their self-confidence in performing their work. This sense of helping their communities is one of the main reasons many paralegals identified for wanting to continue in this role.

I am still interested in this work because people now see some usefulness in me and really consult with me a lot on many issues including those on WPR. I am yet to hear of any bad report on my work and I know people are appreciative of what I do. This is enough motivation for me to continue in this work.

(Male paralegal, Time II)

Several male and female paralegals also discussed feeling more empowered as a result of their work and the knowledge they have gained. One female paralegal in the second cohort shared how she personally benefited from increased understanding of her property rights:

The law has helped many widows, for example I am a widow. When my husband died, he had other women and children. These women did not want me to benefit from the estate. Little did they know that some of the property had already been registered in my name and therefore legally mine. They ... wanted to grab property from me. They got shocked when we went to court and I proved to them that the property was mine. In the will it was clear that each widow was given her property ... So having knowledge about WPR was a benefit on my part.

(Female paralegal, Time II)

Local leaders and community members who have previously interacted with paralegals have overall positive views of them. They also attribute various favorable changes related to WPR in the community to the paralegals' work.

Most respondents expressed favorable perceptions of the usefulness of paralegals' work, and claimed that it has had positive effects in their communities. Community members most value paralegals' ability to mediate disputes, and esteem them highly as leaders. Interviewed local leaders who have worked with the paralegals view them as important resources for legal knowledge about property rights. Several community members and leaders also believe that as a result of paralegals' work there are notably fewer land-related conflicts and more peaceful approaches taken to resolve them.

They [the paralegals] have helped in resolving conflicts in the community. The number of cases of women being abused/oppressed has come down and the mistreatment of children in homes has also reduced in this area.

(Male POI, LC1 chairperson, Time II)

Paralegals' sensitization events and client casework seem to be increasing the awareness of WPR among male and female community members. There is also some evidence that paralegals' work is helping to empower women and reduce resistance to WPR.

Many paralegals and POIs interviewed noted that while knowledge of WPR overall is still limited, community sensitization events have begun to raise awareness among women and men. Several local leaders also corroborated this, and a few said that paralegals' work had been instrumental in promoting greater awareness of WPR. Paralegals and POIs mentioned that women who attend sensitization events have been particularly interested in learning about women's rights to own and inherit land. The FGDs with community members also provide some evidence that will writing has become better understood and accepted by both

men and women who attend sensitization events. Paralegals' efforts to educate people about the importance of writing a will, both in sensitization events and while mediating disputes, seem to have contributed to this improved knowledge.

Client profile 1: Protecting a daughter's inheritance rights

Patience* is a 50 year-old mother of eight children whose husband died several years ago. She decided to return to live in her parents' home, though her father had already passed away. After some time, her brother tried to chase her away from the house, claiming she did not have rights to live there anymore. Patience consulted with a paralegal that was also a village LC1 chairperson. The paralegal immediately convened a meeting with Patience, her brother and other members of her family. He educated them all about the law on property inheritance, and explained to them that daughters have equal rights as sons to inherit property from their parents. Through mediation by the paralegal,

Patience was given a portion of her parents' property. She also gained knowledge about the law and realized the importance of having a will.

I learned that it is important to make a will so as to protect my children when I die. Had my father left one, perhaps things would not have been that bad. I also learned that all children are equal, although our culture tends to favor boys' interests [over girls'].

(Patience, age 52)

* The name of this client has been changed to protect her identity.

Paralegals, POIs and a few community members also reflected on how the paralegals' work has begun to give women greater confidence in asserting their rights. For example, some women in the community have recently written their own wills, reportedly for the first time, and others have newfound confidence in claiming their rights to property.

Some women took the [paralegals'] advice and made wills. When we went back to visit, some of [the women] brought out copies of their wills to show us. Some even confided to us that they wrote the will secretly (in the absence of the husband) and put all their property in it.

(Female paralegal, Time II)

The majority of the women appreciated the sensitization and it has helped them a lot. Many of them have bought plots of land and have put up good buildings, which are rented out, and the proceeds are utilized to pay school fees for their children... The women who benefitted from the sensitizations are empowered and know their rights.

(Male POI, LC1 executive committee member, Time II)

Paralegals have also enabled many of their clients, particularly women, to learn more about their legal rights to land and property. Below, several female clients reported success in claiming what was legally theirs through the help of paralegals' dispute mediation services.

Client profile 2: Upholding a will and a widow's rights to land

Sarah* learned about a paralegal in her village when an LC1 chairperson introduced her to the paralegal during church services. Sarah later attended a sensitization event the paralegal held on property rights. When Sarah's husband died, he left a will that gave her and their children rights to their matrimonial property. After some time, Sarah's husband's family tried to chase her off the land because she had no sons. Sarah immediately went to the paralegal to ask for assistance. The paralegal informed the local councilpersons and also called a meeting with the family. He explained to the family that Sarah's deceased husband had written a will granting Sarah and her children rights to the matrimonial property, and that the family had to respect the provisions in the will. After this mediation, Sarah was able to gain back the property that her husband had left for her.

I got what was legally mine and am happy. I have also learned that it is very good for one to make a will because this protects one's property after death. The beneficiaries will always be in a position to claim what belongs to them. (Sarah, age unknown)

*The client's name has been changed to protect her identity.

Client profile 3: Ensuring women's property rights in marriage

Margaret* is a mother of seven children. Several years ago, officials of a bank came to seize her home, claiming that her husband had mortgaged the house in order to obtain a loan. Her husband had not informed Margaret of this decision. Fearful of the prospect of losing her home, Margaret decided to ask her local paralegal for assistance. The paralegal called a meeting with Margaret's family and explained to them the law around matrimonial property, including that the consent of a spouse was needed before making any transactions on such property. The paralegal also informed the bank about the husband's failure to inform Margaret of this transaction or to obtain her consent. This provided sufficient legal grounds for Margaret to retain her rights to reside in her house, and the case was successfully resolved through mediation. Through her experience in working with the paralegal on this matter, Margaret learned a great deal about her rights.

Before this experience I did not know anything about issues of spousal content...I learned what matrimonial property is and that it should be protected. (Margaret, age 35)

*The client's name has been changed to protect her identity.

There are also some indications that sensitization events are helping to reduce the resistance among men to WPR that is largely tied to long-standing customary practices of patrilineal inheritance. Many paralegals expressed that women who attend sensitization events on WPR respond more favorably to the information taught than do men, and that men's attitudes towards WPR are generally more mixed. However, some paralegals at the end of Phase II noted that they started to see a shift in some men's perceptions of women's ownership of property and rights to inherit land.

The issues related to women's property rights are immense in my area and this is mainly due to the cultural beliefs that disregard women. Unfortunately many men still hold this view. However, through being sensitized some men are beginning to change their attitudes... People were concerned about girls inheriting land with a view that that land would be lost to her husband's family. However, with continued sensitization, this view is changing. Some men are even openly talking about making girls their heirs, which was unheard of in the past. (Male paralegal, Time II)

Although community members come to know about paralegals in many ways, it is unclear to what extent people in the program's various sub-counties understand paralegals' work.

Community members learn about the paralegals through multiple channels, with one of the main ways being through informal referrals to paralegals, particularly from leaders, but also from other people. Other avenues through which community members hear about paralegals include announcements made at group meetings or at church services, when leaders mobilize people to attend community sensitization events, and when paralegals introduce themselves by going door-to-door.

Leaders, community members, and paralegals all expressed mixed views about the extent to which community members are aware of paralegals and fully understand their work. Many respondents attribute gaps in community awareness of paralegals to the fact that certain types of community members, primarily women and girls, largely attend sensitization events. They also noted that factors such as limited mobility, work conflicts, or simply a lack of interest in or support for WPR limit community members' attendance of sensitization events.

Challenges to paralegals' work

Large geographic areas of assignment continue to serve as a physical challenge to paralegals' delivery of services.

Paralegals, local leaders and community members remarked on the paralegals' need to frequently travel long distances, including outside of their focus villages given high demand for their legal advice and mediation services. The program's provision of bicycles to paralegals helped to alleviate some of this burden, but a number of paralegals still cited heavy workloads and far distances as an ongoing difficulty.

Weak linkages with local government and legal institutions hamper the effectiveness of paralegals' counseling and mediation services.

A few paralegals voiced the need for improved lines of communication or linkages with these institutions. For example, a couple of them noted that district and sub-county offices did not always have the resources or legal documents related to property (e.g. letters of administration)



and marriage available that they should be able to offer community members. However, there are no clear channels in place for paralegals to communicate with these institutions to provide necessary feedback. Another paralegal noted that the lack of linkages to other formal legal resources such as local lawyers (besides ULA) sometimes made it challenging to resolve disputes that may have transcended paralegals' capacity to address.

The highly sensitive nature of land-related issues may contribute to a sense of insecurity for paralegals in their efforts to resolve land-related matters and promote WPR.

A handful of paralegals at the end of Phase II raised concerns about their safety when carrying out their work. They mentioned receiving threats of bewitchment or intimidation from various community members who resented their efforts to mediate land-related disputes. This highlights the very challenging nature of paralegals' work in a context in which land rights are often highly contested by a multitude of actors.

My question is why is this work regarded as a volunteer activity, yet it involves a lot of time and risks? For example some people in the community develop hatred for the paralegal because they got involved in the mediation of a case, such as in a land dispute or domestic violence.

(Female paralegal, Time II)

ULA noted that this is an underlying challenge for the paralegals, but that some local leaders have helped to protect the paralegals. In several known instances, leaders have requested police escorts to accompany paralegals or ULA staff during their work in the community to help resolve disputes.

The Program's monitoring system

The program has been able to effectively use the monitoring data in various ways to identify and target areas of support needed by paralegals.

In Phase II of the program, as well as in the pilot, ICRW supported ULA in analyzing and using monitoring data to help inform its ongoing activities. In turn, ULA used monitoring data to help determine gaps in paralegals' knowledge, and to identify trends in the types of cases paralegals handled. ULA also used the data to determine areas in which paralegals may have needed additional technical support during its capacity building visits, as well as which cases remained open and might thus have benefited from follow-up by ULA. The program's system of reporting back insights from the monitoring data to the paralegals also seemed to work fairly well. Both before and after the July 2012 training, ULA periodically presented findings from its analysis of the monitoring data to the paralegals, though this did not happen on a consistent basis.

ULA effectively used the time spent collecting monitoring forms during ongoing site visits as an opportunity to provide informal capacity building and conduct quality checks on the data.

In both the pilot and second phase of the program, ULA set aside time during LLRAA's meetings to review with paralegals the process of completing monitoring forms and to address any questions or misunderstandings paralegals may have had. More recently, during monthly visits in the latter half of 2012, ULA also reviewed the form completion process with individual paralegals and helped to reinforce common understanding of key terms and fields on the forms. It is likely that this ongoing technical assistance has helped to improve the quality of the data paralegals have captured in the forms over time.

Use of English in the monitoring forms has been a challenge to some paralegals in terms of comprehension and completion.

A significant challenge in the monitoring system was that all of the forms were in English. This made it more difficult for some paralegals to accurately comprehend all of the data fields. Although the language in the forms had been revised to be less technical in Phase II, some paralegals still reported to ULA having difficulty in fully understanding the forms' content.

Collecting monitoring data from the paralegals for subsequent entry/analysis on a timely basis has been challenging, despite several measures taken to address difficulties.

ULA employed a new strategy of centralizing form collection by selecting a paralegal coordinator in each sub-county to serve as the designated recipient of his or her peers' monitoring forms. Each coordinator would in turn submit these forms to the overall LLRAA coordinator, who would deliver them to ULA. Although this new approach helped to overcome some of the bottlenecks in the data collection process, several sub-county coordinators were unable to physically bring the completed monitoring forms to the overall LLRAA coordinator because of transport challenges. In response, ULA attempted to collect monitoring forms from many of the paralegals during its monthly monitoring visits. While this was a somewhat effective alternative, not all paralegals completed monitoring forms or did so on a timely basis, which resulted in some gaps in the data, as well as delays in data entry and analysis.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations for strengthening the next phase of the Luwero Paralegals program. A second set of recommendations provides guidance to other organizations implementing or supporting similar legal rights worker programs that address WPR.

For the Luwero Paralegals program:

Ongoing technical support and learning materials for paralegals

- ▶ Continue to provide LLRAA with technical assistance in order to further improve paralegals' knowledge of laws on property rights and their skills in applying them to resolve disputes in their communities. This could continue to take the form of both larger "refresher" trainings, as well as periodic meetings with individual or small groups of paralegals. Paralegals of varying experience levels have expressed a desire for such ongoing structured support. Given that paralegals have derived great value from advice related to handling WPR cases and disputes, this assistance should be continued. Ongoing support could also help to encourage paralegals to share lessons with one another from their work, and to ensure that they are aware of any revisions to statutory laws that have implications for WPR.
- ▶ Develop new informational or teaching materials on WPR in Luganda, so as to encourage paralegals' understanding of, and use of these in carrying out community sensitization events. New tools to support paralegals' sensitization work might include simple handouts for community members on WPR, including on how to write wills, as well as larger pictures or visuals related to WPR that better lend themselves to bigger gatherings of people.

Building relationships with local leaders and legal institutions

- ▶ Expand the role of POIs by equipping them to do more substantive work on WPR, such as speaking to people about WPR and helping to deliver sensitization events. Provision of basic training to POIs on WPR would be a valuable first step in improving their knowledge about related issues, and would likely give them confidence in working more directly on WPR. Many paralegals and POIs have expressed a desire for such training.
- ▶ Encourage greater support of paralegals' work on WPR by local councilpersons through engaging with them in dialogue about WPR and the importance of upholding these rights in their communities. A number of local leaders and paralegals have suggested that increasing other leaders' awareness of WPR and relevant Ugandan statutory law would help to garner their support for paralegals' work. POIs, particularly those who themselves are local councilpersons, may also be able to help encourage the participation of other local leaders in subsequent efforts to support the work of paralegals.
- ▶ Facilitate linkages between LLRAA paralegals and formal legal actors, including land administration units and law firms available for pro bono work. Identify other institutions with which paralegals can collaborate or receive support from for their service delivery work.



that may be too far from some of the sub-counties in which paralegals work, more decentralized data collection procedures can be used by having ULA staff collect forms from the designated sub-county coordinators during its periodic field visits. In addition, incentives tying submission of monitoring data to the payment of paralegals' stipends may promote greater timeliness of data completion.

For other implementing organizations:

Ongoing technical support for legal rights workers

- ▶ Deliver formal trainings to community legal rights workers in the predominant local language. This will better help to ensure that all rights workers fully comprehend the information delivered and are able to participate actively in trainings.
- ▶ In addition to more formal trainings, ensure that legal rights workers have opportunities to receive ongoing support and mentorship on technical aspects of property rights and WPR, as well as on “soft-skills” necessary to be effective in delivering mediation or educational services. Targeted help with more difficult or complex casework is particularly recommended. Adequate program/project resources should be allocated for this purpose.

Approaches to community education work

- ▶ Consider developing a clear set of educational messages on WPR that legal rights workers can focus on in order to intensify the reach of their community sensitization work. These messages can be informed by consultations with stakeholders including legal rights workers themselves, local leaders, and other community members to identify areas of greatest need and/or about which there is limited understanding.
- ▶ Encourage legal rights workers to collaborate and support one another in their work. Such efforts may involve planning and/or delivering community sensitization activities together, or convening periodically to share challenges and lessons learned. In this way, rights workers may support and learn from one another, which may in turn help to increase their confidence in carrying out their work.

Building relationships with local leaders

- ▶ Foster collaboration between legal rights workers and a range of leaders, particularly those involved in local government. Such support may be critical in increasing the visibility and reach of legal rights workers' efforts, and in garnering community-level support for WPR. In order to encourage the collaboration of local leaders, efforts should be made early on and periodically to sensitize leaders about the purpose of the program/project and the importance of WPR, and to engage with leaders in dialogue about how they can help to support legal rights workers.

Safeguarding the security of rights workers

- ▶ Anticipate potential threats to the safety of legal rights workers resulting from backlash to their efforts to promote WPR or mediate land-related disputes. Train legal rights workers and local leaders at the start of the program/project about the potential safety risks, and put into place a strategy for how rights workers and leaders should handle any potential threats (either real or perceived). Take steps to continue to encourage local leaders to play a role in protecting legal rights workers as needed.

Safeguarding paralegal security

- ▶ Ensure there are mechanisms in place to protect the paralegals' safety, given the highly sensitive nature of land rights issues that paralegals address. A proactive approach should be taken to train paralegals and local councilpersons about the potential safety risks paralegals might encounter in their work, particularly in relation to dispute mediation on sensitive land-related issues. Such trainings should make clear to paralegals how to handle any potential threats (either real or perceived), for example by informing local leaders. Including local councilpersons in these trainings is also critical, as these leaders likely have the greatest influence in protecting paralegals' safety when handling casework.

Strengthening the operational and financial sustainability of the paralegals' association

- ▶ Explore approaches to increase LLRAA's capacity to operate independently of close support from partner NGOs, both in terms of organizational management and the capacity to garner funds to support the costs of its work. LLRAA should be supported in its early efforts to raise funds from other sources, such as from district or sub-county offices. A possible strategy for strengthening LLRAA's organizational capacity might include supporting its executive committee members to receive additional training on management of community-based organizations.

Improving monitoring data collection

- ▶ Translate the program's monitoring forms into Luganda to facilitate the paralegals' comprehension of them. This in turn will help to support the collection of higher quality data.
- ▶ Continue ongoing meetings with paralegals to discuss the monitoring system and any difficulties paralegals have either completing or submitting the forms. These meetings should still be used as an opportunity to conduct informal quality checks on the data in completed monitoring forms.
- ▶ Implement a more streamlined approach for collecting and entering monitoring forms to better ensure that data identifies and responds to paralegals' and communities' needs in a timely fashion. Given bottlenecks resulting from having one centralized point of collection

Operational and financial sustainability

- Plan for helping to ensure the financial and organizational sustainability of legal aid associations beyond the life of the program/project. Efforts made early on to strengthen the leadership and management capacity of rights worker associations, as well as to help them identify other sources of funding will better position these organizations to support their own work over time.

Program monitoring

- Devised a monitoring system that collects data on the types of issues that will be most relevant to understanding the work of legal rights workers and who they reach.
- Create monitoring forms in the local language to help ensure that legal rights workers and others who need to complete them fully understand the types of information requested. Using the local language will likely increase the quality of data collected. The data may need to be translated to English or another language during the data entry stage.
- Put into place incentives that will help to encourage timely submission of completed monitoring data, such as tying payment of stipends or delivery of other logistical support to the submission of monitoring data.
- Regularly share findings from monitoring data with rights workers, both to inform their work and encourage their ongoing efforts to provide services to their communities and to complete monitoring forms.

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