

## **Firelight Newsflash! 17 November 2008 - Focus on Property Rights of Women & Children**

### **Congratulations are in order...**

Sizani Ngubane, founder and director of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in South Africa, was chosen as one of 23 'Women Leaders for the World 2008,' by the Global Women's Leadership Network (GWLN). Based at Santa Clara University in California, GWLN sets out to achieve breakthroughs in leadership and communication by empowering each delegate to a new level of effectiveness - so they can return to their respective countries and bring about a culture of opportunity, collaboration, and extraordinary results.

Organized into more than 500 women-led community-based organizations, the majority of RWM's 50,000+ members live on white-owned farmland, commercial farms, or tribal authority communal land. RWM advocates for women's ownership of, access to, and control of land. In addition, they encourage women's participation in governance and address the impact of HIV/AIDS on women, orphans, and vulnerable children. RWM has been a Firelight partner since 2003. Sizani Ngubane was selected 'as a leader of competence, conscience and compassion, and a person who would dare to transform her organisation, community and world.'

### **Profile: Securing the Legal Rights for Women to Own and Control Property**

Poor women in South Africa are discriminated against on the basis of gender and economic status. One of the most difficult forms of discrimination for women, children, and communities is the eviction of widows and single mothers from their homes by their male relatives.

Sizani Ngubane's vision is to secure women's property rights through enforcement of existing laws and creation of new and stronger legislation and policies. "I want to actively engage local women to tell their experiences and speak to their needs, and how they believe these needs and concerns could be met by the government. I want to address situations where the law can be applied to secure restitution and, where it cannot, to advocate for new legislation that will secure their land and property rights."

For the past 40 years, Sizani has been working with grassroots women's organizations. She is Founder and Director of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM), which now works with 500 community-based organizations with a membership of about 50,000 women in South Africa. Through RWM she will conduct case studies of evicted women and determine how restitution can be achieved through existing laws or the passage of new legislation to correct weaknesses in existing laws. In the process, Sizani will educate women and

communities about the property rights of South African women.

For more information, write to RWN at: [rwm@mail.ngo.za](mailto:rwm@mail.ngo.za).

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## **Women's Property Rights as an AIDS Response: Lessons from Community Interventions in Africa**

### **Report Features Firelight Partners' Work in Rwanda**

Program activities of three Firelight partners in Rwanda, Benishyaka Association, Rwanda Women's Network and Trust and Care, were recently highlighted in a recent report from the International Center for Research on Women. See an excerpt below from the report:

"Securing women's property and inheritance rights can reduce their vulnerability to crises, including those that might result from HIV and AIDS. National and international policies are essential for a legal environment that enables women to realize these rights. Also essential is the social and cultural environment—the norms and practices, which often influence people's decisions related to women's property and inheritance rights. However, creating an enabling environment is inherently complex and difficult to address with a single strategy.

"Transformative and sustainable change occurs when people most affected and with the most to gain build on community resources and respond to community needs. Across sub-Saharan Africa, where communities—and particularly women—have been devastated by AIDS, grassroots initiatives are addressing the links between women's property rights and HIV with impressive results. Though small in scale, these efforts are educating communities about how property rights affect women and girls in the context of HIV, and mobilizing stakeholders at all levels to take action.

"Recognizing the importance of community-driven responses to AIDS, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in partnership with the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), implemented a grants program to document and test community interventions to secure women's property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV.

"Program results demonstrate the promise of interventions that harness local capacity and the synergy of networks to secure women's rights to property and inheritance. Findings also suggest practical ways for the international development and donor communities to support these pioneering initiatives and bring them to scale. Ultimately, integrating these findings into new and current programs will go a long way to quell the rise of HIV in Africa and around

the world."

To read the full report, see: <http://www.icrw.org/docs/property-rights/2007-wpr-community-interventions-africa.pdf>

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### **Publication: Children's Property and Inheritance Rights, HIV and AIDS, and Social Protection in Southern and Eastern Africa**

A report from the Food and Agriculture Organization's HIV/AIDS Programme promotes children's property and inheritance rights within a larger social protection agenda and is now available. Children's Property and Inheritance Rights, HIV and AIDS, and Social Protection in Southern and Eastern Africa acknowledges that children's property and inheritance rights constitute the essential building blocks of an interconnected system of rights, making children's property and inheritance rights as much a fundamental human rights issue as an economic issue. The report calls for existing social protection programmes to be redesigned and new programmes to be developed to reflect this. As a part of this effort, it calls for existing programmes that have been redesigned to be scaled up within a national context or adapted to and applied within other national contexts.

To access the document, click

here: <http://www.crin.org/docs/Childrens%20Property%20&%20Inheritance%20Rights.pdf>

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### **Network Profile: Women's Land Link Africa**

WOMEN'S LAND LINK AFRICA (WLLA) is a joint initiative of organizations dedicated to the improvement of women's land and housing rights in Africa. The purpose of WLLA is not to re-create but rather to enhance and support already ongoing work on women's housing and land rights in Africa.

Their website contains a "Linking Directory," or a comprehensive list of organizations – non- governmental, community based, government and network groups – working on women's land and housing rights, or issues that affect women's housing and land rights, throughout the African region, and in some instances, beyond. The WLLA Resource Centre also provides a cross section of information available on women's land and housing rights in Africa, to promote understanding of and the ability to address the issues at hand, in new and creative ways.

To learn more, visit their website: <http://www.wllaweb.org/index.php> or email: [info@wllaweb.org](mailto:info@wllaweb.org).

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**Research Findings: WOMEN’S PROPERTY RIGHTS, HIV AND AIDS, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN South Africa and Uganda**

How can property ownership, access to property and tenure security protect women who are confronting HIV and/or violence? The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and its partners—the Associates for Development in Uganda and the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa—recently explored this question by examining the links between women’s secure property rights, their vulnerabilities to HIV and AIDS, and their experience of gender-based violence.

Preliminary findings suggest that secure property rights have the potential to help mitigate the consequences of HIV and AIDS. However, the ability of secure rights to reduce the risk of HIV infection or the experience of gender-based violence is not so clear. Regardless, the research found that women’s social context is key to determining the degree to which property rights benefit women, and suggests that their immediate social contexts—personal relationships— influence whether women actually realize their rights.

To read more, see the attached:

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As part of the Firelight Foundation’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Technical Assistance (META) Program, Firelight provides “Newsflashes” to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org).