



Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx)

PRESS RELEASE

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Rwandan group releases legal 'Healthcare Rights' community handbook

Handbook, legal project offer tools, model for integrated delivery of medico-legal services for HIV & sexual violence

Kigali and San Francisco, 25 July 2009. An important new legal advocacy tool, “Know Your Rights: A Community Handbook on HealthCare Rights and Other Laws,” is being released today by WE-ACTx for Hope, the Rwandan affiliate of the U.S. non-profit Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx). WE-ACTx is a global initiative that works in partnership with grassroots groups to deliver HIV/AIDS medical and other services via a holistic, empowerment model.

The legal handbook, available in English and Kinyarwanda, is an easy-to-understand review of existing Rwandan laws that can be used to educate and empower Rwandans about their legal rights. It covers topic areas such as: health care rights and HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB and pregnancy care; gender-based violence; stigma and discrimination based on gender or health status; property, wills and succession; and family law. A related children's rights handbook is in development.

“Community associations are using the handbook to help women and children access medical care, prevent evictions against people with HIV, and stand up against rape and other forms of sexual violence,” said Joseph Mafurebo, Legal Project Director of WE-ACTx for Hope, and a lawyer. “These are important steps toward making gender equality and human rights ‘real’ on the ground.”

The handbook was prepared in response to a request by local Rwandan NGO partners of WE-ACTx for Hope whose clients face a range of issues related to their legal rights. The handbook is approved for use as a national training tool by Rwanda’s Ministry of Justice and National AIDS Commission (CNLS).

WE-ACTx for Hope currently offers “train the trainer” workshops to grassroots advocates, law students and trauma counselors in Rwanda, to help them use the new handbook tool. WE-ACTx is also collaborating with groups in other African countries interested in adapting the handbook.

“Conditions vary dramatically among countries, but the local experts are always there”, says attorney Lucy Quacinella of WE-ACTx. “Providing ‘the glue’ and administrative support to bring people together to develop their own community legal education and advocacy tools is what the WE-ACTx for Hope Legal Project is all about .”

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WE-ACTx for Hope is a registered Rwandan NGO based in Kigali with an all-Rwandan staff that is an offshoot of WE-ACTx in the US. The Rwanda organization works with the Rwandan government and 24 local NGO partners.

WE-ACTx was formed in early 2004 by US-based advocates and physicians in response to a demand for help by Rwandan women survivors of genocidal rape. WE-ACTx began working in Rwanda as a global initiative in partnership with groups in Africa who are combating the dual epidemics of HIV and gender-based violence. In Rwanda, WE-ACTx runs three fixed clinics and mobile units that provide free, comprehensive HIV care, treatment and holistic supportive services to over 6,000 clients, many widows, survivors of genocide rape, and orphans.

A copy of the Handbook (English, Kinyarwanda) is available for download at:

English: http://www.we-actx.org/wp-content/uploads/WEACTx_BookEng_March_28_2008.pdf

Kinyarwanda: http://www.we-actx.org/wp-content/uploads/WEACTx_BookKn_June_16_2008.pdf

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NOTE FOR IAC PRESS: Press Conference, Wed, Aug. 6 at 3 pm, Media Room 3

A brief presentation on the Rwandan healthcare rights handbook will take place during a scheduled press conference on ‘War & Rape’, Wed., Aug 6, at 3 pm in IAC media Room 3. WE-ACTx staff will be on hand to speak to the media in English or Spanish.

www.we-actx.org