

time. Ksh.50 is raised at each sitting by the members for savings.

With time, the purchasing of household goods has extended to bedding. Bread-baking and sheep-rearing are the latest additions in the group's income generation projects. They have become the core of the group's project whereas the purchase of household items is more of an obligation to each other.

The sheep project has flourished. From two sheep, members have benefited from the offspring that are shared. These are reared to sell, the proceeds of which go towards the payment of school fees. They are also in the process of constructing water tanks for one another with the goal of providing clean safe water.

The members fundraise collectively toward school fees and individual projects such as purchase of land and contributions towards ceremonies. They also provide collective manual labour on occasions of social celebrations such as weddings and funerals.

The group works in collaboration with the RWPLs and has contributed in promoting peace and reconciliation among the displaced persons following the 1992 and 1997 clashes. By utilizing the skills offered by the network's capacity-building and policies, the group participates in creating awareness and helping manage people living with AIDS.

Conclusion

There is remarkable empowerment and gender equity facilitated through the women's grassroots welfare organizations. The welfare groups are an innovative measure derived out of need and intended to facilitate the fulfillment of identified needs. These welfare organizations, therefore, contribute toward broad-based development and empowerment at the individual, family, group, network and ultimately society levels while ensuring gender equity in a variety of social nomenclatures. Women have emerged from these groups with viable strategies to promote their self-reliability

and the sustainability of available and existing resources without necessarily relying on external aid. They are instruments of peace and reconciliation in their communities and are actively fight poverty and promoting awareness, empowerment, and gender equity through their participation in these welfare organizations at the grassroots level.

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¹Initially *baraza* were weekly meetings convened by the chiefs at which members of the community could come for briefings and dialogue with the administrators. They were provided a forum through which the government directly communicated with the people. They were often held on Mondays hence some communities refer to Monday as *baraza*. They are no longer held on a weekly basis but when they are held they are an opportunity for the people to meet with government representatives. Currently chiefs and their assistants capitalize on private and public functions such as funerals at which many people gather to communicate with them.

References

- Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL).
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PATIENCE WHEATLEY

Every Newsphoto Tells a Story

The old woman
white hair flying
hits the road
skirt up round her waist
rolled stockings
shabby underwear showing
as she
lambasts with her rolled
umbrella
a muscular young policeman

Behind her
a younger woman
perhaps sixty, robust
but outnumbered,
fights three more brave
policemen

Oh, think of the black scarfed
Mothers of the Disappeared
who circle, circle
the huge imperial square in
Buenos Aires
mourning sons
trussed up like chickens
and dropped alive from
airplanes.

And today a newsphoto of
General Pinochet
ecstatic
landing in Chile
prancing from his supposed
sickbed
into the cheers of supporters

lamentations of mothers,
sisters, wives
of tortured men and women

Patience Wheatley has had two collections of poetry published by Goose Lane Editions and lives in Kingston, Ontario.