Huairou Commission

Listen to Us

Land Ownership and Property Control: Grassroots Women Document Innovations in Practice

Jacqueline Leavitt PhD
With the assistance of Blerta Cela, Ava Bromberg, Deirdre Pfeiffer and Nicole Ganzekaufer

June 2006

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1-617-388-8915
info@huairou.org

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Acknowledgments

To write a report like this is a privilege and depends on the work of many, starting with the grassroots women who carry out the practices and improve daily lives in their communities. Their courage and tenacity is joined by the women who start, staff, and sustain nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) over the years. Many staff come from the grassroots and become focal points for others. In some communities they are called mobilizers. Together they form a growing and powerful network. Without them, and others, including men and youth, all of whom are "on the front lines" and many of whom were the researchers "on the ground," the information and data for this report could not have been assembled.

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Jacqueline Leavitt, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Urban Planning
UCLA School of Public Affairs
Los Angeles, California
June 11, 2006

I. Introduction

The lack of land ownership and control over housing are destructive to the everyday lives of women in much of Africa. As widows and orphans, they face physical displacement and mental stress, literally uprooted from their communities and social networks. This blow is worsened by the atrocities of genocide and pandemic HIV-AIDS that ravages entire families and leaves women, frequently sick with the disease, to shoulder the burden of care. Children are orphaned and left to fend for themselves. Protective agencies such as the police and judiciary are often rife with corruption, leaving women who lack awareness about land and inheritance rights most vulnerable when facing displacement. Having lost their bearings and, in many cases, their livelihood, grassroots women in rural and urban areas may be the most apprehensive and least likely to speak about injustices that they are experiencing. In this report we define grassroots "as those living at the base encompassing rural and urban areas in the developing and developed world" (Azad 1995). However, we acknowledge that women at all levels of society in much of Africa face obstacles in claiming land ownership, property control, and housing security.

Yet the multiple challenges women and children face are not being ignored. Women's groups are responding in innovative ways to change their lives, focusing on collective and individual empowerment through legal, social, and economic projects that combine to form a community development practice from the ground up. This report will focus on grassroots women's strategies to attain and manage land, housing and property through the work of the following groups:

(1) Grassroots Women Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) Kenya;
(2) Rwanda Women's Network (RWN);
(3) Uganda Land Alliance (ULA);
(4) Ntengwe for Community Development Trust;
(5) Seke Rural Home-Based Care;
(6) Zimbabwe Widows and Orphans Trust (ZWOT); and
(7) Zimbabwe Women in Construction Association (ZWICA).[1]

Each group functions in a unique context with different partners and offers lessons about navigating the traditional cultural norms and expectations about women's place in society.

With the goal of supporting initiatives in Africa for women to have control and gain security over housing and land, in 2004, four international organizations – UN Habitat, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Centre on Housing Rights and

[1] The reports, written in 2005, include: GROOTS-Kenya; Rwanda Women's Network, "An Assessment Report on Women's Land, Housing and Property Rights Initiatives by Seven Grassroots Associations in Rwanda;" Juliet Amutojo and Rita Aciro Lakor on Uganda, "Case Study of Grassroots Women's Experiences on Land, Tenure Security, and Human Settlements;" Nelson Marongwe, "Inheritance of Property by Women and Children: promising case studies from Zimbabwe;" and S. Ncube, "Zimbabwe Women in Construction Association (ZWICA)," Bulawayo Chapter. Other networks were also named in some reports; for example, in Zimbabwe, the Girl Child Network, Care International, and Legal Advice Center. Care International works with rural microfinance programs and home-based care programs; in this process it too has started working on will writing programs. The Legal Advice Center in Matebeleland, through paralegals, provide contact to councilors and chiefs around wills, and offer legal advice on proper processing of will writing.

Evictions (COHRE), the Huairou Commission -- established a partnership, Women's Land Link Africa (WLLA).[2] Each brings different strengths to the collaboration and their partners. Two are part of the United Nations system: UN Habitat, in existence since 1978, provides technical support and has taken the lead in sensitizing the UN and other agencies to further support the work of grassroots women, while FAO dates to the 1940s and the formation of the UN and focuses on rural areas. Both are leading organizations whose expertise lies in linking land and housing issues to a rights-based approach to development. COHRE was established in 1994 and has raised international awareness about forced evictions and human rights violations as well as helped define the right to housing. The Huairou Commission, formed in 1996, is a network of grassroots organizations and groups that brings representatives of grassroots women's organizations to the forefront in dialogues with nongovernmental (NGOs) and international organizations.

WLLA members, sponsored by the Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA), have met and learned from each other, reflected on their practices, and discussed long-term funding strategies. Rejecting the top-down development model based in expert advice, WLLA has exchanged ideas about creating linkages among grassroots women and NGOs and augmenting databases about women and development. The process of conceptualizing and implementing linkages is neither linear nor identical. This may sound familiar, reminiscent of mission statements and bygone projects in the development world. **Yet in this instance, grassroots women are at the center of development practices and are "mapping" what "they themselves think and decide what is important to them, what is working or not, how they look at information, how they look at laws, their contributions, what they want, how they want it"** (WLLA 2006 4).

The WLLA collaboration offered the Huairou Commission an opportunity to influence the research methodology used to document women's approaches to controlling land, housing and property. Involving grassroots women was an integral part of the process, beginning with the planning meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in 2004. Representatives from the WLLA organizations identified five objectives and named the process of documenting needs and identifying innovations as "mapping." The objectives were to:

(1) **Listen directly to women's voices;**
(2) **Adopt peer learning as the practice/advocacy tool in order to uncover common concerns, exchange strategies, and assess potential for joint action on issues of land and secure tenure;**
(3) **Document variations in grassroots women's regional approaches to land, housing and property control.**
(4) **Deepen understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of strategies taken;**

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[2] To find out more about WLLA, see http://www.wllaweb.org/, accessed on June 6, 2006; Its mission statement reads: "The Women Land Link Africa is a collaboration of existing initiatives that supports and strengthens women at various levels, with particular focus on communities, to have access to and control over land, housing and property, using both a rights and development based approach."

(5) Further extend grassroots women's advocacy and participation in international forums and meetings.

The Huairou Commission also was able to facilitate the documentation of other women's groups with funds from CORDAID.[3] CORDAID provided $10,000, which Huairou distributed to five additional organizations so they could 1) identify three strategic practices within each local organization and 2) share practices through coordinated exchanges. This was in keeping with other Huairou projects to, "understand how women in different parts of the world are grappling with the practical ways" of "reconfiguring power relationships to advance their interests," in this case around land issues (2004 6).[4]

Two of the five organizations Huairou-funded through CORDAID were the Zimbabwe Women in Construction Association (ZWICA) and the Uganda Land Alliance (ULA). The findings of these groups, although the result of a separate project that received less funding, are included in this report. Knowledge about their practices helps strengthen the Women's Land Link Africa initiative. ZWICA and ULA's efforts contribute to knowledge about grassroots women's innovations in not only gaining fundamental rights to inheritance, land, and housing, but also transforming the research process.

Two main scenarios emerge from the reports and WLLA meeting notes:

- In the first scenario, grassroots women are at the center of a project and simultaneously connect with other grassroots women, chiefs, subchiefs, and land boards at the local level, partner with different types of NGOs at the regional and national level, most of which work with women, and participate in the international arena of conferences and policy meetings.

- In the second scenario, an NGO that is women-centered and active at the local, regional, national, and international level begins a project with grassroots women, which typically spins off additional projects that involve other grassroots women.

Since these two scenarios employ different levels of participation, they often yield different results. For instance, by enabling grassroots women to document their own practices in obtaining land and tenure security, GROOTS Kenya channeled their voices through an unfiltered lens. Their stories are told in their own voice. On the other hand, when the consultants to the other groups employed the mapping process, they found that some of the NGOs, such as the Rwanda Women's Network and the Zimbabwe Widows and Orphans Trust, were planning to move physically closer to the grassroots groups with whom they work and to incorporate more grassroots women as mobilizers. This will result in broadening their accessibility, creating greater

[3] CORDAID, an international developmental organization, is composed of four Dutch associations: Bilance, Memisa, Mensen in Nood, and Vastenaktie. The three additional groups funded included Estrategia – United Women for a Better Community, Lima, Peru; Lumanti, Kathmandu, Nepal, and DAMPA, Inc. (Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api Inc., Cubao Quezon City, Philippines.

[4] United Nations Human Settlements Programme and Huairou Commission. March 2004. "Local to Local Dialogue: A Grassroots Women's Perspective on Good Governance," a UN-HABITAT publication; also see Huairou Commission web site, http://www.huairou.org/, retrieved October 3, 2005.

opportunities for grassroots women to take on leadership roles, and to research and document their practices.[5] In turn, this has positive results for upscaling.

In both scenarios, activities are decentralized and sometimes exist in more than one village or neighborhood. For example grassroots women:

- Participate in income-generating projects, polyclinics, and live in and/or construct low-income housing;
- Develop their leadership and entrepreneurial capacity;
- Mobilize their neighbors, broaden their networks, connect with other grassroots women, hold informal and more formal meetings at the local level, assess their situations, reach out to local chiefs, meet with government agents and NGOs;
- And travel great distances to attend legislative hearings and regional and international conferences to teach about their projects, learn about other projects, bring information back to the village or neighborhood, and incorporate and adapt lessons from others.

This process of capacity building and exchange is dynamic and empowering. It transforms scattered local efforts by small groups of women into a powerful constituency that crosses borders and forges transnational links. "Scaling-up" from individual projects boosts organizational strength, expands service delivery, broadens the range of activities, and increases the number of engaged participants (Uvin and Miller 1994). This enables local women to influence policy and obtain resources.[6] Although WLLA is a relatively new collaboration, literature suggests the significance of such independent transnational efforts that do not rely on formal government structures in promoting women's political power (Tripp 2000).

This report begins with a brief background of how a women-centered "mapping" project evolved. Since the women involved, especially grassroots women, are rarely included in consultations, they often are reluctant to step forward for reasons of rank, status, or anxiety. Selected literature echoes the importance of supporting women who are least heard in documenting their own thinking and practices. The following section illustrates this model of research as conducted by one of the collaborating organizations, GROOTS Kenya. This innovative process-oriented model — with its emphasis on forging meaningful linkages — becomes imperative given the common challenges that grassroots women face over controlling land, housing and property.. Additional examples of creative practices by NGOs illustrate how women are using cultural strategies and other methods to correct conditions of inequality. The conclusion summarizes recommendations from reports produced by each group, as well as WLLA's consensus to develop a toolbox of grassroots research methods.

[5] Discussions at the WLLA meeting centered on positioning grassroots women in relation to partners. For example, the representative from the Huairou Commission asked, "Can we put grassroots women at the center and everyone else around?" Her reasons are worth citing. "There have been a lot of processes, legislation, and the missing link has been that women on the ground have been organized. We know that poor women need partnerships, but we need to place them at the center. The sustainability of our project is at the community level: money comes and goes, but the community watch groups, community leaders are the ones who will complete the work" (WLLA 2006 31).

[6] See Kinyanjui Michael and Jackson Mbutura, "Building on Poor Communities' Strengths: A case study of NAHECO saving and credit schemes in Nakuru, Kenya," a report prepared for the World Urban Forum, Barcelona. Michael and Mbutura discuss both the challenges and lessons in scaling up.

II. A Brief Background: Grassroots Women Move from the Shadows to the Center

Jane S. Jaquette and Kathleen Staudt (2006) ably tell the history of women's organizations and practices, as well as women and development (WID) and gender and development (GAD) discourse from 1975 to the 1990s. The authors open their discussion by stating that both the WID and GAD analyses "have had an impact on development discourse and on the way aid is administered, but they have been less successful in making a material difference for the vast majority of women in developing countries" (17). Questions remain about what kind of development is being promoted, based on whose agenda, and for what ends. Jaquette and Staudt's conclusion to their chapter is not startling but worth repeating; they suggest that scholars, advocates, and practitioners require new models that include both the North and South and are dependent "on the women themselves as agents of change and protectors of the traditions they value" (50).

The concept of grassroots women as agents of change is sometimes difficult to grasp. Even the term "grassroots" remains ambiguous. Deborah Mindy has written about women's transnational networks in local and international arenas, particularly in South Africa (Mindy 2001). Her analysis offers insight into understanding the grassroots by comparing their practices to NGOs using variables such as insiders, outsiders, race, and education. She reminds the reader to distinguish between thinking about grassroots women as *targets* of development versus thinking about them as agents *in charge* of development. The transformative power of this shift is at the heart of this report.

The WLLA collaboration signifies a long brewing emergence of grassroots women's groups from the "shadow" gatherings that began around 1975 during the United Nations' conferences. The official assemblies enabled grassroots groups to identify mutual concerns and structure periodic meetings (Leavitt and Yonder 2003). Prior to 1975, the needs of grassroots women were articulated through advocates within international organizations who were influential in supporting greater consultation with the groups. Over time, organizations of grassroots women began forming networks, and the emphasis shifted to promoting inclusionary decision making. The need for continued advocacy within organizations remained. Mutual benefits occurred; grassroots constituencies offered credibility to advocates within institutions and the advocates, in turn, provided technical and financial resources to the grassroots and their representatives.

In the 1980s, participatory, bottom-up, NGO-led strategies for development gained momentum in the World Bank and other international organizations (Jaquette and Staudt 2006). According to Uvin and Miller, the alternative to top-down decision-making functioned "most of all on the level of discourse, but also, and increasingly so, in practice" (2000 3). Uvin and Miller describe a hierarchy of participation that moved from program receivership to resource and program ownership. It is the contention of this report that the women driven "mapping" process discussed here is a major step forward in control over knowledge.

The need to control knowledge production exists because research remains the province of outsiders, expert consultants, and academics. Yet limited staff and

pressing concerns prevent many grassroots groups from documenting their efforts or archiving ephemera, such as flyers. Furthermore most funding agencies are skeptical of local women's ability to conduct research and thus are hesitant to support these efforts.

The Huairou Commission's work in enabling group research and dialogue is a notable exception. GROOTS International, a member network of the Huairou Commission and itself a coalition, includes groups who have refined horizontal learning techniques and practices. The Huairou Commission's first activities built on members' tested work — such as the German Mothers Centers — and safety campaigns — such as Montreal, Canada's collaboration between women in bureaucracies with Femmes de Ville. These became better known through an "Our Best Practices" campaign. The United Nations runs a Best Practice competition with cash prizes; the German Mothers Center won one of the top Dubai awards (Leavitt and Yonder 2003). Additionally, Huairou solicited descriptions of "Our Best Practices" from grassroots groups that were displayed at international conferences and posted on the Commission's website.[7] What were previously under the radar examples of community development became visible to a wider audience.

Following the ideas of Monika Jaeckel, then an initiator of the German Mothers Centers, a Grassroots Womens International Academy was established. A Grassroots Academy is a peer-learning forum where grassroots women are students and teachers. Nine international Grassroots Academies have been held and another is scheduled for the week preceding the World Urban Forum (WUF) in Vancouver, Canada in June 2006.[8] Huairou distributed small grants that they received from donors and UN Habitat to facilitate grassroots women's self-documentation. Strategic working groups within the Grassroots Academy reflect local groups' priorities, forming around issues of land and tenure, HIV-AIDs, natural disasters, post-conflict recovery and redevelopment, and local governance. These topics shift in reaction to each group's priorities. GROOTS also developed exchanges among grassroots women's groups. In the first exchange, women from Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Canada, and the United States traveled to each other's countries to learn about adapting projects and strategies to local needs. Turkish and Indian women visited each other to learn about redevelopment after experiencing devastating earthquakes that left countless numbers of families homeless (Yonder 2006).

Far more detail and consideration is needed about the everyday knowledge that informs grassroots women's problem solving skills and how to integrate this knowledge into research methodology.

[7] http://www.huairou.org/
[8] http://www.gwia.net/index.php?o=3&c=GWIA%20Events describes the history and purpose of GWIAs.

III. Selected Review of the Literature: The Role of Grassroots Women in Research

This selective literature review uses a few articles to demonstrate the reasons for developing a grassroots research process.[9]

Monika Jaeckel (2005) describes the significance of legitimating grassroots women's voices.

> Grassroots groups often are already practicing solutions, where others are debating theories. These practices, however, generally are not considered when resources are being distributed. By excluding grassroots women and ignoring, under-resourcing, distorting, or diluting their practices, a wealth of highly needed expertise is wasted. Many academic, institutional, and political arrangements manage to overlook and abstract from what is really happening on the ground. This is quite amazing, considering the fact that it is there, that all practical knowledge needs to be implemented. It is where the ultimate answers and tests of ideas and theories is to be found (1-2).

Louise Grenier (1998) opens her book on indigenous knowledge in a similar vein and discusses the different outcomes that arise from consulting with local people. Although Grenier's work addresses examples of indigenous people managing the natural environment, her arguments about knowledge pertain to urban and rural areas as well. She furthers Jaeckel's points by detailing how knowledge is formed and emphasizing its validity.

Grenier writes "knowledge systems are cumulative, representing generations of experiences, careful observation, and trial-and-error experiments" (1). This knowledge gathering is not static but dynamic as new knowledge is acquired; Grenier writes that "such systems do innovate from within and also will internalize, use, and adapt external knowledge to suit the local situation" (1).

Nancy Jacobs, Sophia Kisting, and Lundy Braun's examples of collaborative research methods in the South African cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Kimberly illustrate how even participatory methods can stifle grassroots opinions and underestimate local people's knowledge of detrimental community conditions and remedial strategies. The authors based themselves in the town of Kuruman in a former mission station that served as an ecumenical and community development center. "The initial interviews with academics, government officials, and activists, used the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) which is designed to let research 'subjects' direct the research process" and "elicit explanations valued by community members rather than extract data desired by interviewers" (2004 228). The researchers soon found that tools "such as mapping, matrices, and Venn diagrams **were not useful because**

[9] Examples also exist of practices that reject top down development but do not refer to a research process. For example, Emma T. Lucas (2001) analyzes the Country Women's Association of Nigeria (COWAN), an NGO that began in 1982 and was the vision of Chief (Mrs.) Bisi Ogunleye, "who understood the plight of rural women and the need to develop effective strategies against ethnic and political exploitation" (188).

informants were already eager to convey their experiences under the burden of asbestos" (emphasis added)**.** Furthermore, people interviewed told the researchers **"that they expected policy making to be participatory and the solution to involve economic development"** (228).

A grassroots women's research approach differs from ethnographic case studies that use grassroots women as key informants. While these typically include local women's voices and are accomplished through gaining their trust, they nonetheless establish a relationship of researcher and subject.[10] Although the grassroots research process may retain distance due to women's status and rank, it also has the potential to break down barriers, such as women's hesitation to public speaking.

[10] Clare Bleakley (2002) describes 'Aloua Ma'a Tonga that "is directed by the needs of the people it serves and acknowledges that women have the capacity to define their lives, even if the circumstances are not of their own choosing" (141). 'Aloua formed because some women realized that those who are least well-off will not approach others of higher rank. In the words of one member, 'Aloua's mandate is, "'You look deep down to see who is the most needy, the women at the other end of the scale.' And another said, "'You go into the community, sit down with the women, and talk, and you experience their needs'" (143). Other articles "codify" a set of consultation principles. See June Lennie (1999) who compares the scientific control-oriented discourse and the empowerment discourse.

IV. The Grassroots Women Research Process: GROOTS Kenya

The research process described in this section begins with the aim of putting grassroots women in the center. Community conversations that occur prior to mobilizing form the heartbeat of grassroots mapping.[11] Mobilizing, in turn, precedes mapping. Focal women who live in the community and are from the grassroots collect information prior to starting any project.[12]

The power of this process arises from its three stages, pre-mobilization, mobilization, and mapping, each building upon the other.

Ann Wanjiru, who has worked with GROOTS Kenya since 1996 and was part of every mapping exercise with the organization, describes the overall situation that researchers face. "Women are not empowered to talk. . . Women [are] concerned that they will be killed because they spoke out for their situation" (WLLA 18). During the first stages of meeting with people, women do not usually feel very comfortable talking in front of men. Also, people do not usually know where to turn for advice. This changes when the mobilization stage begins.

In Kakamega,[13] for example, on the first day, the GROOTS Kenya team:

> collected the data from the communities, the second day we got the data from the village elders, the local leaders, and administration. The third day, we brought all these people together (around 30 participants). We gave them feedback. We then gave the data to everyone and gave them a chance to review the data (WLLA 15).

The team followed a similar procedure over three days in other communities where they found lots of problems and where no one had "ever informed them [people in the communities] about land rights and property rights." Women would open up in the feedback sessions. In some cases, chiefs reported that they were being bypassed because cases would go straight to a land tribunal. Ann describes the research team's response:

> Later it became overwhelming for us because there were many people who wanted to give their stories. A lot of issues emerged. We realized that most of the women did not know the rights. The chiefs were happy because they were helping to educate women on how to follow up with educating women. . . .

For the community, there was a big gap. . . .The land laws had not been accessible to the communities so that the communities can understand them (WLLA 15).

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[11] This may also start with a home-carer who finds that as a result of HIV-AIDs, a community need has to be met. GROOTS Kenya saw that the community already had many questions that they wanted answered.
[12] GROOTS Kenya's schedule was as follows: mobilizing within communities began before March 2005; the mapping exercise took two months, July and August 2005.
[13] Kakamega is in East Africa near the famed Kakamega Forest and National Reserve.

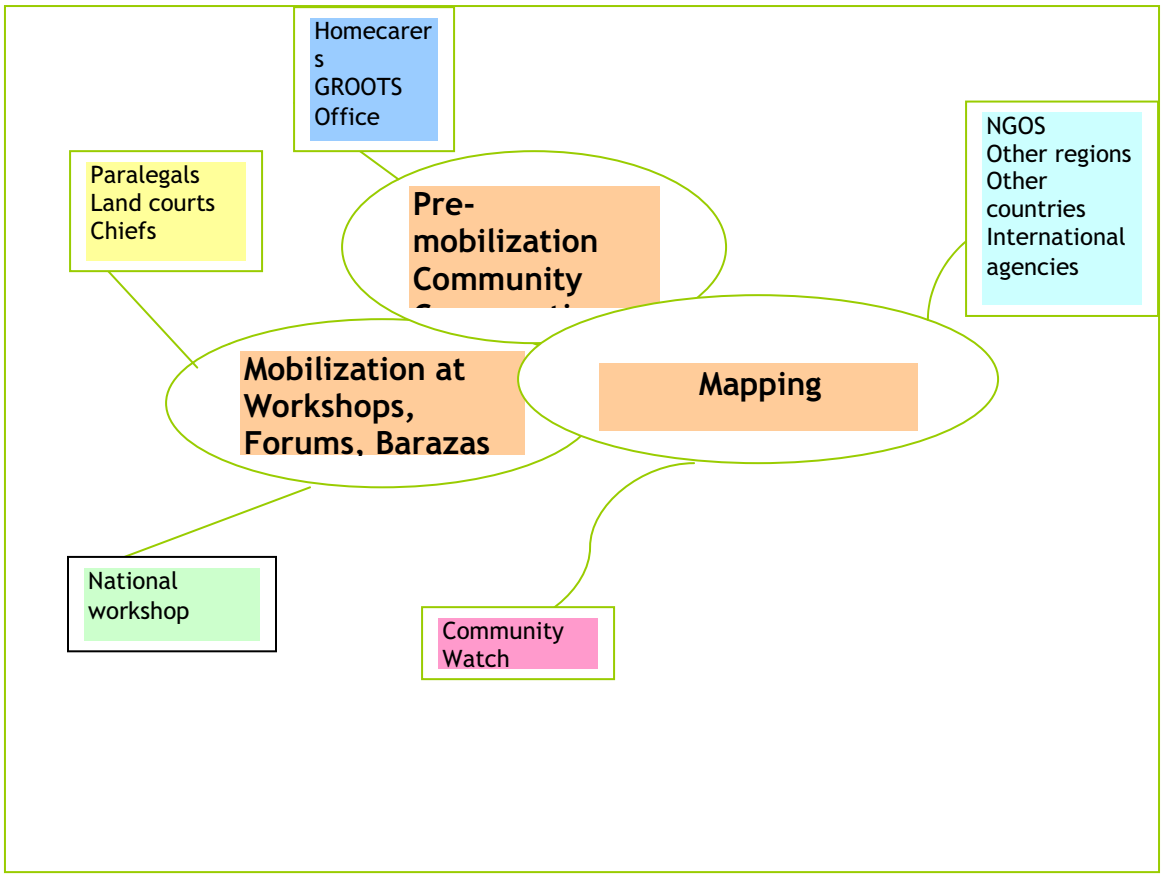

Figure 1. Process and Linkages in Grassroots Research for Mapping, Based on GROOTS Kenya

Although each community varies, the general procedure also includes a linking step where group leaders identify other women who may be helpful[14] and additional resources (including people, organizations, and databases) on controlling land, housing and property. [15] In August, after the grassroots research team met with people in all

[14] In this way, for example, a woman who was also a widow and sits on a land tribunal was identified and invited to one of the meetings.

[15] Ruth, a focal point and staff person for GROOTS Kenya, described the ways in which a collective group formed. Individual clients in home-based care had problems with land and housing issues. The home-based care teams "decided as a group to talk to the chief so that he could try to find a solution." But the chief "did not have a solution." A member of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission Peace volunteered to come and educate the group. "They used this as an opportunity to talk to many people in the communities and talk about inheritance rights" (18). Helen, another focal point, spoke about calling a meeting of subchiefs in one place in order for them to learn more about women's rights to control land, housing and property (19). Towards this effort the Kiamworia Ass. Chief, Mr. Peter Gichukia Mutheru, was tireless in his effort to see women, even going beyond his area of jurisdiction to access their rights of inheritance and property ownership and further sharing his legal knowledge beyond provincial boundaries.

the communities, a national workshop was held and others were invited who had not been included previously. Their question was, “When are you asking in our community to do the mapping?” (WLLA 20). Everyone was inspired by the amount of knowledge they were gaining during the experience.

The process does not stop with interviewing people, sharing stories, and providing information. For example, GROOTS Kenya is identifying people **within** community watch groups who will be trained as paralegals and have knowledge of the community with whom they are working. In this way, the defense of property rights is no longer a burden for one person but becomes a collective effort. They also intend to use the Barazas (the meetings the chiefs call) as venues for teaching about land and property rights. This will mean that administrators are also part of a larger group and not only involved in a case-by-case basis. Although each community watch group may function in different ways, they all share a common agenda, which enables them to eventually obtain endorsement from the larger community.

The GROOTS Kenya process was one way that the mapping for this project occurred. Consultants to the other NGOs used a combination of interviews, focus groups, workshops, small and large meetings, and administered surveys in rural and urban areas of Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The following section discusses these findings, beginning with a brief overview of the challenges.

V. Challenges Facing Grassroots Women's Groups and Women-Driven NGOs in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe

Carolyn Hannan, Director of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, describes the impact of lack of land ownership on women.

> Women's importance in food production underscores the need to provide them with security of tenure for the land they cultivate. Secure land tenure can increase women's probability of accessing credit, finding supplementary wage employment and increasing productivity. This can be especially crucial in situations where women are the principal farmers. In the context of HIV/AIDS, ownership and control over economic assets can save women from total and complete destitution. When they are unable to inherit land after the death of a father or husband due to AIDS, women are rendered powerless and unprotected just when they most need protection and support (2004 6).

The International Center for Women research in Kerala, India, found that 49 percent of women with no property reported incidents of domestic violence compared with 7 percent who had property rights (International Center for Research on Women 2005 4-5).

Grassroots women face **multiple obstacles** around property disputes. Although single obstacles frustrate their tenure security, the social relationships that comprise the land acquisition process render the challenges more complex. In most of Africa, grassroots women's bargaining strategies must account for household and community norms and laws. Recognition in one arena does not automatically confer recognition in the other. Some hurdles are gender specific and others systemic. By gender specific, we are referring to roles that women are expected to assume because of their reproductive role and most customary laws. For example, women often only access land through their male relations, such as husbands, fathers, uncles, brothers, and sons. When these relations rupture, women's tenuous holds to property slip away.

Ann Wanjiru reflects on cultural norms regarding property. She explains, "Women are treated as property and there is an overwhelming position, 'How can a property own a property?'" (WLLA 14). Furthermore, political and legal checks against those who deprive women of land are elusive or inaccessible. Inadequate transportation and communication structures frustrate the grievance and document transmission process. In response to these barriers, laws are changing in some countries and representation by women has increased dramatically.[16] Nonetheless, as grassroots women who spoke out in different forums taught us, deeply rooted challenges persist through lack of enforcement and education.

[16] The United Nations Economic and Social Council considers 30 percent as a threshold for women in legislatures to have any significant impact on policy. In 2001, 24.7 percent or 75 of 304 members of the Ugandan Lower House were women. In Kenya, in 2002, of 224 elected representatives in Kenya's Lower House, 15 or 6.7 percent were women. In comparison, Rwanda reached 48.8 percent or 39 out of 80 women elected in the Lower House. In 2005, in Zimbabwe, 10.7 percent or 16 women of 150 representatives in the Lower House were women.

Figure 2. Obstacles Women Face in Gaining Control Over Land and Inheritance Rights by Effects on Women and Method of Control of Women

Obstacles Women Face in Gaining Control over Land and Inheritance Rights	Effects on Women	Method of Control over Women
Gender Specific	Lack of Hope	Institutions (for example, household, judiciary, land boards, police) take hostile actions toward widows
	Lack of Respect	Marriage rules and customs subordinate women who are expected to be quiet and passive;
	Lack of Education	Parents do not encourage girls to stay in or go to school past a certain age; parents need children to bring in income; keeps women ignorant of rights
	Lack of Money	Reduced or no income means lack of access to securing legal representation, finding and processing documents, and traveling to courts
Systemic	Lack of Voice	Inadequate representation in the political system, at different levels of government, and within the household
	Legal and Regulatory Structures	Complicated rules and language; inaccessibility of documents or judicial proceedings; delays require return visits
	Lack of External Support	Media visibility declines in times of government stability and absence of atrocities
All Challenges Equal	**Lack of Power**	**Maintain Women's Secondary Status**

A Kenyan woman exemplifies the lack of hope that was reinforced by the actions of her in-laws, the judiciary, and the police. Physical scars exacerbate the frustration of settlement delays.

> *Marion has scars on her forehead and on her legs, a reminder of a knife battle by her stepsons. They knifed her forehead and slashed her feet. . . .Her daughters were harassed by their stepbrothers, branded prostitutes and asked to leave the homestead with their mother. It is their way of trying to shut her up. She has been to the Human Rights office in Bungoma. They filed a case in a Bungoma court on her behalf concerning the battering. . . .*

The words of a Ugandan woman infer willingness to voice complaints but underscore the financial burden of securing legal representation, processing documents, paying fees, or traveling to faraway courts.

> *If any woman wants to give her opinion, she ought to have money to be able to air her views even if her ideas are not going to be considered*

Another Ugandan woman expresses the meekness and sexual passivity women must assume to acquire land, housing and property.

> *Tenure & marriage go hand in hand although the ground is not leveled for rural women! 'As a woman the process of buying land involves seeking [for] permission from your husband 'with a lot of humility' before you transact any business with the land owner even if your husband is not contributing a penny'.*

ZWOT consultants also emphasize that women's lack of education obstructs their ability to "articulate their case in situations where the 'fight for inheritance' spills to the courts."

Yet women's courage in the face of intimidation is admirable. A Kenyan woman earned the nickname "the Boss" when she stood up to a land surveyor:

> *When the surveyor went to the farm during subdivision this year, he asked her [Rosalie] to shut up but then she said that if she shut up then it would mean that no one would speak for her since her husband who could was long dead.*

Family support enables women's ability to use existing systems to negotiate their own land rights. In one case, an elder Ugandan woman purchased land after her husband's death because she had the support of her late husband's clan "although the County had dismissed her as "just a woman!" (Amutojo and Lakor 2005). A second elder renegotiated and bought a piece of land that a friend had gifted to her husband. She got all her children to sign their names to a contract and the elders in the community witnessed the entire ceremony. A third woman, intending to buy adjacent land to

enlarge her family's small plot, bought a pig, traded it for a cow, and purchased two hectares of land with the sale proceeds. She registered her name, a fact that her husband recognized. A fourth acted to avoid conflict with her husband's family, went ahead and purchased land, and informed her husband who accepted the action.

Despite these success stories, a lengthy "run around" and complex legal and regulatory processes may eventually weaken determination. A Kenyan woman's story unfolds this way:

> *The District Office (DO) sent Mary to the Land Tribunal. They sent her to conduct a land search, and get the Green Card. . .The Tribunal has listened to both sides of the conflict. When it calls a hearing, the stepsons do not attend. The mother-in- law attended the hearing once. At other moment(s), she has feigned sickness. Mary has since been instructed to get a letter of visitation to allow the Tribunal to hold the hearing at her mother-in-law's sick bed. The visitation was to be on 20th July and that is when the judgment was supposed to take place. The (Federation of Women Lawyers) FIDA office in Kisumu told her to await the judgment of the tribunal. If they do not rule in her favour, then FIDA would take her case to court.*

If powerlessness and subordination define these challenges, what strategies are required to overcome them? If it "takes a village to raise a child," what does it take to raise a woman's status and power? From these five reports, grassroots women -- variously assisted by community-based groups, NGOs, tribal chiefs, subchiefs, elder women, husbands and sons, donors, legal professionals, technical assistance organizations, government bureaucrats, politicians, and others -- are forging new ways to overcome these obstacles. Mary Balikungeri of the Rwandan Women's Network notes, "We need to look at the whole strategy and community conversation strategies and how they all come together." The next section will explore these multiple innovations.

VI. Multiple Innovations

The groups discussed here have made progress in five different areas. At one point, women and development circles concentrated on legal rights almost to the exclusion of all else. Yet the findings in these reports clarify that the law is only one aspect of a larger set of human rights that include community development or collective rights. These consist of projects that benefit an entire rural community or urban neighborhood and build capacity among individuals for raising funds, keeping books, and running businesses. As individual skills are acquired, residents may gain access to better drinking water, housing, sanitary facilities, etc.--the package of public goods that governments are unable to deliver. Grassroots women also are developing appropriate structures for governance. The five areas of community development they are engaged in include:

- Projects
- Financial and Negotiation Skills
- Governance Structures and Participation
- Legal Campaigns, and
- Popular Education.

Women's groups and NGOs have packaged resources in creative ways to meet the challenges described in the quotes above. The most compelling findings from the five groups build on conscious strategies that link these areas into a broad set of interrelated development practices. Although no single model ensues, the groups identify projects that draw from one or more categories.

Figure 3. Multiple Innovations in Five Areas of Community Development

Categories of Innovation	Types of Innovation
Develop Projects	• build houses to create shelter • start economic initiatives to increase earnings • start savings schemes to purchase land, initiate long range community projects, and respond to household needs • provide polyclinics for spiritual healing and emotional counseling to overcome trauma • create home-based care
Acquire Financial and Negotiating Skills	• obtain financing to acquire land and materials • negotiate with family members • consult with tribal chiefs and elders • identify and track down landowners or stakeholders who control land • purchase land • make presentations to donors • participate in grant writing

Design Governance Structures and Increase Participation	• build leadership capacity • provide safe forums for women to speak • increase women's roles in decision making • develop action strategies • directly engage in dialogues with authorities to shift power relations • upscale activities within countries and across borders • develop national alliances of home-based carers and link with international groups
Bolster Legal Campaigns	• raise awareness about wills and inheritance rights • provide free access to legal rights and related services • create women's space in courts • raise consciousness of policemen, local chiefs, and judges
Use Popular Education Methods	• integrate culture (music, drama, poetry, art) into education campaigns • package culture as economic project

Figure 4 identifies the innovative project or projects and the NGO or grassroots groups' results. These innovations typically address more than one challenge and result in more than one outcome. Following Figure 4, selected innovations are discussed in more detail.

Figure 4. Women's Community Development Practices: Responses to Challenges by Group and Innovation

Responses to Challenges	Group	Innovation
Create Hope and Empowerment through Polyclinics of Hope	Rwanda Women's Network	Open Polyclinics of Hope that offer emotional and trauma counseling to survivors of rape and violence. These become centers where survivors also learn leadership training and peer counseling and engage in other activities such as income generating projects and constructing shelter.
Create Hope and Access to Resources through Forming Community Watch Groups	GROOTS Kenya	Initiate a process that begins with grassroots women's community conversations in a premobilization stage, provides a safe forum in mobilization stage, increases number of people who participate in mapping process that is women-driven, makes linkages with NGOs, experts, and establishes Individual home-carers to households with HIV-AIDs form groups to meet with chiefs. Community Watch Groups are formed, with trained paralegals, to ensure that cases are heard and acted on in regard to inheritance rights and tenure. Community Watch Groups act as resource center.
Use Culture to Create a Legacy of Respect for Women	Uganda Land Alliance Women Elders	The Uganda Land Alliance in Ibuie Sub-County involves elders as role models who share stories about acquiring land through gaining support of family and clan members and of chiefs. They help resolve disputes about discipline, property grabbing, and other land issues.
Reduce Subordinate Status of Women through Legal Access to Tenure and Inheritance Rights	Zimbabwe Widows and Orphans Trust SEKE Rural Home-Based Care Ntengwe for Community Development Trust	Demystify legal instruments through teaching the process of will making; establishing widows day in courts and conscientization programs for police Educate women and orphans about importance and process of will making, using film, music, theater, poetry, local talent and international artists

	GROOTS Kenya Rwanda Women's Network Uganda Land Alliance	Access free legal resources from NGOs and others who are familiar with land and inheritance rights Offer cost free legal representation in land, housing, property disputes in Haguruka; facilitate case filing fees and related court expenses Pilot project with Jinja municipality, housing will be registered in name of women; before occupancy each beneficiary signs agreement with Jinja Municipality Council Cooperate Society – intermediary agency that collects money from women to honor loans
Acquire Power	Rwanda Women's Network RWN Beinshyaka[17] RWN Avega Zimbabwean Women In Construction Association	Increase grassroots women's networks based on their work with Polyclinics of Hope; Increase the presence of women in governance; women head all committees; general committees oversee running of village; School scholarships are awarded to children of beneficiaries Form agro-based women's associations Increase grassroots women's skills by learning construction Lobby to change national standards for contractors
Acquire Resources	RWN, GROOTS Kenya Uganda Land Alliance Aboko Womens Group GROOTS Kenya Muungana Women Slaughter House Rwanda Women's Network	Provide home-based care to HIV-AIDs households; this led to awareness about land and inheritance issues and prompted collective approaches to acting to get help, e.g. group of GROOTS Kenya home-carers approached chief Raise organic chickens for income generating project Train women as slaughterers Rehabilitate primary school,

[17] Location: Mutara Kibungo, Gitarama, Kiglai Rural, and Kigali Urban

		investment in children's education; Introduce mutual health insurance plan in Kinigi Ruhengeri
Acquire Finances through Fund-Raising and Lobbying, Local-to-Local Dialogues, and Partnering	Uganda Land Alliance	Develop land fund for tenants
	Uganda Mjunde Low Income Women's Group	Started a Mothers' Union, save $2.50 a month, develop a revolving loan fund of about $175 for members for income generating projects
	Rwanda Women's Network	Pool money to buy land Provide micro-credit loans to dispossessed women in pre- and post-settlement cases
	Uganda Land Alliance	Tri-partite pilot project with UN-Habitat, Akrights Projects Ltd. and Jinja Municipality for housing plan for 20 permanent homes with room for expansion in Kisenyi-Kampala
Acquire Finances through Learning New Skills, and Starting Income-Generating Projects	Zimbabwe Women in Construction Association	Acquire funds for training and building housing Make loans to members at 20% interest rate
	GROOTS Kenya Muungana Women Slaughter House Association	Operate slaughterhouse, sell products, rent rooms for slaughtering; Sell water, produce, and milk; Lease grounds for goat auctions
	Rwanda Womens Network	Training in tailoring, knitting, off farm food processing; Training in post-harvest handling and storage; oxen fetching water and firewood for sale
Acquire Economic Power	Ntengwe for Community Development Trust	Sell cds, videos and reinvest in project
Achieve Sustainability	Rwanda Women's Network	Promote energy-saving stoves, harvest rain water in all households; training in non-land intensive farming in Seurka, Buliza Shyrorongi

- **Challenge:** Lack of hope

- **Response:** Create hope through empowerment and resources
- **Innovation:** Provide clinics of "Hope" that offer counseling to people who suffered from post civil war and genocide and link to services for people with HIV-AIDS.

The **Rwanda Women's Network** (RWN) "came into being" in 1997,[18] expanding activities from counseling victims of the civil war and the 1994 genocide to developing core leaders among survivors who are empowered to advocate for health benefits, human rights, and community and economic development. RWN has accomplished this through Polyclinics of Hope (POH). From 500,000 to 1 million people suffered from civil war and genocide; women and children were raped and mutilated in ways that prevent them from having children. Widespread massacres led to a mass exodus. Grassroots women and their children lost everything when villages were wiped out, including houses, schools, clinics, and their livelihood. Through the polyclinics, RWN pioneered holistic counseling as a model among peer groups and have replicated this in other parts of Rwanda.

The **Village of Hope in Gasabo District** in Kigali city is an important example of the RWN approach and serves a community of women victims of rape and other violent crimes. The village was constructed in 1999-2000, and the center was completed in 2002. The land was given by Kigali city. Local authorities, the Japanese government, Church World Service, Firelight Foundation, individual friends of RWN, women, and youths contributed to the construction of the space. The village is made up of 20 housing units accommodating 20 families with approximately six persons per family, for a total of 120 beneficiaries. The Village of Hope Center is in the middle of the housing units and provides different services to the residents of the village and the surrounding community. The owners of the houses in Kigali were beneficiaries of the Polyclinic of Hope (POH), and the "district" Village of Hope was started to bring services closer to them. Another POH was built in Mutura Province.

The WLLA process has extended RWN's grassroots women's networks. In each area, RWN is planning to work with more grassroots women, including peer groups of women who carry out home-based care and offer assistance to people with HIV-AIDS.

- **Challenge:** Lack of hope
- **Outcome:** Create hope through forming community watch groups
- **Innovation:** Create a transformative research process that provides a safe forum, increases the number of grassroots women who participate, makes links to others including chiefs, subchiefs, NGOs, and people with information about land and inheritance rights.

For **GROOTS Kenya**, the WLLA project added another layer to existing projects and increased the breadth of participants, one objective of scaling up. GROOTS Kenya facilitated local-to-local dialogues between grassroots women and chiefs, assistant

[18] The Church World Service (CWS) started in 1946 and is composed of 35 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. CWS partners with "indigenous organizations in more than 80 countries" on relief, development, and refugee assistance. From 1994 to 1996, the CWS responded to the genocide in Rwanda and in 1997, RWN took over.

chiefs, church officials, and clan members. At meetings, grassroots women who had not participated previously testified about unfair land practices, corruption, fees, and the roles that clans play in determining land issues. At a national workshop of 40 participants, fifteen NGOs were introduced to grassroots women. Prior to this, NGOs were either not known or grassroots women and community-based groups had not approached them. The NGOs included people with training in land issues, housing, human rights, and education. One outcome was that grassroots women and community-based groups were offered the opportunity to access legal resources free-of-charge. This helps them overcome the expense of judicial transactions and proceedings, which prevents many grassroots women from fighting through regulatory agencies and the courts to gain control over land and inheritance rights. In one striking example of cutting through obstacles, a tribal chief at a meeting in Nairobi explained that his ability to make decisions has been impacted by the dialogues that GROOTS Kenya has forged with him over time.

- **Challenge:** Lack of respect
- **Response:** Gain respect through understanding cultural history
- **Innovation:** Harvest traditional culture from elders and integrate with information on land rights

The **Uganda Land Alliance** identifies an innovative practice in **Ibuie Sub-County** where a cultural legacy is entwined with community development and land rights. Women clan elders pass on experiences and cultural traditions to younger women. The elders nurture, advise, educate, and resolve disputes on issues such as discipline and property grabbing at the family and clan level. Of 33 elders interviewed, four elder women's stories (described previously) illustrate the complexity and range of ways in which challenges over land and property rights occur. The elders were able to draw on clan, family, and elder support as well as acquire money to purchase land. Passing down these stories is a powerful process for all actors. Since role models are nearby, the stories are easily retold.

- **Challenge:** Change women's subordinate role
- **Response:** Alter subordinate role
- **Innovation:** Involve men in politics, the judiciary, and police force, and as husbands, fathers, and brothers in expanding women's traditional roles.

In Zimbabwe, the **Zimbabwe Widows and Orphans Trust** and **Seke Rural Home Based Care** directly challenge men's dominant status through changing the process of will making. ZWOT has worked with over 500,000 widows and 1,300 orphans to prevent property grabbing. Seke has been involved in writing more than 3,500 wills.

ZWOT and Seke educate women and children by demystifying the legal process and the role of lawyers. In 1996, a group of five widows formed an alliance and registered ZWOT as a Trust Deed through the High Court of Zimbabwe (Marongwe 6). Seke Rural Home Based Care focused originally on the provision of home-based care to the chronically ill. When workers noticed that inheritance problems surfaced as soon as

someone died, for example, from AIDS, Seke introduced will writing into their activities. They have helped married women and men as well to obtain legal assistance to transfer ownership rights, sell houses, and protect them from physical and verbal attacks by stepchildren and in-laws when death occurs to male relatives. ZWOT and Seke teach principles of will writing and emphasize that a document must be written, signed on every page, and dated. In the court system, a Widow's Day is set aside to hear specifically about land disputes at the High Court and Magistrate's Court. Responding to the challenges of police intimidation and ignorance, ZWOT developed a "conscientization" program for police officers that is held at different bases and requires high ranking judiciary figures to attend and lecture. This is aimed at educating the police to better serve the inheritance rights of widows and orphans.

- **Challenge:** Lack of representation
- **Response:** Acquire representation
- **Innovation:** Provide a framework for grassroots groups to network and create a more powerful constituency

RWN has developed a collaborative model with grassroots associations. In some of these organizations, women head all committees and oversee village administration. One group restored education by rehabilitating the primary school and offering scholarships to widow's children. Another association is developing a communal health plan. RWN plans to build on its work, establishing a Network for Women regarding land, housing, and property rights.

The **Uganda Land Alliance** was formed in 1995 to lobby and advocate for fair land laws and policies. Their efforts have influenced various national land rights initiatives, including the 1995 Constitution, the 1998 Land Act draft, a 2004 amendment, and the National Land Policy (Odhiambo 2002). ULA's membership has grown from an informal group of interested individuals to a consortium of 68 Ugandan and international NGOs. At the national level, ULA links grassroots groups with established Land Rights Information Centres with the intent of making legal information accessible to local women. Since community paralegals carry out the work, these linkages have enabled grassroots women to be compensated for their community development activities, a condition that enables them to accumulate money to purchase land. In another example, the **Aboko's Women's Group** uses peer-to-peer exchanges to bring rural women together. They also have developed a constitution and a four-person executive committee. Using property provided by the local church, they are raising organic chickens and cultivating onions with the eventual purpose of securing land.

- **Challenge:** Lack of resources
- **Response:** Acquire Resources
- **Innovation:** Mobilize social and human capital to assert control over land, sustain family life, earn money for collective savings accounts, and develop a practice of community development to improve conditions

One of the toughest places for innovations to flourish is in the Mathare Valley settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, the second largest squatter settlement in Africa. Prior to 1960, Mathare was a quarry operated by various owners. Over the

years, informal settlement occurred and tenants rented small, one-room shelters from absentee owners or poorer residents. Services within Mathare are scarce. Earth drains and pit latrines are shared. Earthen roads and lanes crisscross the housing, mostly "built in barrack-type blocks of temporary materials such as timber off-cuts or wattle and have a very high density, typically 250 units per hectare"(Alder n.d. 1).[19] Mathere is the location of the **Muungano Women** who, during Jomo Kenyetta's leadership of the Kenyan government (1963 to 1978), were given use of a building in which they could earn money through keeping goats and cows, renting small rooms for slaughtering, and selling milk and grass. Some of the Muungano women learned to slaughter and charge for their services, an economic innovation that continues despite the group's lack of ownership documents. Elderly women who have participated in these practices are among those who continue to fight for land rights and income generating ability.

The **Vihiga 560 Self Help Group** formed in 1992 as a savings organization of around 560 members, each of whom saved anywhere from Ksh 20 to 100. After pooling their money, they bought land in the Kenyan Great Rift Valley from a since departed European landowner. Confusion over ownership led to a dispute with a person who claimed rights to the area and protested its subdivision. Currently, the legal case is in the court system. In response to these difficulties, a woman's group adopted overlapping strategies to improve the existing settlement. By charging for services (e.g. fees for use of toilet and bath), they purchase and inhabit land and engage in local dialogue. In this way, the women were able to save Ksh 65,000 in one year. Needing more money, the group met with the area councilor and asked him for another toilet to increase their income. They also plan to raise funds to buy construction material by selling stones retrieved from a local river.

In **Uganda, at Ocok-cing,** 20 huts provide shelter for families with people who are HIV positive or have AIDS. The projects address mental, physical and nutritional needs. Ocok-cing negotiated with the "Send A Cow" program to acquire dairy products that will improve nutrition. The group is active in construction and collects materials for buildings. People also receive counseling support to cope with mental health issues.

- **Challenge:** Lack of Finances
- **Response:** Acquire Finances
- **Innovation:** Engage in local-to-local dialogues and partner in order to leverage funding, secure land, create job opportunities, build housing, and link to health services

In Uganda, the **Mjunde Low-Income Women's Group in Kisenyi-Kampala** began as a Mother's Union in St. Paul's Church. They facilitate monthly meetings and encourage self-reliance through member savings of US $2.50 a month. Their revolving loan fund enables members to borrow US $175. This group took advantage of a United Nations

[19] Alder's article puts forward an argument that security to earn a living, access to health and education services, are more important to the poor in Nairobi based on a UN-Habitat survey. However, he goes on to state that an integrated strategy should be provided "including freehold, leasehold and forms of joint tenure such as cooperatives, which offer economies of scale and opportunities for community development" (4).

UN-HABITAT program and partnered with Akrights Project Ltd. and Jinja municipality to build 20 low-cost permanent units, each with room for expansion. Small interest-free loans were advanced for construction under a 10-year payback period. Before occupancy, each beneficiary signed an agreement with the financial intermediary, the Jinja Municipal Council Corporate Society. In addition, they will provide ongoing support to women for income generating projects such as small scale farming.

The **Avega Association in Kigali Urban Rwamagana, Rwanda** provided shelter for genocide survivors and held local-to-local dialogues with the City Council, which led to their recognition of homeownership for program beneficiaries. As in other areas, community development occurs in a variety of ways. While trauma counseling helps survivors through the healing process, non-agricultural job opportunities help overcome farming dependency. In addition, as the Rwandan Ministry of Health focuses on expanding anti-retroviral (ARV) care and treatment for people living with HIV-AIDs, Avega links grassroots women with these services.

In February 2004, the **Zimbabwe Women in Construction Association** was formed by women who had received donated machines from the International Technology Development Group (ITDG) (Ncube). The ITDG provides women with training in the construction and the production of low-cost building materials, including brick molding, tile making, and door/window frame manufacturing. The ZWICA represents a group of over 300 women who had lost their houses and faced shortages exacerbated by demolitions and evictions. ZWICA provides support to members and makes loans to small business ventures. The Association also intends to influence national legislation through lobbying for safe working environments and supportive policies that would allow women access to legal tender and contracts.

The Haguruka Association in Kigali in Rwanda provides cost-free legal representation in land, housing, and property disputes. The legal clinics handle filing fees and other court related expenses. Their education efforts are raising awareness about national policies such as the Land Policy and Succession Act. Micro-credit loans are available as temporary financial support for widows pre- and post-settling of a case.

- **Challenge:** Lack of external support through media
- **Response:** Acquire support
  Innovation: Create videos and cds and use sales to fund other projects

Grassroots groups also use popular media to communicate women's rights issues. Gray and Kevane describe such efforts as being a "subtle ability to manipulate and interpret notions of identity, that determine who has rights to what and where," and go on to state that "Traditions of collective action through songs or public demonstrations may be a further source of power" (Gray and Kevane 1999 19). The **Ntengwe for Community Development Trust** in Zimbabwe is an outstanding project that illustrates the use of film, theatre, poetry, and video as "alerts" to the community of the dangers of disinheriting women and children (Marongwe 19). A message is sent "that seeks to persuade the community to shun the dispossession of wives and children following the death of fathers" (Marongwe 19). Ntengwe staff lives in an area for a month; they offer legal advice on wills, show films in schools, and distribute manuals based on the films. They recruit local orphans to write and act in performances that

explore local inheritance problems. A Memory Book Project records the orphans' stories. "Through the use of six different characters, children tell stories about how they lost their parents and property, and strongly argue that they want to see change" (Marongwe 21). The Ntengwe staff identifies "mobilizers," i.e. women or widowers who assist in investigating the inheritance problems the orphans identify. This project also helps establish relationships with the Magristrate's office. Ntengwe plans on relocating closer to the communities that it works with in order to be more accessible and also to develop a community-based mechanism that is able to follow-up on transactions to ensure that the young and orphaned children are protected.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations: From the Perspective of Grassroots Women and Women-Driven Mapping

It is not surprising that the grassroots' perspective emphasizes participation, increasing leadership capacity, strengthening networks, institutionalizing women's roles in governance, and placing women at all forums from the bottom to the top. Correspondingly, the NGOs' perspective focuses on expanding organizing and mobilizing locally, through the Rwandan Clinics of Hope, the ZWOT mobilizers, or the Ntengwe for Community Development Trust. Thus participation will increase through both decentralization and scaling up.

- **Participation** should take place at several different levels, from the home outward. Susan Saegert and Jacqueline Leavitt (1990) refer to this as the community-household model. Women's level of attendance at meetings should be increased. A goal is to get all-inclusive community representation (i.e. men and women, elders, children, opinion leaders, church, community institutions). Towards that goal, "community mobilizers have been trained on inheritance issues and they are better placed to observe inheritance problems. The mobilizers are essentially women, mostly widows, who also have been affected by the inheritance problems. The women mobilizers also assist with identifying women with inheritance problems and registering them with the organization" (Marongwe 21). As noted above, GROOTS Kenya has started a community watch to ensure that cases do not get lost between the time a complaint is voiced and restitution is made. Women from the group will be trained as paralegals. Toward this end, social support networks need to be strengthened and exchange visits organized.

- **Decentralization** should occur in rural and urban areas. ZWOT and RWA are planning to decentralize their activities and involve more local groups in establishing polyclinics and income generating projects.

- **Increasing Women's Governance** in decision-making, on land control boards, in development committees, at the local level, and in key decision-making bodies is crucial. Forums should require a certain percentage of women to function. Local-to-local dialogues should be strengthened, an effort already underway with GROOTS Kenya and the Uganda Land Alliance's involvement of elders, chiefs, and subchiefs.

- **Resource people** such as lawyers and paralegals should be included in women's organizations and NGOs and accessible to poor women. Entire communities should be sensitized about land/housing laws and policies. This type of community awareness should be an integral part of community development. The struggle for human rights includes the right to housing and sustainable development. More explicitly it is the links to community and maintaining ties to social networks that helps deliver and sustain an inclusionary women-driven vision of development.

- **Exchange visits** should be held so community conversations can transcend local borders. These are underway or in the planning process.

In support of community development projects, recommendations focused on different types of training.

- **Skills development for employment** in non-agricultural dependent industries such as tailoring and knitting; income generating activities in slaughtering, selling milk, grass, or vegetables, and charging fees for use of sanitary facilities; and constructing houses based on sustainability principles such as collecting water for times of drought and permitting floor area expansion.

- **Awareness of land rights** through the use of community mobilizers, paralegals, and community watchdogs; learning about the process of will making, including lessons on the maintenance of documents.

- **Peer learning in exchange visits** to experience first-hand the context and the results of projects in other places.

Recommendations that address the core issues of land and women's roles include perceptions about education and the family.

- **Curriculum changes** that address issues of importance to girl children about land rights; school-age girl children should not be employed.
- **Attitude changes** such as fostering respect among family members.

Many of these recommendations were reviewed at the three-day meeting of WLLA in Nairobi, Kenya, from November 15th to 17th, 2005.

From the perspective of the grassroots women and Huairou, WLLA has accelerated the visibility of grassroots-driven mapping and further legitimated putting women at the center of development, including being in charge of the research that will help bring awareness to their innovations and mobilize resources for their benefit.

In the end, the results remain to be seen. Aili M. Tripp writes persuasively of the importance of regional discussions and exchanges within Africa and "suggests that the most important focus of transnational diffusion occurs at the continental and sub-regional level" (9). Across the globe, mass media does not routinely report about the lives of grassroots women unless they are suffering from natural or manmade disasters. Under the status quo, the daily challenges that grassroots women confront over land and property at the local level are least likely to reach further than the village or urban area. A global audience may intermittently become aware of the issues through conferences. Transnational discussions at different levels -- within academia, among parliamentarians, in bureaucracies – shine a spotlight on grassroots women's concerns and recommendations. Yet the time for grassroots women's voices to be fully present is long overdue and acknowledgment of their innovations has barely begun. The findings in this report take a first step in bringing their practices and research processes to the forefront.

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Huairou Commission

The Huairou Commission envisions a world in which local and global democracies embrace the voices, policies and practices of grassroots women.

Established in 1995 at the 4th World Conference on Women, the Huairou Commission is a unique experiment in global democracy. Driven by grassroots women's organizations from around the world, this network partners with individuals and organizations who support the belief that it is in the best interests of local and international communities for grassroots women to be full partners in sustainable development.

While the Huairou's network membership evolves with changing realities, today's anchoring networks are Network Members: Asian Women & Shelter Network, GROOTS International, Habitat International Coalition: Women & Shelter Network and Red Mujer y Habitat de America Latina y el Caribe, International Council of Women, Women in Cities International, Women & Peace Network.

UN-HABITAT, in particular, has played an integral role as a partner in the development of Huairou. UNIFEM, UNDP, the World Bank, CORDAID, United Cities & Local Governments (UCLG), certain NGOS and faith based organizations have supported its work. Except for the organization's administrative work and some international advocacy, Huairou Commission programs are executed by its member organizations.

Huairou Commission
249 Manhattan Avenue
New York, New York 11211 USA
T: 1-718-388-8915
F: 1-718-388-0285
E: info@huairou.org
www.huairou.org