

## Grassroots Women's Innovations to Securing Land and Housing Rights: Tool for Sustainable Development

The course was sponsored by the Huairou Commission. The course instructors were: Femie Duka, DAMPA, Philippines; Esupat Ngaluwa, MWEDO, Tanzania; Violet Shivutse, GROOTS, Kenya; and Suranjana Gupta, Huairou Commission, India. For communities living in poverty, land was recognized as a crucial issue and a key resource that impacts their access to basic services and shelter. In the course, the grassroots women presented innovative strategies and tools they have used to address the impacts land and housing interventions are having on their lives. The interactive course highlighted strategies developed at the community level by grassroots people, as well as potential tools for women's land rights that may be scaled up and replicated.

In Kenya and Tanzania (among Maasai tribe), one such tool introduced was the Community Mapping which has identified land ownerships. Through interviews, testimonials by affected women, including among indigenous people, and documenting the findings, it has helped understand the underlying causes of women's loss of rights to land and how legal institutional structures affect them. Creation of Watchdog Groups was introduced as an effective conflict resolution tool at the community level. Community Paralegals have helped provide land-related legal advice to the community and affected women and have served as their human rights defenders.

The example of Philippines demonstrated how grassroots organizations could play a key role in promoting local capacity-building and informed, collective decision-making at the community level. The formulation of Community Action Plans has helped organize collective actions among those affected while engaging government for improved support delivery resulting in enhanced security of tenure and land access to benefit women.