



Information Bulletin

May 2006

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

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA/UNAIDS) and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is implementing the Reducing Women's and Girls' Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS by Strengthening their Property and Inheritance Rights grants program, referred to below as Strengthening Women's Property Rights. In 2005, the program awarded one-year grants to eight organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. These organizations will examine and document links between HIV/AIDS and the absence of women's and girls' property and inheritance rights; test and document strategies to empower women to claim their rights to property and inheritance; and share results. The project also will conduct a case study of a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) working on these issues. ICRW will provide technical support to the grantees in proposal development, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation, and will disseminate findings on effective program interventions generated by the project organizations.

Women own less than 15 percent of land worldwide. Without official title to land and property, women have fewer economic options and virtually no collateral for obtaining loans and credit. In some African countries, lawmakers have amended legal frameworks and systems to reduce gender inequities with respect to property rights. However, these reforms often are poorly implemented and laws seldom are enforced. The reasons are many and complex: Civil law may contradict traditional law; women may not be aware of their legal rights; and women, especially in rural areas, may lack access to lawyers and courts.¹

In the context of HIV and AIDS, women's lack of ownership and control over such economic assets as housing and land can leave them destitute. This is

especially true in communities where AIDS-related stigma is high and widows can become socially isolated. Women who own or otherwise control economic assets are better able to prevail over such crises and transitions.

Strengthening Women's Property Rights

The Strengthening Women's Property Rights grants program has three objectives:

- (1) Facilitate access to financial resources among community-based organizations and others working to improve women's ability to own property and claim inheritance;
- (2) Strengthen grantees' capacity in proposal development, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation; and

¹For an in-depth discussion on barriers to women's property and inheritance rights, see Strickland, R. (2004). *To Have and To Hold: Women's Property and Inheritance Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.

- (3) Disseminate program findings and results to a wide range of audiences.

The **first objective** will be accomplished by issuing one-year grants to nongovernmental organizations and others working at the community and institutional levels to:

- identify and strengthen promising interventions to improve the realization of women's and girls' property and inheritance rights;
- document these interventions; and
- share findings with in-country communities, program practitioners and policy-makers, and donor agencies.

To accomplish the **second objective**, ICRW will provide technical support through onsite visits, e-mail and telephone communications, and workshops. For example, a five-day monitoring and evaluation workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2006. Representatives from the eight grantee organizations learned about writing goals and objectives, developing measurable indicators, collecting and processing qualitative and quantitative data, and ensuring confidentiality. They also refined their project's monitoring and evaluation plans based on what they learned in the workshop.

ICRW and each grantee will contribute to achieving the **third objective** by compiling findings and sharing them through workshops, meetings, and print and electronic media. ICRW will prepare a paper synthesizing the findings and lessons learned for wide dissemination.

Grantee Descriptions

The grants were awarded through a two-step process. First, 65 organizations in sub-Saharan Africa were invited to submit concept notes. ICRW, GCWA/UNAIDS and FAO team members reviewed 26 concept notes and invited 10 organizations to submit full proposals. In the second phase, the organizations submitted proposals to an External Review Panel comprised of experts from the region working on HIV/AIDS and/or property rights. Eight of the 10 organizations were awarded grants that fall into three general themes:

- (1) Women's empowerment initiatives which are initiated, organized and run by women living with and affected by HIV and AIDS;

- (2) Network models that can leverage results; and
- (3) Interventions that change norms and practices at the community and institutional levels.

Women's Empowerment

Two grantees will document effective ways of mobilizing women affected by HIV/AIDS to strengthen their property and inheritance rights.

- ▶ **Young Widows Advancement Program (YWAP), Kenya:** Contact person: Esther Angudha, program coordinator (e-mail: youngwidows@yahoo.com)

YWAP was founded in 2003 by five young widows affected by HIV or AIDS who intended to do something about AIDS-related stigma. With the grant, YWAP will document and evaluate its model of social change as a means of mitigating HIV impact among young Kenyan widows. YWAP provides a number of services, ranging from psychosocial and legal support to will-writing workshops for widows. After documenting its social change model and results, YWAP will share its model with the development and donor community and realign its ongoing work to improve results.

- ▶ **Zimbabwe Widows and Orphans Trust (ZWOT), Zimbabwe:** Contact person: Susan Zwinoira, director (e-mail: zimwid@yoafrica.com; Web site: www.zwot.com)

Formed in 1996, ZWOT's mandate is to support widows and orphans in the areas of inheritance, health, income generation and psychosocial support. ZWOT will use its grant to analyze its methods for securing inheritance and tenure rights for 200 widows and orphans in Harare; analyze factors that influence its success in mobilizing widows; and evaluate the impact of its work to promote inheritance rights for widows and orphans in Harare's high-density suburbs where property grabbing, poverty and the displacement of people to clear urban slums are most pronounced. ZWOT will disseminate findings to key stakeholders and other interested organizations.

Leveraging Results through Networks

Grants were awarded to two organizations that have formed networks to maximize resources and results.

- ▶ **Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS), Kenya:** Contact persons: Esther Mwaura-Muira, director, or Jacqueline

Kaari, project officer (e-mail: grootsk@Grootskenya.org)

GROOTS works with community-based organizations involved in women-led community responses to HIV and AIDS. With its grant, GROOTS will partner with the Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD) and Internews Kenya to strengthen the capacity of three communities to reduce women's and girls' vulnerability to HIV and AIDS by safeguarding their property and inheritance rights. The group will use case studies and facilitated group discussions to educate community leaders about the linkages between HIV/AIDS and the absence of women's and girls' property and inheritance rights, and what these leaders can do to strengthen and promote these rights. GROOTS and its partners also will work to strengthen the capacity of three community "watch dog" groups to monitor enforcement of women's and girls' property and inheritance rights. Finally, GROOTS will train paralegals to improve access to legal services for women.

- ▶ **Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO), Kenya:** Contact persons: Allan Ragi, executive director, or Edward Miano Munene, project leader (e-mail: Kenaims@iconnect.co.ke; Web site: www.kanco.org)

KANCO has 840 member organizations that address HIV/AIDS and its impact. KANCO will use its grant to help its members promote property and inheritance rights for women and girls in their programs. The project initially will focus on 10 member organizations, conducting needs assessments to determine their existing capacity for and interest in integrating property and inheritance rights into ongoing HIV/AIDS activities. KANCO will train members in integration strategies and support and evaluate pilot interventions. KANCO then will share this learning with all member organizations and others, creating multiplier effects.

Changing Norms and Practices

Four grantees will implement and document activities that help communities and institutions enhance and realize women's and girls' property and inheritance rights.

- ▶ **Community Law Centre (CLC), South Africa:** Contact person: Sibonile Khoza, project leader (e-mail: skhoza@uwc.ac.za; Web site: www.communitylawcentre.org.za)

This project aims to strengthen the capacity of informal community structures to promote the realization of women's and girls' rights to adequate housing. The implementing partners include CLC, a human-rights research and education organization, and the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (SBCWC), a service-delivery organization that reaches out to women and girls vulnerable to violence and HIV/AIDS. The grant will support information collection in three communities on the roles of informal community structures in housing allocation, particularly related to women's and girls' ability to obtain adequate housing. This information will be presented to stakeholders (such as community elders and local government officials) in a two-day workshop, which will identify strategies for strengthening the capacity of informal community structures. Following the workshop, the partners will work with key stakeholders to convert the strategies into practical community action plans.

- ▶ **Ntengwe for Community Development Trust, Zimbabwe:** Contact person: Elizabeth Markham, director (e-mail: ntengwe@mweb.co.zw; Web site: www.wearetheorphans.org)

Ntengwe for Community Development was established in 1999 to promote development through HIV/AIDS-related projects that focus on communication through the arts. With its grant, Ntengwe and staff from the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust will train 20 women and 20 girls living with HIV or AIDS on women's legal rights, with an emphasis on will-writing, and help develop their advocacy skills. Ntengwe will support these women and girls to implement a series of activities to increase awareness of women's legal rights among community members, including lawyers and judges, traditional leaders, police, church leaders, and most importantly, women and girls. Ntengwe also will produce a documentary film based on the experiences of these women to demonstrate the impact of building rural women's capacity to recognize their rights, and advocate for laws and monitor their implementation.

► **Rwanda Women’s Network (RWN), Rwanda:**

Contact persons: Mary Balikungeri, director, or Peter Turyahikayo, project leader (e-mail: rwawnet@rwanda1.com; Web site: www.rwandawomennetwork.org)

RWN is dedicated to improving women’s socio-economic welfare by helping them meet their basic needs. RWN will use its grant to work with Benishyaka Association, Village of Hope and Trust, and Care to strengthen women’s rights and access to land, housing, property and other economic resources. RWN and its partners will train community members and mid-level administrators in Kigali rural and urban, and Umutara provinces about the new Rwandan land policy and land law, women’s land succession and inheritance rights, and the process of will writing. The project will target grassroots initiatives on women’s property and inheritance rights, people living with HIV and AIDS, local authorities, and the land commissions responsible for land and other property disputes. RWN will produce a training guide on the new land policy and land law, a will-writing tool in the local language, and trainer guidelines for use in will-writing clinics.

► **Women’s Voice, Malawi:** Contact person: Benedict H. Nyirenda, program manager (e-mail: womens-voice@sdp.org.mw; Web site: www.womens-voice.org.mw)

Women’s Voice will implement a project in the Ntcheu district of Malawi to enable women and girls to claim and defend their property and inheritance rights as a means of mitigating negative impacts of HIV and AIDS. “Property” in this context is the ownership and control of such economic assets as housing and land that

belong to the family after traditional, civil or religious marriage. The project will: (1) increase knowledge and improve attitudes regarding women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights among traditional leaders, village headmen and other influential persons; (2) increase knowledge and improve attitudes among women and girls about their property and inheritance rights; and (3) improve availability of local legal resources for women and girls by training 30 paralegals. Women’s Voice, which is devoted to the promotion and protection of justice and welfare of women, will partner with Malawi CARER, a human rights NGO, and the Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MANET+) in designing and implementing this project.

Case Study: Justice for Widows and Orphans Project

The Strengthening Women’s Property Rights program also will conduct a case study of the Justice for Widows and Orphans Project (JWOP) in Zambia. JWOP has been working with seven organizations since 2001 to enhance the legal rights of widows and orphans by establishing support and advice groups, training group members and stakeholders on relevant legal provisions, and producing informational pieces for radio and television. JWOP also convenes legal tribunals to review management and judgments of relevant cases; provide legal representation; and coordinate with and provide referrals to its seven member organizations and other interested stakeholders. The case study will document what JWOP does, its accomplishments and challenges. It also will suggest ways for JWOP and its partners to disseminate lessons learned so others can draw from its experience.

For additional information on the *Reducing Women’s and Girls’ Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS by Strengthening their Property and Inheritance Rights* grants program, contact:

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