General Project Information

Project Title: Empowerment of HIV/AIDS Women on Property and Inheritance rights: A Road to Gender Equality

Organization: Slum Women’s initiative for Development (SWID), Uganda

Implemented in: Jinja District / Jinja Municipality in 5 sub-counties: Kagoma, Budondo, Walukuba/Masese, Kakira and Mpumudde

Grant Amount: $70,000

www.sites.google.com/site/swiduganda

Context

In Uganda today, women are disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS, accounting for 57% of adults living with HIV. Despite their critical role in cultivating the land, women suffer from a lack of access to land and property: only 18% of Ugandan women own land or property. Although the laws of Uganda affirm the rights of women to own and inherit property, a general pattern of discrimination persists in accessing those rights. HIV-affected women are particularly vulnerable to violations of property and inheritance rights, given the stigma associated with HIV.

In 2008, SWID carried out a baseline survey that revealed a number of challenges faced by women, particularly those living with HIV or affected by AIDS, in Jinja District. The survey found a high number of violations of women’s property and inheritance rights, often by relatives; an increase in women-headed and child-headed households; and widespread lack of knowledge from women on their property and inheritance rights.

Objectives

SWID seeks to empower women in Jinja District to realize their property and inheritance rights; to strengthen community paralegal networks; and to increase the participation of women living with HIV or affected by AIDS in community decision-making processes.

Key results

- Enhanced knowledge and skills of 35 paralegals to support women’s access to property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS.
- Enhanced knowledge and awareness of 104 community-level opinion leaders and 234 community members of their obligations to protect women’s property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS.
- Increased legal literacy and awareness of 85 women living with HIV and AIDS about their property and inheritance rights. Women living with HIV and AIDS now know how to seek justice confidently, and with the support of paralegals, police and village Local Council Leaders.
- Increased visibility of women living with HIV and AIDS in their communities as they gained skills, led dialogues with their leaders, and articulated issues affecting them.
- Dialogue meetings were crucial in increasing the engagement and commitment of local authorities to protect women’s property and inheritance rights.
- Using music, dance, and drama performances are effective means to engage community members while raising awareness of women’s property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Lessons Learned

- Women living with HIV encounter widespread discrimination because of stigma. Awareness raising interventions that address their concerns are essential to restore their self-esteem and to empower them to take action to claim their rights.
- Ignorance about women’s property and inheritance is widespread, particularly in rural areas. Further awareness raising is needed to promote and protect women’s rights.
- Services and resources must be available in local languages, as the majority of the target population is illiterate or semi-literate and may not speak English.

Partnerships

SWID partnered with Uganda Land Alliance and Legal Aid Project in Jinja district.