

HOW GHANA'S GRASSROOTS SISTERHOOD FOUNDATION AND THE HUAIROU COMMISSION SUPPORT EQUITABLE INHERITANCE.

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WHO WE ARE

❖ HUAIROU COMMISSION is a global coalition of women's networks, institutions and individual professionals. It links grassroots women's community development organizations to local and global partners. At the same time, it connects development professionals to on-the-ground practice, to advance the local work of grassroots women.

Four campaigns: AIDS, Community Resilience to Disaster, Governance, Land & Housing

The name Huairou [why-row] honors the place where it was founded at the 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing, China, 1995

The Huairou Commission is comprised of seven networks, that include: GROOTS International, FEMUM, Red Mujer y Habitat de America Latina Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF), International Council of Women, Women in Cities International, Women and Peace Network

GRASSROOTS SISTREHOOD FOUNDATION

- Begun as a pressure group in 2000 to support young girls and women suffering injustice due to negative cultural practices and seeking justice from formal and traditional courts.

- In 2007, GSF was registered and begun facilitating women led community processes to enhance power relations in poor rural communities of Northern Ghana.

- 3000 women from 75 grassroots women groups with leadership structures including:

- Faith based Groups,
- Widows and their orphans,
- Home-based Care givers
- Women living positive with HIV/AIDS
- Women caucus of district assemblies

Programmes

GSF runs four programmes

- ❖ Land, Housing and Livelihoods

 - ❖ Group/Block Farming

- ❖ Property and Inheritance

 - ❖ Saving schemes

- ❖ Community Action for Gender Advocacy

 - ❖ Campaign against Domestic Violence

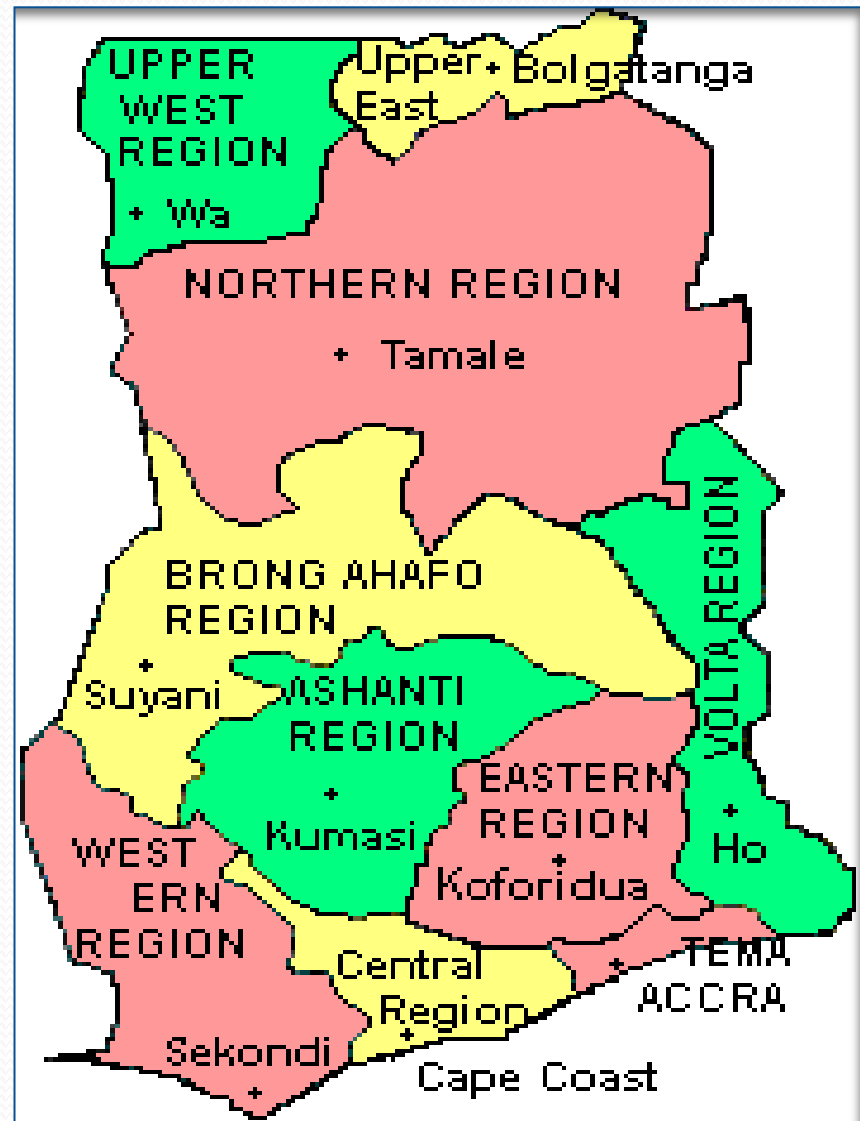
- ❖ Home –based Care

 - ❖ Home based Caregivers Alliance

 - ❖ Compensation for Contribution (C4C)

Operational area

- Three northern Regions-
 - Northern
 - Upper East
 - Upper West
- Studies have shown these are three of the four poorest regions of the country



SITUATION OF WOMEN IN NORTHERN GHANA

Suffering from negative cultural policies and practices that have promoted intergeneration poverty, illiteracy and exclusion.

- ❑ In the traditional setting women/girls are seen in their reproductive and social roles and as part of a family property and these can be seen in the high dowries, widow inheritance, exchange of sisters for male siblings brides and responsibilities during funeral performances
- ❑ Widowhood rites to ensure fidelity during marriage
- ❑ Traditional division of labour where the burden of care and in agriculture from planting, harvesting and marketing rest solely on women.

SITUATION OF WOMEN IN NORTHERN GHANA

❑ Policy on Access to and Control of Resources

- Exclusion in decision-making on natural resources and other property related issues

❑ Education and Skills Training

- Promotion of boy child detriment of girls (average gender gap of 35 % at lower level and 70% at tertiary level)

❑ Health and Nutrition status of women.

- Beliefs and Taboos
- Decisions of child birth and spacing
- Early and forced marriages

❑ Decision Making

- Vested in community leadership (chiefs, linguists, religious, land priest, clan heads even the palace jester)
- Family heads (some consult older women privately)
- Decentralized agencies (less than 10% women's representation far below the conventional 30 %)

What Motivates Us: Legal provisions promoting and protecting women's rights to inheritance

❑ International Conventions

- Africana Charter
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
- Social, Cultural and Economic Rights
- Declaration of Human Rights

➤ National Provisions

- 1992 Constitution
- PNDC Law 111 (Interstate Succession Law)
- Domestic Violence Act
- Spousal Property Bill 9 now before parliament

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE INHERITANCE

Action Research

- Mapping
- Validation



Education and Advocacy

- ✓ Sensitization and awareness creation
- ✓ Consultations and Community conversations with traditional authority
 - ✓ Creating linkages between the chiefs and the women groups through the chiefs wives and daughters –the revered “Pognnab/Napaga and Magazia ”
 - ✓ Local to local dialogues and stakeholder forums
 - ✓ Local government agencies, the youth, religious and opinion leaders, women groups etc
- ✓ Media-Radio talk shows and documentaries

Capacity Building

- ❖ Training of community watchdogs and paralegals
- ❖ Training on Land and Inheritance Rights



Sharing and Learning Experiences

- Peer to Peer Exchanges
(Local and national
and international)



Networking

- Building and shifting partnerships
- Networking and collaborations
- Alliances



Impact

- Increased knowledge on land, property and inheritance rights

Grassroot women evaluating the Ghana Land Administration Project using the Gender Evaluation Criteria developed by the Global Land Tool Network



Cont.

- Increased ownership through titling and documentation
- Citizen engagement
80 women in the settler community consulted overlord of traditional area to give title to land. 40 women now have titles.
- Seven women groups allocated 120 acres of land for block farming



Cont .

- Developed strategic partnerships with chiefs, religious leaders, professionals and land agencies, youth and women's groups
- Chiefs and opinion leaders evaluating the



Cont.

- Reduced land grabbing , gentrification and disinheritance
 - Increased space and voice for women's participation in decision making at all levels including demanding for spousal property rights
 - Advanced advocacy on repealing negative traditional and customary practices of property rights and Inheritance
- ❖ Built confidence among women groups to demand equity, equality in inheritance
 - ❖ Helped Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation and her women groups to further strategize on women's inheritance rights, wealth creation and security of tenure



Cont.

- Mobilised women including widows around campaign for security of tenure and inheritance of farm lands for livelihood improvement
- Created synergy between traditional and religious leaders and women groups for the allocation of land to women



Emerging Lessons from Practice

- ❖ As women articulate their needs and community issues, they raise awareness and forge strategic partnerships for change
- ❖ Community participation reduces their isolation and vulnerability , promotes community dialogues and create solutions together
- ❖ Outcomes are greatly improved when grassroots women's contributions are recognized, reflected and supported.
- ❖ Empowering GRW to participate in decision making processes increases their ability to challenge and change existing power relationships that place them in subordinate . No longer considered passive recipients of welfare, they become dynamic promoters of social transformation

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government

- ❖ Intensify partnering with GRW to identify indigenous innovative strategies that will enhance transformative development.

Research institutions

- ❖ Partner grassroots women groups and their organisations in the development of tools that can be used to
 - Evaluate available legal and customary laws and practices on inheritance and local government strategies of poverty reduction
 - Design appropriate presentational material that will support the dissemination of research findings
 - Codify the numerous and varied customary laws and practices to ensure equity

Donors

- To recognize the diverse contributions of women as dynamic change promoters.
- To support grassroots women's innovative strategies of reducing intergenerational poverty
- To direct resources and efforts at enhancing their capacity to challenge their exclusion and discrimination and advocate pro-poor policies
- Support the development of media programmes audio and video documentaries that promote wealth creation among women.



STAY BLESSED

THANK YOU