

# NEWSLETTER

**“A world where everyone has a secure place to live in peace and dignity”**



## 2024 MARKS ROOFTOPS CANADA 40TH ANNIVERSARY!

Rooftops Canada is proud to be celebrating 40 years with Canadian and overseas partners improving housing for vulnerable populations and developing sustainable communities.

Our work has spanned 38 countries from A to Z - from Angola to Zimbabwe - and we have brought security, affordable housing and new employment opportunities to tens of thousands of urban families previously subsisting in slums and other perilous living conditions.

Our current initiative, the Women's Spaces Project, applies the cooperative ideals of expanding decision-

making power from a small number of individuals to the larger communities experiencing poor and inadequate housing. Women's Spaces Project aims to support women in achieving equal rights to land and housing and it focuses on entire communities, empowering women to enable the changes that will better their lives and the lives of their families.

The future of Rooftops Canada is bright. Our partners, volunteers, donors and Board members form a strong and passionate team committed to making a difference and meeting our mission. In the coming months, we will have more exciting news to share with our supporters and about the growth of Rooftops!

To all of our supporters, from those who have been here from the beginning to those who are new, we thank you for your compassion and commitment and look forward to the next 40 years!

# ROOFTOPS CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

Almost 25 years ago, the Canadian International Development Agency (now known as GAC) introduced International Development Day as part of an education initiative to promote global peace. Held annually in the first full week of February, International Development Week spotlights Canadians' contributions to eradicating poverty and building a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. It's a unique opportunity for all sectors – NGOs, private and philanthropic sectors, public institutions, community organizations, and the general public – to come together in recognition of the important role that Canada plays in promoting world peace and bettering the lives of many.

This year, GAC's IDW theme "Go for the Goals" calls for all Canadians to take action to support the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (see <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> for information on SDGs). Achievement of many of the SDGs are under threat due to recent global factors, including the pandemic, global warming and associated climate disasters, and economic recession.

There are several ways to take part in IDW. GAC provides a list of both virtual and in-person events being hosted across Canada. Here's a taste of just a few of the many exciting events:

- The Aga Khan Foundation of Canada is hosting a virtual event titled Unlocking development finance: Canada's role in African and emerging economies
- In Toronto, Cuso International and VIDEA are hosting an event on climate justice with a viewing of the documentary "Treeline: A Story Written in Rings".



# LAND OWNERSHIP IN UGANDA

Land ownership plays a critical role to women's livelihoods in many parts of the global south. Land can generate income through rent, sale or as collateral credit which can be re-invested to either start or expand a business. Secure land rights enhance a women's ability to participate in formal trading and access higher income emerging markets. It can improve her self-esteem, and lead to improved participation in local communities, governance structures and larger civil political aspects of society.



Uganda has one of the most gender sensitive constitutions in Sub-Sahara Africa and yet, with all of the progress that has been made, women continue to struggle to participate in land ownership equalling to their male counterparts. Currently, women make up half of the population, but own less than 20% of the land. They provide over 70% of the labour for the agricultural sector but seldom own the land on which they work. The challenge facing Ugandan women is between cultural norms which favour men's ownership and inheritance rights and the laws that now protect women's rights to land ownership.

## HOW THE WOMEN'S SPACES PROJECT IS ASSISTING WOMEN IN UGANDA?

To address the divide between Ugandan laws and cultural norms, the Women's Spaces Project (WSP) is training members of the community to become paralegals who can assist women in exercising their legal rights. Our Ugandan partner, Shelter and Settlements Alternatives, is training paralegals in four regions of the country, providing them with the information and practical skills to enable them to provide a range of supports related to human rights, the protection of children's rights, marriage separation and divorce, law of succession and land rights. Once the paralegals have been trained, they become part of a cooperative in their community which provides them with the space and office



equipment needed for their work. In addition to supporting women directly, the paralegals also work within their communities to educate local authorities, cultural leaders, religious leaders and the police regarding women's land rights and the services available to support them.

## PARALEGAL CASE: BEATRICE NYANSUNA

Unfortunately, in Uganda it is common for parents to die without a will, leaving their daughters inheritance in limbo. Beatrice Nyansuna, a paralegal from Kayunga Municipality was approach by the female children of a recently deceased widow in Tororo Municipality. When the mother died, her children met with clan leaders to determine how her estate should be distributed. The male children insisted on receiving their mothers land, while their sisters received non-land articles. The clan leaders agreed to the son's request, leaving the daughters without a home and stability.



The daughters met with Beatrice to learn about their options. Beatrice then met with the local leaders and the brothers to educate them of their legal obligation to distribute the land evenly with their sisters. With the training she received through the Women's Spaces Project and Shelter and Settlements Alternatives, Beatrice put her legal knowledge into practice enabling the female heirs to receive their equal shares of their mother's land improving their financial situation and enabling them to make decisions about their land.

## KENYA STORY OF CHANGE: GERALD AND GLADYS

Group farming is a common practice in Nairobi benefitting entire communities. Gerald and Gladys are two young farmers from Nairobi who farm with two groups, Bidii Yetu Pioneers and Kayole Community Justice Center. These groups provide the community with healthy food, a place for youth to engage in a productive activity, a safe place, and much more. In addition, they have made a positive impact on the environment by turning an old dumpsite in to a productive farm.

Before their training at Mazingira Institute through the Women's Spaces Project, Gerald and Gladys were growing vegetables in sacks on their farm.



Gladys shared, "We used to sell our produce to our close neighbours. It was good because they know that what they are eating has been watered with clean water". Producing vegetables for the neighbours was very successful for Gerald and Gladys, but they were unaware of the ways that they could bring their farming practice to the next level.

Gerald and Gladys were introduced to a Women's Spaces Project and the 7-day training program "Gender, Urban Agriculture and Food System (GUAFS)" which provided





education on subjects such as organic crop production, livestock production and management, domestic value-adding food processing, and much more. “The training has been impactful for me because there is knowledge that I got there that I didn’t have before. Value addition I didn’t know much about, and waste management,” shared Gerald. Gladys shared the sentiment and explained, “For me, everything I learnt was very good and impactful.”

After their training, Gerald and Gladys returned to their farm to incorporate their newfound knowledge into practice. They began by sharing their newly acquired knowledge with their group members. They then decided to build new urban agriculture technologies they learned at the training, showing their group members how it is done.

“I have helped my group to know how to hoe to form a cone garden. It felt good because before, I didn’t have the knowledge. On that day, they were all very interested and they were ready to learn, both the men and the females,” shared Gladys.

One member was so encouraged and motivated by the potential for growth that could come from Gerald and Gladys’s new knowledge that he offered a small plot of land to them to expand the group

farming. With this addition, the vegetable production for the community was improved and more new farming practices have been implemented. This Rooftops sponsored program had inspired and empowered Gerald and Gladys to set long-term goals for their farming group and make significant contributions to the safe food supply of their community.

