General Project Information

Project Title: Justice for Women and Girls Living with HIV and AIDS on Property and Inheritance rights (JUST+)

Organization: National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, Uganda (NACWOLA)

Implemented in: Kaberamaido District in the Sub Counties of Ochero, Aperekera, Alwa and Kaberamaido

Grant Amount: $74,836

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Context

In Uganda, women are disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS, comprising 57% of adults living with the virus. In Kaberamaido district, stigma and discrimination against HIV-affected women is common, with frequent violations of property and inheritance rights, including cases of dispossession and property grabbing. These issues are exacerbated for widows, who are often blamed for the death of their husbands. In addition, the practice of “wife inheritance”—in which a widow is forced to marry a male relative of her late husband—is common and contributes to the spread of HIV.

Objectives

NACWOLA seeks to strengthen the informal justice system in Kaberamaido District by building the capacity of community paralegals, clan and traditional leaders, and members of Land Boards. NACWOLA also strengthened the capacity of women and girls living with HIV and AIDS to advocate for national laws and policies that protect and promote their property and inheritance rights.

Key results

• Enhanced legal literacy and awareness of 300 women living with HIV and AIDS on their property and inheritance rights.

• 87 women living with HIV and AIDS were trained as paralegals to support women’s access to property and inheritance rights. These paralegals supported 30 women in their property and inheritance cases.

• Enhanced knowledge and awareness of 100 clan leaders, 100 male community members, and 60 local authorities of their obligations to protect women’s property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS. Members of Parliament for Kaberamaido District pledged their continued support to the property and inheritance rights of women living with HIV or affected by AIDS.

• Dialogue meetings between local authorities and local women living with HIV were crucial for increasing the engagement and commitment of duty bearers to protect women’s property and inheritance rights.

Lessons Learned

• Involving men to speak out against harmful cultural norms and practices is a powerful strategy. Men are especially inspired and engaged by other men’s activism against violations of women’s property and inheritance rights.

• Legal aid must be both accessible and affordable. Even after receiving legal counseling on property and inheritance rights, many women were unable to pursue their claims since they lacked the resources to pay for legal fees.

Partnerships

NACWOLA partnered with the Human Rights Office; the District Community Development Officer; the local police; the District NGO Forum; and the District Health Officials.