

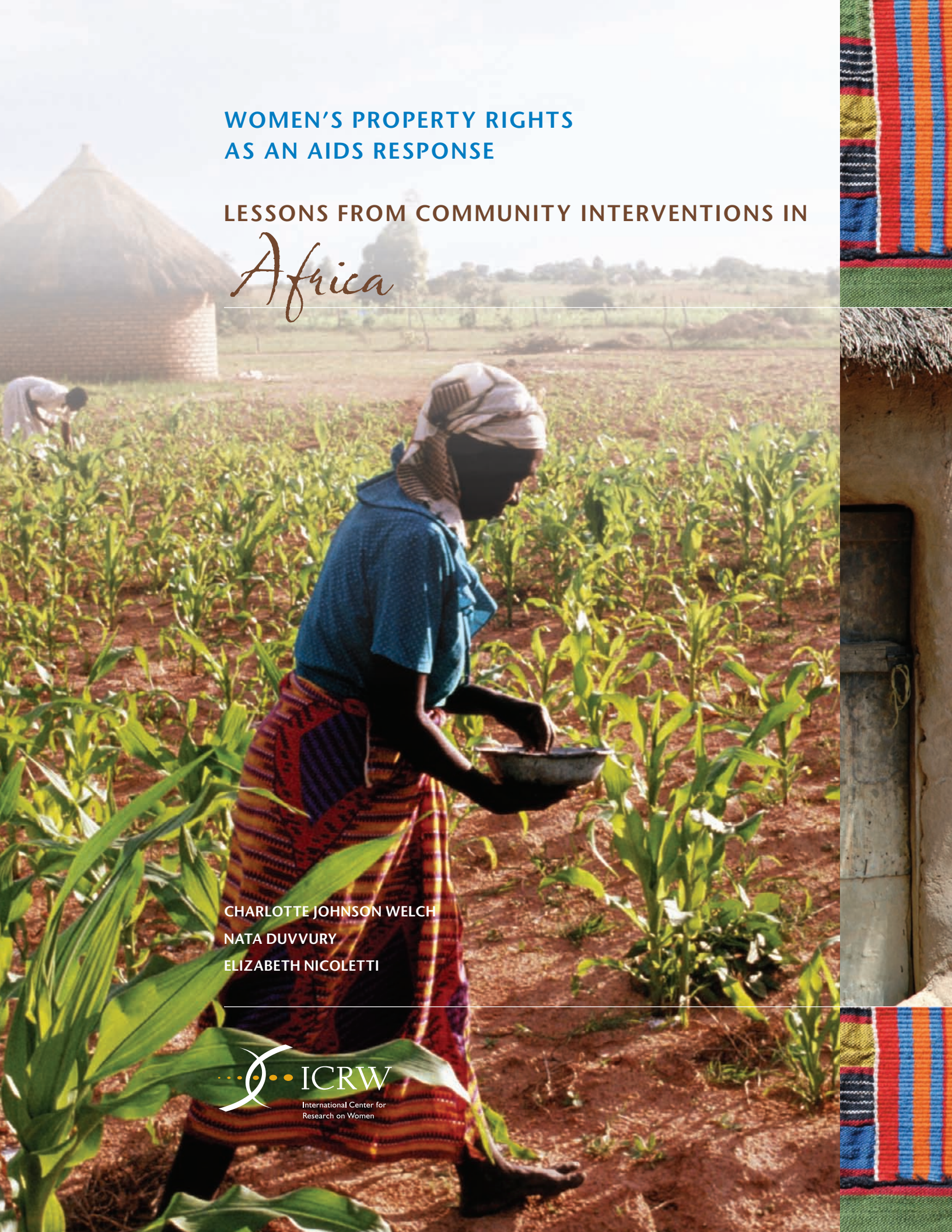
WOMEN'S PROPERTY RIGHTS
AS AN AIDS RESPONSE

LESSONS FROM COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS IN

Africa

CHARLOTTE JOHNSON WELCH
NATA DUVVURY
ELIZABETH NICOLETTI

 ICRW
International Center for
Research on Women



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WOMEN'S PROPERTY RIGHTS AS AN *AIDS Response*

LESSONS FROM COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS IN AFRICA

Securing women's property and inheritance rights can reduce their vulnerability to crises, including those that might result from HIV and AIDS. National and international policies are essential for a legal environment that enables women to realize these rights. Also essential is the social and cultural environment—the norms and practices, which often influence people's decisions related to women's property and inheritance rights. However, creating an enabling environment is inherently complex and difficult to address with a single strategy.

Transformative and sustainable change occurs when people most affected and with the most to gain build on community resources and respond to community needs. Across sub-Saharan Africa, where communities—and particularly women—have been devastated by AIDS, grassroots initiatives are addressing the links between women's property rights and HIV with impressive results. Though small in scale, these efforts are educating communities about how property rights affect women and girls in the context of HIV, and mobilizing stakeholders at all levels to take action.

Recognizing the importance of community-driven responses to AIDS, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), implemented a grants program to document and test community interventions to secure women's property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV.

Program results demonstrate the promise of interventions that harness local capacity and the synergy of networks to secure women's rights to property and inheritance. Findings also suggest practical ways for the international development and donor communities to support these pioneering initiatives and bring them to scale. Ultimately, integrating these findings into new and current programs will go a long way to quell the rise of HIV in Africa and around the world.

HOW THE GRANTS PROGRAM WORKED

ICRW issued one-year, \$25,000 grants to organizations working at the community and institutional levels. Supporting community-based initiatives through small grants has a number of advantages. Grants are an efficient way to provide financial and technical resources, particularly to small organizations that are unable to absorb large funds. Also, a grants program provides a framework for building capacity on an ongoing basis, generates a body of evidence on a single issue in different sites and offers opportunities for cross-learning among grantees.

In July 2005, ICRW sent requests for application to 65 organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. ICRW selected the grantees based on their experience working on women's property rights and HIV. Ten groups were invited to submit full proposals. A 10-person external panel of subject experts then reviewed the proposals. ICRW, GCWA and FAO made final funding decisions based on the proposals and expert review panel input. By February 2006, grants were awarded to eight organizations in six countries. One grantee, Zimbabwe Widows and Orphans Trust, did not complete proposed activities during the one-year grant and is excluded from this discussion. The Justice for

Widows and Orphans Project (JWOP) in Zambia was added to the program through funds provided by an anonymous donor to examine JWOP's network approach as a means of addressing women's property and inheritance rights.

All grantees had one year to design, implement and evaluate their interventions. ICRW provided technical support through on-site visits, e-mail and telephone communications, and two workshops. Long-distance technical support occurred throughout the grants program; on-site visits largely took place during the proposal development process. The workshops focused on monitoring and evaluation—this workshop was held early in the grants program—and data analysis and writing skills—these workshops were held toward the end of the program. The workshops also provided opportunities for participants to exchange their knowledge on and experience with the issues, and to develop their networks.

A full description of each grantee's intervention appears at the end of this report.

GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

The **Community Law Centre (CLC)**, based in Western Cape, South Africa, is a human rights research and education organization. Founded in 1990, CLC works to realize the democratic values and rights enshrined in South Africa's Constitution. CLC engages in policy development, advocacy and education initiatives, focusing on areas critical to the realization of human rights and democracy in South Africa and the broader African context.

Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) is a network of women's self-help groups and community organizations, which are involved in responses to AIDS such as home-based care, building women's capacity to participate in decision-making arenas, and investing in peer exchange processes that empower communities to directly address the gendered aspect of the AIDS pandemic. Operating in 12 regions in Kenya, GROOTS was formed as a response to inadequate visibility of grassroots women in development and decision-making forums that directly impact them and their communities.

The **Justice for Widows and Orphans Project (JWOP)**, Zambia, is a network of seven organizations that was organized in 1999 to strengthen widows' and orphans' property and inheritance rights. JWOP works in Lusaka, Copperbelt, Eastern Province, Southern Province and Central Province, with a central office in Lusaka. This office serves as an informational clearinghouse for network members, coordinates among organizations and individuals dealing with property and inheritance issues; and serves as a referral point for widows and orphans who need help.

The **Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO)**, established in 1990, is a national network of 840 nongovernmental, civil society and faith-based organizations involved in HIV/AIDS activities in Kenya. Its mission is to be a premier organization committed to providing and promoting leadership, collaboration and enhancing capacity among civil society organizations for collective action. The network provides the means to collaborate on activities; extend and sustain the impact of members' work; facilitate access to a wide variety of resources; and reduce duplication.

Ntengwe for Community Development, established in 1999, is a nonprofit organization that supports the needs of people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, particularly women and children, in Binga, Zimbabwe. The organization's mission is to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS among individuals, families and communities by providing accessible, sustainable and comprehensive awareness through projects and programs, including communication through films, videos and publications, and through services,

mobilization and empowerment of communities in partnership with service users. Ntengwe produces its own films (including the award-winning HIV prevention film *Musinsimuke—Wake Up* in 2000), CDs, documentaries and publications to promote HIV/AIDS awareness and secure children's rights through wills and inheritance. The productions also generate income for orphans and vulnerable children. The films are used to stimulate and promote discussion of HIV/AIDS issues for community intervention outreach programs.

Rwanda Women's Network (RWN), established in 1995, is a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and strengthening strategies to empower Rwandan women. RWN implements four core programs. These include provision of health care and health support; education and awareness programs on different issues affecting women, including HIV and AIDS, human and legal rights, sexual and gender-based violence, and reproductive health; socioeconomic empowerment; and networking and advocacy. RWN offers training for women in the respective program areas, with peace and reconciliation being the ultimate goal of its programs.

Women's Voice, based in Malawi, is an indigenous nonprofit and nonpartisan human rights organization, which is devoted to the promotion and protection of justice and welfare of women. It was formed in 1993 with a main office in Blantyre and three district offices in Mchinji, Mzuzu, Nkhata Bay and Ntcheu. The organization is committed to the education and promotion of women and children's rights through training, civic education, advocacy, action-oriented research and forums for discussion.

The **Young Widows Advancement Programme (YWAP)**, based in Nairobi, Kenya, is a self-help community-based organization started in 2003 by five young widows whose spouses had died from AIDS. All five women had tested HIV positive and were chased away from their matrimonial homes. They met quietly to support each other by sharing experiences and finances. Now numbering more than 300, YWAP members work as volunteers and are supported by a board, a small number of paid staff and three lawyers who provide pro bono services. YWAP is active in five programmatic areas: advocacy; paralegal services; a rescue center for women and their children; psychosocial support groups; and preparation of memory books and wills.

GRANTS PROGRAM RESULTS

Community interventions within the grants program tested practical strategies that addressed the links between women's property and inheritance rights, and HIV and AIDS. The following key results from the grants program increase understanding of how women's property and inheritance rights can prevent and mitigate HIV and AIDS:

- 1 Expanded set of strategies to improve women's knowledge of their property rights and use of services.
- 2 Piloted innovative approaches and tools for building community-based legal support.
- 3 Increased international development community's understanding of factors that impact the realization of women's property rights.

COMMUNITY *Interventions*

Women and girls face significant barriers in claiming their property and inheritance rights. They may not be aware of their legal rights and the documentation needed to ensure those rights. They may lack access to legal services or the economic means to pursue legal options. Cultural norms may constrain women from seeking advice and support to realize their property rights.

From the outset, grantee organizations conducted formative research to identify factors that limit women from realizing their property and inheritance rights. Using this information, grantees designed evidence-based interventions to respond to the needs of women, girls and their communities. The interventions focused primarily on increasing women's property rights knowledge and access to services, piloting approaches for community-based legal support, and building networks of organizations and people for greater collaboration and learning.

PROPERTY RIGHTS KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICES

Women's lack of knowledge about supportive laws, policies and services limits their ability to realize their property and inheritance rights. Grantees used a range of media and outreach tools to increase awareness, knowledge and use of existing services.

Information and Education through Multimedia

Grantees employed various media including print, television, radio and the Internet to educate the public. The Young Widow's Advancement Programme (YWAP) expanded its work on behalf of young widows and their families in Kenya by increasing the visibility of its organization. In addition to developing printed brochures, YWAP created a Web site to promote its services and was interviewed for the newspaper, *Kenya Times*. YWAP also produced a 13-minute documentary in partnership with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, which was featured on the television program, "Mending the Ribbon." The increased exposure yielded substantial gains in membership. During the one-year grant period, YWAP's membership jumped from 183 members in March 2006 to 350 members.

The Justice for Widows and Orphans Project (JWOP) uses the media to educate the public and reach out to widows and orphans in Zambia. It sponsors a call-in radio program on widows and orphans that is broadcast weekly to national and community stations in Lusaka. JWOP partnered with a television station to produce two 13-week programs that featured discussions with widows and orphans, individuals working with them, and documentaries on JWOP and its work. One viewer shared, "I wish I had seen this program before I lost everything. I would have known what to do." For many viewers, the television program was the first time they had heard about services such as legal aid.

Community Listening Groups

To raise awareness of the links between gender, HIV and AIDS, and property and inheritance rights, Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) in Kenya tested community-based listening groups, an innovative strategy to educate, stimulate discussion and share experiences among HIV-positive women. Participants listened to prerecorded interviews with women who had experienced problems related to property and inheritance rights.

GROOTS found that the listening groups facilitated open discussion among participants, even on sensitive issues that ordinarily would not be discussed. In communities where cases of property grabbing were frequent but HIV and AIDS was not openly discussed, the listening groups were a forum for people to talk about why dispossession occurs and how women's vulnerability stems from the inter-relationships of HIV and

FACTORS THAT PREVENT WOMEN FROM REALIZING THEIR RIGHTS

Many social factors play into whether a woman is able to realize her property rights. Key among these is a woman's fear of punishment and violence, and her mistrust of community institutions.

PUNISHMENT AND VIOLENCE

Disinheritance and dispossession are commonly considered forms of punishment meted out to women, who for various reasons can be blamed for the death of a family member.

Widows, in particular, often are reluctant to take action in claiming their rights. The Young Widow's Advancement Programme (YWAP) held focus groups with paralegals and clients who accessed YWAP's psychosocial support sessions and rescue center. For young widows, their youth is used against them to support disinheritance. "[My in-laws] said I'm too young to stay married to their dead son and that was final," one young widow shared. "That's why they took away everything."

Widows may lose access to important property-related documents during the mourning period because they are not allowed to participate in funeral arrangements. As one young woman described, "You are to be seen but not heard while they ransack the house, stealing the ATM cards, log books and other valuables." She added, "If [YWAP] had not talked to me about the ATM card, [my in-laws] would have withdrawn everything in the bank."

Violence plays a crucial role in preventing women, especially young widows and orphans, from realizing their property and inheritance rights. Women expressed fears stemming from trauma and intimidation. They often did not confide in anyone because they were suspicious of betrayal.

Gender norms that value men more than women also play a role. Widows explained their fears of what male in-laws might do if the widows had no older sons to protect them and their property. One widow with young children contemplated action to claim her house and the title deed using her husband's death certificate and their marriage certificate but was afraid of repercussions from her brother-in-law. "Even now my brother-in-law lives with his family in my house," she explained. "If you tell them to move, it will be war. Who will defend us at night when they come to beat us? They can even kill us."

MISTRUST IN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

Women also articulated mistrust in relationships and community institutions. A widow described how she hid some of her possessions with a friend only to learn that her friend "gave them away." Institutions that ordinarily would offer refuge were

viewed skeptically. One widow who sought counseling at her church explained, "My own pastor told me that I should behave well since I'm already sick." Some women were leery of lawyers who provided pro bono legal services for YWAP members. One woman contended, "She [lawyer] wants to hear what I say so that she can use it against me. I know them, they are just pretenders."

Women also often mistrust traditional community mechanisms for dispute resolution and perceive them as ineffective. Women's Voice held discussions with traditional leaders to understand their role in resolving property disputes as well as their level of knowledge of legal institutions in Malawi. Women's Voice learned that traditional chiefs were called only in cases of disagreement in inheritance conflicts, and their decisions were not always seen as fair, which exacerbated rather than resolved conflicts. Moreover, some community members stopped going to traditional leaders because they believed the leaders were ineffective in resolving disputes, were inconsistent in applying customary laws, and tended to favor boys in their decisions. Similar findings emerged from the Community Law Centre (CLC) project in South Africa.

CLC conducted in-depth qualitative research with members of community institutions as well as women in shelters and the broader community. CLC found that informal community institutions generally resolved informal disputes and referred cases to the police, social workers, local housing office or other service providers.

Despite the relative effectiveness of these institutions, many women did not know what an informal community institution could do for them in terms of dispute resolution. If they did know, few women had approached these resources for assistance with housing. Members of informal community institutions reported that, in some locations, community members had lost faith in informal mechanisms for justice such as "street committees" or lost interest in participating in informal community activities.

Members of informal institutions noted several challenges in working on issues related to housing, domestic violence and HIV and AIDS. Intervening in these sensitive issues often leaves members open to accusations of "taking sides." Members also feel restricted in the options they can suggest to women due to the lack of shelters and limited space in existing shelters. And women can be reluctant to disclose incidents of domestic violence. As one member noted, "The problem is the wives don't talk about such issues. We need them to disclose so that we can deal with the problem before anything might happen."

AIDS, women's poverty, and gender-based violence. The listening groups also served as catalysts for sharing personal stories: Participants found it more comfortable to talk about their own experiences.

Through the listening groups, participants gained a better understanding of women's property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS. Initial views such as "with HIV you will die anyway and do not need property" developed into a fuller, more complex understanding. As one participant noted, "When a woman or girl loses property, she is more vulnerable to HIV because she lacks a means of livelihood. She will solicit support from people who have property, usually men who exploit her sexually in exchange for support." Participants also learned more about necessary documentation, including death certificates, burial certificates, birth certificates for children, wills, memory books and eulogies, to retain property after a spouse's or a parent's death.

To reinforce what people learned, GROOTS organized community dialogues with elders and other community leaders to create a more supportive environment for change. For example, GROOTS educated community leaders about its "Watch Dog" groups, which monitor and guard against property stripping of widows and orphans. As a result, GROOTS gained the buy-in of these leaders and organized additional Watch Dog groups, providing stronger support for women in their communities.

COMMUNITY-BASED LEGAL SUPPORT

Raising women's awareness of their property and inheritance rights is the first step to creating an enabling environment to realize and protect these rights. Concurrently, women need access to legal tools and resources (e.g., preparation of legally and socially binding documentation such as wills), advice on legal options and social support to take action.

Grantees piloted two community-based approaches to provide legal support and tools to women. One approach trained community members as paralegals; the other created templates for will writing. Each approach demonstrated great potential for replication and scale up.

Community Paralegals

Preliminary findings suggest that community paralegals can be an effective and affordable resource for women involved in property disputes. Many grantees used funds to provide legal training for community members.

GROOTS and Women's Voice trained 16 and 30 community-based paralegals, respectively, to provide women information about wills, assist them with will writing and make referrals. Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) trained 220 facilitators, and Ntengwe for Community Development trained 40 peer

educators. Both the facilitators and peer educators provided community members with legal education and some support in preparing wills. The trained community paralegals, combined with legal literacy and public education campaigns, gave women more opportunities to report cases of property violation. For instance, GROOTS saw a jump in violation cases in all three of its Kenyan sites: from 0 to 44 cases in Gatundu; 5 to 57 in Kendu Bay; and 10 to 100 in Kakamega.

Women are more likely to seek out legal support if they believe that support is effective and credible. Women's Voice and Ntengwe for Community Development took steps to ensure that paralegals and peer educators interacted with community elders in training workshops to build rapport and dialogue. The elders, in turn, introduced the newly trained paralegals and peer educators to their communities, which became a visible demonstration of the elders' support. Moreover, because the elders were familiar with the competencies of paralegals, the elders would refer women to paralegals for assistance.

YWAP expanded an existing program of paralegal services through a creative strategy that trained women who regularly engaged with community members through normal work activities. YWAP paralegals included a hairdresser, a vegetable vendor and a microcredit group facilitator. Not only did these women serve as a crucial locus for social interactions in their communities, but being from the community, they also were viewed as safe and trusted sources of information and advice who were available any time, day or night.

QUICK ACTION: PARALEGAL HELPS INTERVENE ON THE SPOT

When the husband of a woman suddenly died in the early hours of the morning, neighbors rushed to a local paralegal trained by the Young Widow's Advancement Programme in Kenya. The paralegal determined the best action was to immediately take the widow to the local chief and the police station to inform both authorities of the death and arrange for removal of the body. When they returned to the widow's house, her in-laws were loading up household property into a truck. At the same time, the police came with the van to take the dead body and blocked the in-laws' vehicle. The local chief then arrived and witnessed how the in-laws were quickly moving to take possession of her property. The in-laws were publicly shamed. Ultimately, the widow was able to claim her rights – verified by her husband's death certificate and supported by the local chief and neighbors—and retain possession of her household goods.

Templates for Will Writing

RWN (Rwanda Women’s Network) sought to increase the use of written wills by developing relevant tools that complied with requirements in inheritance and succession laws. RWN’s preintervention research found that among community members, 45 percent preferred holographic wills, which are witnessed by people without formal legal authority and do not require costs related to legal support and authorization. Wills also can be executed through verbal agreements made in the presence of family and other relevant persons; 15 percent of community members believed a verbal will would be best because all interested parties would learn the content of the will at the same time. Authentic wills require legal authorization, and 40 percent of community members preferred this type of will because they felt it would be known to local authorities in case of any problems. Eight of 10 executors and persons working in the registry office said they would advise people to use authentic wills because it is more respected, and it facilitates resolving disputes and reaching agreements. To accommodate these differences, RWN developed holographic and authentic will templates, and a training manual that informed clients about each type of will and its comparative advantages.

COLLABORATION AND LEARNING

Interventions addressing women’s property rights must be multifaceted and draw from various skills and expertise.

Grantees used two principal strategies to address the complexity of women’s property rights in the HIV/AIDS context: (1) create partnerships through formal and informal networks, and (2) train people to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to help women seeking support. By building collaboration among a network of responders and actors, grantees helped create an enabling environment for women to realize their property and inheritance rights.

Informal and Formal Networks

Some grantees developed informal networks to expand the available services for protecting and securing women’s property and inheritance rights. Ntengwe for Community Development, GROOTS, Women’s Voice and YWAP referred women to appropriate services or organizations. Other grantees organized or worked within informal networks for collaboration and sharing. For example, RWN connected its facilitators and trainers with other organizations and stakeholders to create resource groups. This informal network met regularly to discuss problems, advise

women on how to present their cases to local authorities and in court, link women to services such as case documentation for submission to courts, and monitor and report violations of women’s inheritance and succession rights.

JWOP is a formal network that offers a range of services to strengthen the legal rights of widows and orphans. Comprised of seven member organizations, including public sector, nongovernmental and community-based organizations, JWOP provides widows and orphans with financial and other material support, legal advice, psychosocial support and counseling. JWOP’s member organizations also conduct research, provide assertiveness training, advocate for human rights, and pursue the arrest and prosecution of people who violate property and inheritance laws. JWOP’s central office coordinates the network, refers women and orphans to appropriate member organizations, and implements skills-building workshops. This formal network structure provides the means for coherent planning, coordinated implementation and efficient use of resources.

Skills-Building Workshops and Training

Grantees built and strengthened the capacity of people who inform, educate and provide services through skills-building workshops and training. RWN trained six local authorities, six members from partner organizations, and 12 members of associations of people living with HIV and AIDS on Rwanda’s new land policy and law, women’s property and inheritance

rights, and will writing. Those 24 trainers went on to train 220 facilitators from partner organizations and HIV-positive networks. The facilitators then reached out to more than 500 people through community meetings and will-writing clinics. This multiplying effect was repeated throughout communities. Altogether, RWN reached more than 1,000 people in less than a year’s time.

Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO) strengthened the capacity of 10 of its member organizations to integrate gender and women’s property rights into ongoing HIV/AIDS programs. Following two skills-

building workshops, trainees from one of KANCO’s member organizations held community sensitization meetings and workshops focusing on women’s property and inheritance rights with elders, women leaders, religious leaders, opinion leaders, school teachers and peer educators. Trainees also established Rights of Children (ROC) clubs in eight primary and eight secondary schools, a legal help desk and a resource center; organized public legal clinics; and monitored and evaluated

“BY BUILDING COLLABORATION AMONG A NETWORK OF RESPONDERS AND ACTORS, GRANTEES HELPED CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN TO REALIZE THEIR PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE RIGHTS.”

activities. By the end of the grant, KANCO's member organizations reported a greater number of people seeking legal services pertaining to women's property and inheritance rights. Some member organizations reported that widows who had been denied inheritance rights were seeking legal redress and, in many cases, courts were deciding in favor of returning property to them.

THE WAY *Forward*

Three key lessons emerge from the grants program and can inform future efforts to replicate and scale up community interventions for realizing women's property and inheritance rights.

1 SUSTAINABLE CHANGE REQUIRES TIME AND INVESTMENT

Women's property and inheritance rights cannot be viewed in isolation from other complex development issues, including gender and HIV and AIDS. Changing social norms requires meaningful, long-term investments of time and resources.

All grantees leveraged their available knowledge and skills, and ongoing relationships with communities and other organizations to achieve results. That said, grantees had to limit interventions to factors that could be addressed within one year.

Promoting sustainable change is difficult when interventions are limited by time and funds to addressing only those factors most expedient to change. Increased information and training, no matter how well done, does not guarantee long-term change. For example, grantees trained unpaid volunteers to provide community-based legal services. But the long-term effectiveness of this approach can be limited by the lack of compensation for these key staff, which may lead to high turnover and loss of capacity.

To address the myriad factors that influence women's property and inheritance rights, interventions must be flexible, holistic and designed to achieve short-, middle- and long-term objectives. Fundamental

factors— such as ensuring that women have the financial means to act on information and access services or ensuring that social norms promote, and do not limit, women's choices—require more time, effort and financial resources.

2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS KEY TO CHANGE

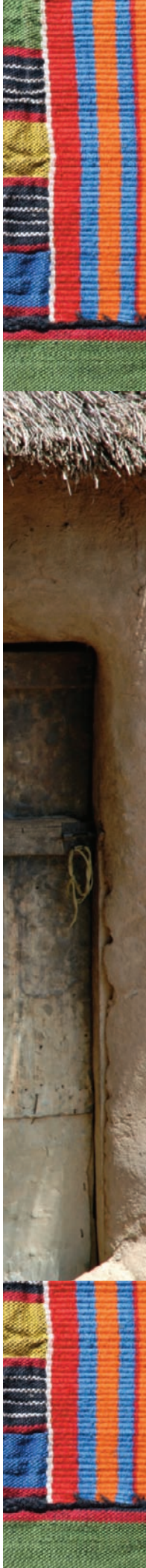
Engaging entire communities and strengthening local capacity was a core component of each community intervention. Grantees understood that change was more likely to happen when everyone—grassroots groups, elected leaders, young and old, women and men—was engaged in the process. The grantees also found that strengthening local knowledge and skills' capacity requires a mix of strategies, including workshops, refresher trainings and follow up in the field.

In Zimbabwe, Ntengwe for Community Development involved community elders, many of whom were men, in their workshops and advocacy activities to ensure that a critical mass were informed of Zimbabwean laws pertaining to wills; property and inheritance; HIV and AIDS; and gender and development. In Kenya, GROOTS' listening groups included men and women who were members of Watch Dog groups, church leaders, village elders, opinion leaders, provincial administrators, agricultural officers, land board and tribunal members, and youth groups to discuss women's property rights and increase public awareness.

In contrast, KANCO found that few senior male staff attended its workshops, which likely limited the change process. For example, only six of its 10 member organiza-

tions reported using tools developed to integrate gender into HIV/AIDS programs. KANCO felt this might have resulted from the perception that gender is a "woman's issue," so men either did not see the need or did not want to participate. Knowing this, KANCO plans to take steps to engage more senior staff, particularly men, to participate in the training workshops or find alternative ways to gain their buy-in and support for change when KANCO extends the training and lessons learned to other member organizations.

Effective education and training requires adequate time and sufficient human, financial and other resources to ensure that participants have the time and space they need to internalize change. Each



grantee was challenged by creating the necessary skills and knowledge base given its time and financial resource constraints. All grantees used workshops because these ensure that large numbers of people learn the same thing at the same time; provide a means for participants to learn about and from each other; and permit participants to apply and see results of what they learned, particularly when linked to an intervention.

However, participants generally agreed that workshops were not sufficient for them to internalize what was presented. Women's Voice and KANCO found that participants in their one-week training sessions needed more time and support because they first had to deal with their own attitudes, practices and value systems before they could effectively reach out to others. And community members needed to learn not just information but also techniques for responding to myriad questions and unique concerns that would be brought to them, material not necessarily covered in the workshops.

Some grantees did go beyond workshops to provide limited follow up. Ntengwe for Community Development used refresher trainings for its peer educators. YWAP held monthly supervisory meetings with its trainees. KANCO provided ongoing support to member organizations via telephone, e-mail and, in some cases, field visits. Despite these efforts, follow up was minimal and not systematic. Executing effective education requires planning, time and resources.

3 LEVERAGING NETWORKS ACHIEVES RESULTS

Grantees leveraged informal and formal networks to address the complex relationships between women's property and inheritance rights and other development issues. Networks

allow individuals, communities and organizations to come together toward a common purpose. Informal networks, such as those organized by RWN, allow grantees to expand the range of services they provide. Although informal networks can help organizations build relationships and share ideas, the grants programs found that the occasional meetings and informal processes related to an informal network are unlikely to be as successful as a formal network.

Formal network organizations, such as GROOTS, JWOP and KANCO, often are better positioned to respond to the social and economic needs that emerge from women's insecure property and inheritance rights. For example, JWOP's network was effective because a well-documented organizational plan, including goals and objectives with annual work plans and a board comprised of senior representatives from each member organization, guides its operations. Many member organizations also have the necessary expertise to provide a range of support and services; knowledge and sensitivity toward local contexts; legitimacy with communities, partners and influential others; and visibility and influence to affect change. For example, JWOP's formal network was able to capitalize on the competencies of its member organizations and avoid duplication of efforts.

Still, JWOP like many formal network organizations faces a number of challenges. One is the need to establish a diversified funding base that is not dependent on project-specific funding and could serve as an incentive to keep member organizations engaged over the long term. Other challenges include developing the mechanisms to resolve internal disputes; holding members accountable; and deciding when and how to expand into other areas, such as economic development, that respond to clients' needs and requests. Member organizations also need to develop the capacity to monitor and document results.

**“NETWORKS ALLOW
INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES
AND ORGANIZATIONS TO
COME TOGETHER TOWARD
A COMMON PURPOSE.”**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN

Community Interventions in Africa

The grants program shows that community-driven approaches can work to help women realize their property and inheritance rights. Though limited by time and resources, these grassroots initiatives have begun to empower women and mobilize communities to take the action necessary to reduce women's and girls' vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

Based on lessons learned from these community interventions, ICRW makes the following recommendations for the international development and donor communities to support the realization of women's property and inheritance rights:

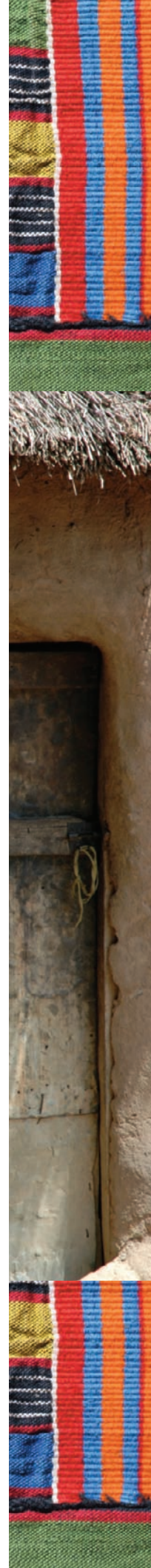
1 Increase flexible funding support, particularly core funding. Too often, small organizations receive only project funding, which limits their ability to build infrastructure, retain staff, provide an integrated set of services and creatively expand activities to address issues that emerge in the course of their work. Donors should allocate a part of their funding to provide core support to organizations that have demonstrated capacity to deliver results.

2 Encourage wide replication of the network model. Responding to women's insecure property and inheritance rights requires integrated interventions with multiple entry points that address complex, myriad contributing causes and effects. A network model, which brings together organizations that can provide comprehensive support, is an efficient and effective approach. However, networks are difficult to sustain because vertical funding tends to support individual agencies in specific sectors, which creates competition that drives apart potential network members. In JWOP's formal network, project funding from various sources had to be cobbled together to support its full range of activities. Sometimes, funds were available for one type of activity but not for others, which created unevenness in programming and limited results. Donors should seek ways to creatively shift the focus of project funding to support a network model.

3 Commit to patience and long-term investment. Small grants programs with short timeframes can initiate processes of change. Still, sustainable change requires patience and continued investment. Long-term investments are needed to change social norms and attitudes, and build capacity of organizations and communities. Donors should invest with a long-term view of future payoffs.

4 Scale up successful strategies such as community-based paralegals. Donors should support efforts to replicate and scale up tested strategies. For example, a common approach employed by grantees was to establish paralegal services in communities. Throughout the course of the program, grantees found the approach was particularly successful when paralegals were carefully selected, and community elders saw them as a resource that they could support. The long-term sustainability of a paralegal system, however, requires more investments in training, funding and time. Donors could provide the necessary resources to ensure that the paralegal approach works to its maximum potential.

5 Develop property rights toolkits to facilitate cross-country learning for effective replication. Social norms determine how women's property and inheritance rights are realized in the context of HIV and AIDS, and changing them often requires context-specific interventions. Still, common strategies such as raising awareness, building capacity and using referral systems to realize women's property rights can be used across cultures. Unfortunately, lessons and challenges often are not synthesized and systematized to guide organizations in developing new interventions or expanding existing activities. Donors should support the development of toolkits that include materials such as posters, radio scripts, songs and videos. Small organizations can then access and adapt these materials for their communities and avoid the need to spend precious time and resources on developing similar tools.



GRANTEE *Interventions*

COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE (CLC)

CLC partnered with Saartjie Baartman Centre (SBC), a community-based organization that works with women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence or are living with HIV and AIDS. Their intervention in South Africa aimed to strengthen the capacity of informal community institutions, which play an unofficial role in the allocation of housing. These community institutions mostly take the form of informal dispute resolution mechanisms, such as “street committees,” and are found mainly in the poorer sections of townships and informal settlements in South Africa. The intervention’s objective was to promote women’s and girls’ rights to adequate housing in three communities: Langa, Manenberg and Mfulenei.

The partners conducted focus group discussions with community members and interviewed members of informal community institutions and service providers to obtain information about housing, domestic violence, HIV and AIDS. They also interviewed residents of shelters for women who have experienced violence, and discussed legal and policy frameworks with housing officials at the provincial and local government levels. CLC and SBC developed a summary document based on this information to provide practical guidelines for women on how to apply for housing and a list of organizations that provide relevant services.

Strategies to strengthen the capacity of informal community institutions were presented at workshops attended by a range of stakeholders including SBC members, shelter managers, members of the Western Cape Network on Violence against Women, a representative from the Western Cape Department of Local Government and Housing, members of informal community institutions, the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO), and other community organizations. Nearly 2,000 copies of the summary document were distributed as a booklet entitled, *Accessing Housing in the Western Cape: A Guide for Women Vulnerable to Gender-based Violence and HIV/AIDS and for Organisations Providing Services to Them*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sibonile Khoza, *senior researcher*
Helene Combrink, *project coordinator*

COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE (CLC)

University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535, South Africa

E-mail: skhoza@uwc.ac.za; hcombrinck@uwc.ac.za

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING TOGETHER IN SISTERHOOD (GROOTS)

In Kenya, GROOTS improved the capacity of communities in Gatundu, Kakamega and Kendu Bay to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV and AIDS by safeguarding their property and inheritance rights. To increase awareness of the links between HIV and AIDS; gender; and women’s property and inheritance rights, four prerecorded scripts were produced for use in radio listening groups. Each script focused on one of four themes: (1) causes of property dispossession; (2) consequences of property dispossession and HIV; (3) women’s groups and women’s rights; and (4) documents and other information necessary to realize property and inheritance rights.

The scripts were developed in partnership with Internews Kenya based on interviews with women who had experienced problems related to their property and inheritance rights. The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, a national radio network, aired one tape during a popular program, “A Stitch in Time.” Listeners from all over the country responded with comments and questions through cellphone text messages.

Nine listening groups were held, reaching 330 persons, in which community members listened to and discussed each of the four tapes. GROOTS also organized eight community dialogues with: 300 community leaders, GROOTS’ Watch Dog participants and other community members. Through the dialogues, leaders heard women discuss their problems associated with insecure property and inheritance rights while participants learned about gender and HIV/AIDS issues and how they affect women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights. Participants also learned more about GROOTS’ Watch Dog groups.

GROOTS also improved women’s access to legal services by training 16 persons (five men and 11 women) as paralegals during a one-week training led by the Legal Resources Foundation. Paralegals provided free legal and nonlegal advice on property and inheritance rights; made referrals; and counseled and assisted community members in preparing wills.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Esther Mwaura-Muiru, *project officer*
Jacqueline Kaari, *project officer*

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING TOGETHER IN SISTERHOOD (GROOTS)

P. O. Box 10320
Nairobi 00100, Kenya

E-mail: grootsk@grootskenya.org

JUSTICE FOR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS PROJECT (JWOP)

JWOP in Zambia was included in the program as a case study of a formal network approach, which provides the necessary range of services and support to meet the complex factors related to women's property and inheritance rights. Organizations within the network conduct legal tribunals; use the media to educate the general public, civic and traditional leaders, and government officials on matters related to women's property and inheritance rights; train community and network members in will writing and steps for realizing women's human rights; and provide other support services depending on each member's expertise (e.g., psychosocial support or legal assistance). Most activities bring together the right combination of network members to make things happen.

The case study describes JWOP and how its network functions, presents lessons, and suggests recommendations for JWOP and others interested in using this type of approach. Information was gathered from primary sources—such as network members, stakeholders, communities served by JWOP, and public sector leaders—and secondary sources. A publication of the case study was launched at a public meeting attended by 45 people, including widows and orphans, the media, nongovernmental and community-based organizations, law enforcement, and other public sector agencies. The deputy minister of Zambia's ministry of development and social services gave the keynote address.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Florence Shakafuswa, *project manager*
Felix Kunda, *project leader*

JUSTICE FOR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS PROJECT (JWOP)

House No. 6 Nyati Close Rhodespark
P. O. Box 34777
Lusaka 10101 Zambia
E-mail: jwop@zamtel.zm

KENYA AIDS NGOS CONSORTIUM (KANCO)

KANCO strengthened the capacity of 10 of its member organizations in the central and eastern provinces to integrate women's property and inheritance rights into ongoing HIV/AIDS programs using a gender planning tool. Member organizations were selected based on demonstrated success in working with their target communities, a commitment to addressing gender issues, and a sufficiently large numbers of beneficiaries. Two persons per organization—seven men and 13 women—were selected for training.

Two workshops were held to strengthen the capacity of the 20 organizational representatives. The first was a three-day workshop to improve knowledge of the human rights of women and girls living with HIV and AIDS, a rights-based approach to HIV and AIDS, laws pertaining to women's and girls' rights, the cultural context of women's property and inheritance rights, and a framework for interventions that address women's and girls' human rights within the context of HIV and AIDS. This was followed by a two-day workshop on how to use the gender tool in planning, implementing and evaluating interventions that integrate property and inheritance rights with HIV and AIDS. Participants developed action plans to apply what they had learned within their organizations; KANCO project staff provided ongoing support to trainees via telephone and e-mails.

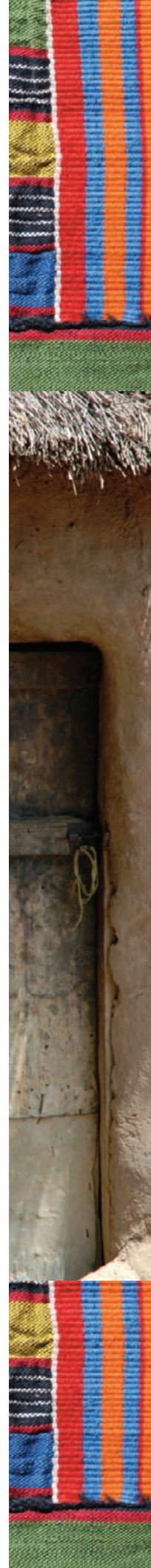
KANCO held three networking meetings to raise awareness of property rights, HIV and AIDS, and the gender tool among other member organizations. It also organized two one-day meetings with strategic partners, policy-makers and stakeholders in the central and eastern provinces, and leveraged resources from KANCO's human rights project to hold a forum with 90 national stakeholders and policy-makers, including members of women's organizations, legal human rights organizations, religious organizations, HIV/AIDS organizations, members of the Kenyan Women Parliamentarians, and other members of parliament from the central and eastern provinces.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Allan Ragi, *executive director*
Jane Mwangi, *programme director*

KENYA AIDS NGOS CONSORTIUM (KANCO)

P. O. Box 69866-00400
Nairobi, Kenya
E-mail: kanco@kanco.org; kenaids@iconnect.co.ke



GRANTEE *Interventions*

NTENGWE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ntengwe, based in Zimbabwe, collected data to understand the problem of property grabbing and the factors that limit women and girls affected by HIV and AIDS from realizing their property and inheritance rights. Community meetings were held in six project sites—Binga Centre, Damba, Manjolo, Msenampongo, Samende, and Siangwemu—to inform leaders and community members about the project and its purpose.

Forty women and girls were trained as peer educators in three workshops, two of which were implemented in partnership with the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust. The first was a five-day workshop in which participants learned about women's legal rights and relevant laws, how the laws can be useful in ensuring those rights, will writing, and strategies for community outreach. A referral system was developed with the police and the magistrate. One-day refresher training was held a month later. Peer educators were joined by 20 orphans and vulnerable children (10 girls, 10 boys), and 15 men (representatives of local councils, the district administrator's office, ministry of youth and traditional authority) in a three-day legal rights workshop about Zimbabwean laws pertaining to wills, property and inheritance, HIV and AIDS, and gender and development. Peer educators also attended a one-day advocacy sensitization workshop.

The peer educators developed a script for a play, based on true stories, highlighting unfair property and inheritance practices so communities could identify with the issues and behaviors and develop solutions to problems. The peer educators performed the play in schools, churches and community meetings. They also held workshops, assisted women in property grabbing situations, referred women to the local police and the chiefs, and translated legal rights information into the local language. Ntengwe also produced and distributed t-shirts, and started work on a documentary film with stories of women and girls who lost their property, and perpetrators responsible for property grabbing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Elizabeth Markham, *director*
Juliana Muskwe, *programme officer*

NTENGWE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Private Bag 5740
Binga, Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe
E-mail: ntengwe@mweb.co.zw

RWANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK (RWN)

RWN worked with Benishyaka Association, Village of Hope, Trust and Care, and six associations of people living with HIV/AIDS in Kigali and eastern, northern and southern provinces. Their aim was to assist women, specifically women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS to ensure easy and secure access to property, land and housing by increasing knowledge of Rwanda's 2004 land policy, the 2005 land law, and women's property and inheritance rights. RWN also worked to increase women's access to community-based legal resources such as will writing.

RWN developed holographic and authentic will-writing templates, in English and the local language, that complied with the requirements in the inheritance and succession law. It also produced local language editions of a training manual on women's inheritance and succession rights, land policy and law, and will writing. To build local capacity, RWN organized two levels of four-day training workshops, including a training of 24 trainers from local authorities, partner organizations and associations of people living with HIV and AIDS. This was followed by a training of 220 persons (144 women and 76 men) from six associations of people living with HIV and AIDS, and the Village of Hope as community facilitators. The facilitators held awareness-raising meetings and will-writing clinics in their communities. They assisted community members, particularly women, in preparing wills. They also met with the trainers, local authorities and organization partners to form networks of resource persons to coordinate support to community members, especially women and children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Mary Balikungeri, *director*
Peter Turyahikayo, *program manager*

RWANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK (RWN)

P. O. Box 3157
Kigali, Rwanda
E-mail: info@rwandawomennetwork.org

WOMEN'S VOICE

Women's Voice in Malawi used the grant to respond to requests from women and girls who encountered problems realizing their property and inheritance rights. Women's Voice partnered with Malawi CARER, a human rights nongovernmental organization that provides pro bono legal services, and the Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MANET+) to implement interventions in 106 villages in the Ntcheu district, Mpando Traditional Authority.

Formative data were collected from traditional leaders, village headmen and other influential persons about their knowledge and opinions regarding women's and girls' property and inheritance rights. The information was used to develop a public education campaign, including an information brief for local leaders, t-shirts and posters. Thirty persons from 10 community-based organizations were trained as paralegals in a four-day workshop. Representatives from the district assembly, the police's victim support unit, ministry of justice and the department of social welfare attended as observers. This meeting allowed collaboration between the two groups—government officials and paralegals—to share experiences about property grabbing.

Following the training, the new paralegals were introduced to their communities in meetings attended by local chiefs and influential leaders, including some members of the district executive committee. The paralegals, with support from their respective organizations, organized 219 meetings at churches, schools, marketplaces and funerals to educate participants; assisted community members to prepare wills; and recorded violations and referred them to Malawi CARER for legal follow-up.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Benedict H. Nyirenda, *programme manager*
Gwen Munthali, *executive director*

WOMEN'S VOICE

Private Bag 231
Blantyre, Malawi

E-mail: Womens-voice@sdpn.org.mw

YOUNG WIDOWS ADVANCEMENT PROGRAMME (YWAP)

YWAP held focus groups with paralegals and clients who accessed YWAP's psychosocial support sessions and rescue center to understand the factors that impact women, and particularly widows, from realizing their property and inheritance rights. YWAP trained 25 paralegals and 25 people living with HIV on memory books and will writing. Each training lasted one week.

YWAP documented and disseminated information about its organization and services. It developed an organizational Web site and published three brochures. Staff and volunteers were interviewed by print and electronic media services, including the *Kenya Times*; "Mending the Ribbon," a program on the Kenya Television Network; and "A Stitch in Time," a radio talk show on the Kenya Broadcasting Company (KBC). It also produced a 13-minute video documentary in cooperation with KBC. The video describes YWAP activities and includes interviews with staff, organization members and people staying in the rescue center.

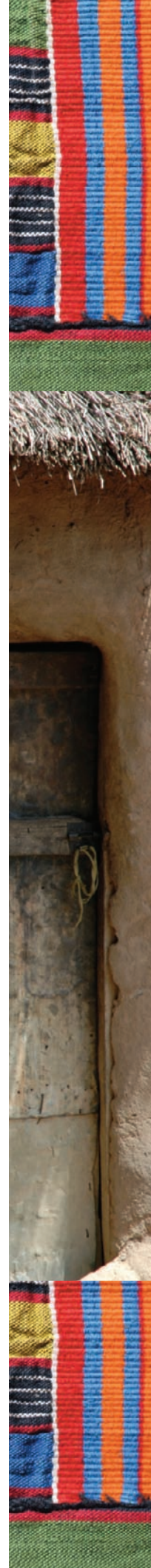
FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Esther Angudha, *program coordinator*

YOUNG WIDOWS ADVANCEMENT PROGRAMME (YWAP)

P. O. Box 323, 00518 Kayole
Nairobi, Kenya

E-mail: youngwidows@yahoo.com





FOR FURTHER STUDY ON WOMEN'S PROPERTY RIGHTS:

Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. *Economic Security for Women Fights AIDS*.

ICRW. *Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection—The South Asia Experience*.

ICRW. *Reducing Women's and Girls' Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS by Strengthening their Property and Inheritance Rights*.

Pradhan, B.K. and R. Sundar. *Gender Impact of HIV and AIDS in India*. UNDP.

Strickland, R. *To Have and to Hold: Women's Property and Inheritance Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*. ICRW.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN (ICRW)

1120 20th Street, N.W.
Suite 500 North
Washington, D.C. 20036

T. 202.797.0007
F. 202.797.0020
E-mail. info@icrw.org
Web. www.icrw.org

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA

42, 1st Floor
Golf Links
New Delhi, India - 110 003
T. 91-11-2465-4216
F. 91-11-2463-5142
E-mail. info.india@icrw.org