General Project Information

Project Title: Women’s Property and Inheritance Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS

Organization: Réseau des Femmes Working for Rural Development

Implemented in: Gasabo and Nyanza Districts

Grant Amount: USD $142,222

Context

A study commissioned by Réseau des Femmes in 2012 entitled “Study on the issues related to women’s property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV/AIDS” found that women living with or affected by HIV and AIDS are denied their property and inheritance rights due to discriminatory attitudes. This denial of property and inheritance rights increases women’s and girls’ vulnerability to HIV: lack of assets and property creates economic instability for women and their families and in turn reduces their ability to access and afford HIV prevention, care, and treatment services. In addition, denial of property and inheritance rights places women at greater risk of exploitation, violence, and risky behaviors.

Objectives

Réseau seeks to empower HIV-affected women in Gasabo and Nyanza districts to fully assert their property and inheritance rights, as a means to reduce their vulnerability to HIV and mitigate the impact of AIDS on their families and communities.

Key results

- Established 29 women’s groups, each implementing an income generating activities aimed at reducing women’s vulnerability to HIV and increasing their capacity to claim their rights. Réseau assisted eight groups to register formally as cooperatives.
- Improved legal literacy and awareness of 911 HIV-affected women on their property and inheritance rights.
- Enhanced knowledge and awareness of 400 community leaders and 1,000 community members of their obligations to protect women’s property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS.
- Enhanced knowledge and skills of 60 community mediators to support women’s access to property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS. These mediators have supported 97 cases involving women’s property and inheritance rights and helped to reunify 56 women with their property and inheritance assets.
- Established stakeholder platforms with local authorities and gender advocates in all 25 targeted administrative sectors and two districts to mediate cases regarding women’s property and inheritance rights.
- Exchange visits between different women’s groups promoted shared learning and replication of best practices.

Lessons Learned

- Psycho-social counseling services should accompany the provision of legal aid services to HIV-affected women. During sensitization sessions, some women were overcome with emotion or seemed visibly traumatized when discussing their HIV status.
- The support and participation of community leaders in the activities of the women’s cooperatives was invaluable for reducing stigma around people living with HIV.

Partnerships

Réseau partnered with leaders at sector and district levels; with sector executive secretaries; sector social affair officers; district officers in charge of the Access to Justice Bureau; community mediators (ABUNZI); community policing committees; women and youth councils at sector level; leaders of cells, community health mobilizers; and leaders of health centers.