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THE WOMEN'S LEGAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE

**RWANDA TRIP REPORT
JUNE 29 – JULY 12, 2005**

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A Task Order Under the Women in Development IQC

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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SECTION I

Travel Dates, Destinations, and Purposes

A. Introduction

The USAID Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLR) is a task order under the Women in Development (WID) Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) which was signed by Chemonics International, Inc. on September 30, 2002. The WLR project team, in coordination with USAID/Rwanda, the Africa Bureau, and the USAID Office of Women in Development (EGAT/WID) selected Rwanda as one of the focus countries for WLR activities in Africa.

WLR is designed to strengthen and promote women's legal rights by providing opportunities for women to participate in the economic, social, and political aspects of life. In October 2004, WLR Chief of Party David Vaughn, Legal and Gender Specialist Lyn Beth Neylon, and EGAT/WID Gender Advisor Sahana Dharmapuri conducted a two-week assessment and analysis trip to Rwanda. WLR met with key staff at USAID/Rwanda, government officials, judges, a member of parliament, and several civil society organizations working on issues of particular importance to women. The WLR team completed a draft assessment and analysis report in December 2004 that was submitted to USAID/Rwanda and EGAT/WID for comment and review. In January 2005, Ms. Neylon conducted additional interviews and research from Washington D.C. to better understand the complex situation in Rwanda. Based on the findings and recommendations from the assessment and analysis report, as well as comments and suggestions from the Mission and other sources at USAID, WLR revised the assessment report for Rwanda, which was submitted and approved by USAID in February 2005.

B. Travel Dates and Destinations

WLR Chief of Party David Vaughn traveled to Kigali, Rwanda from July 6 to 9, 2005 and WLR Project Manager Rachael Pierotti traveled to Rwanda from June 29 to July 12, 2005. WLR Legal and Gender Specialist Lyn Beth Neylon was originally scheduled to travel to Rwanda with Ms. Pierotti, but was unable to for medical reasons. Mr. Vaughn added three working days in Kigali to a previously scheduled trip to southern Africa to ensure continued progress for WLR start-up in Rwanda.

C. Purpose of Travel

The purpose of this assignment was to initiate start-up activities for the Women's Legal Rights Initiative in Rwanda, including consultations with USAID/Rwanda and potential local partners on the scope of WLR activities and interviewing candidates for in-country staff positions. While in Rwanda, Mr. Vaughn and Ms. Pierotti established a bank account; identified two strong candidates for the long-term Rwanda office coordinator position; launched the search for an accounting and administration manager; initiated the registration process for the project with the Government of Rwanda; and commenced the search for office space. In addition, they met with a variety of stakeholders to discuss the WLR project, build relationships, assess commonalities of

interests and identify areas for possible cooperation. Mr. Vaughn and Ms. Pierotti also met with USAID/Rwanda staff to ensure Mission participation in the project design process.

SECTION II

Trip Results

A. Technical Consultations

Building on the findings and recommendations presented in the WLR Rwanda assessment report, Mr. Vaughn and Ms. Pierotti met with USAID/Rwanda, government representatives and civil society organizations to begin a collaborative process for designing WLR's activities in Rwanda. This included briefing the Mission on progress to date as well as short- and long-term plans. USAID/Rwanda Democracy and Governance Team Leader Benjamin Allen provided additional contacts and guidance on the scope of WLR activities, including key individuals at CARE International, the American Bar Association - Africa, and Avocat Sans Frontieres (ASF) while encouraging close coordination with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) in designing activities. Mission staff also noted a rise in violence, particularly against women, resulting from the Gacaca process and the recent release of prisoners who had committed crimes during the genocide (*genocidaires*). Program Officer Christopher Tocco encouraged cooperation on succession and inheritance rights with the USAID-funded land reform project being implemented by the Rural Development Institute (RDI). The WLR team agreed to work closely with Mr. Allen and Program Management Assistant Angèle Uwinganji in designing strategically focused activities with a strong monitoring and evaluation system.

Mr. Vaughn and Ms. Pierotti also had a very productive meeting with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Democracy Officer Stephen Kooshak and UNDP Gender Officer Berthilde Gahongayire as well as Felix Rusake and Hyacinthe Budomo of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), where possible opportunities for collaboration were identified related to linking civil society and Parliament in the legislative drafting process for a proposed domestic violence law (referred to as "gender-based violence law" by UNDP) and efforts to improve judicial enforcement. Here, it was proposed that WLR would work with civil society on raising public awareness about issues related to violence against women and contribute expertise through civil society organizations to the Parliament to assist in law drafting and add public participation to the drafting process thereby increasing support for the ultimate passage of the law. This would not only provide an opportunity to broaden the impact of WLR, but leverage limited resources with another project. Enhancing judicial capacity to enforce women's legal rights through training programs and work to improve the ability of Women's Councils at the national, regional and local cell level to give proper guidance and referrals to women was also seen as areas where WLR could add value.

The WLR team also received recommendations from Justine Uvuza, Director of Gender and Women's Empowerment at MIGEPROF, learning that domestic violence is a priority for the Ministry. Because the majority of domestic violence cases are brought to *abunzi* (community mediators), Ms. Uvuza suggested training *abunzi* on women's legal rights and gender sensitivity. Although the Ministry is campaigning for a review of the legal framework from a gender perspective, Ms. Uvuza added that work on implementation of laws is much more important and will have a greater impact. Ms. Uvuza also welcomed the idea of a focused pilot project that can

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have a demonstration effect. Given the importance of close collaboration with MIGEPROF, all WLR activities and materials will be made available to the Ministry for review.

Mr. Vaughn and Ms. Pierotti also consulted with Ben Ntanganira of the USAID/Rwanda-funded National Center for States Court (NCSC) judicial reform project. The NCSC is helping to promote judicial independence by improving the capacity of the judiciary to manage and defend their budgets. They are training judges on budget preparation and documentation and hope to train court staff on these issues once new judicial assistants are hired. Mr. Ntanganira also worked on the USAID-funded Associates in Rural Development (ARD) project on strengthening the Parliament, which included enhancing the capacity of members of the Women's Parliamentary Forum to draft legislation, speak publicly and analyze budgets. He noted the importance of donor coordination, particularly given the large number of organizations working on justice sector issues. Mr. Ntanganira suggested that WLR assist the Women's Parliamentary Forum in organizing public hearings, adding that violence against women could be a good focus area for the project. He also stressed the significance of being flexible in our work plan and addressing needs identified by stakeholders to ensure buy-in.

The WLR team followed up with Mary Balikungeri of the highly respected Rwanda Women's Network to further solidify a relationship initiated during the assessment visit. Ms. Balikungeri proposed work on succession and inheritance rights, including the publication of a brochure on the topic in simplified language as part of an awareness campaign for rural women. Finally, Jean Haguma of the Kigali Bar Association, an Avocat Sans Frontieres partner, recommended providing assistance to students at the legal aide clinic at the University of Butare, including assistance related to providing legal counseling to women and raising awareness about women's rights through student led training programs at the community level.

As a result of these consultations, the WLR team received greater input on potential focus areas from stakeholders as well as a better understanding of the social, economic and political context in Rwanda. Section IV of this report includes detailed information regarding meetings conducted by the WLR team and a list of contacts with telephone numbers and email addresses.

B. Administrative Start-Up

While in Rwanda, Ms. Pierotti and Mr. Vaughn established U.S. Dollar and Rwandan Franc bank accounts, identified first and second choice candidates for the position of coordinator, placed an advertisement and interviewed several candidates for the position of accounting and administration manager, researched the process of project registration, and began the search for office space in Kigali. USAID/Rwanda Executive Officer Hadiza Linganwa was very helpful in providing information about the registration process and locating potential office space as well as giving the WLR team a copy of the Mission's partner's manual.

Since the conclusion of the trip, the position of coordinator for the WLR Rwanda office was offered to and accepted by our first choice candidate, Rose Mukantabana. Ms. Mukantabana will begin long-term employment on September 12, 2005. The Rwanda office coordinator and assistant will continue collaboration with USAID/Rwanda to complete project registration, locate office space, and procure project equipment. The WLR home office team will also work closely

with Ms. Mukantabana to select a candidate for the accounting and administration manager position. WLR has already identified several qualified candidates for the position.

The WLR team will also establish a policy manual and train Rwanda-based staff on USAID regulations and Chemonics procedures, including personnel policies, procurement procedures, accounting regulations, and contract compliance. In addition, through a process of dialogue, consensus will be reached between the Washington-based legal specialists and the Rwanda-based team on the process for project activity design, activity approvals, and project monitoring and evaluation.

SECTION III

Next Steps and Recommendations

A. Next Steps

Discussions conducted during this start-up trip confirmed the findings of the assessment work conducted earlier by the WLR team. WLR activities will focus on issues related to violence against women, which may also include a link to the application of succession and inheritance laws. In addition to MIGEPROF, potential recipients of technical assistance may include *abunzi*, judges, lawyers, civil society advocates, and women's councils, among others. Possible partners in implementation of our activities are local civil society organizations, such as Haguruka, Seruka, Rwanda Women's Network, Kigali Bar Association, and the Legal Aide Clinic at the University of Butare.

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Based on these findings, the WLR team drafted a provisional country action plan for the period of August 1 to September 30, 2005 that presents the overall strategy for the start-up period. The provisional plan outlines steps to build relationships with possible partners, details the recruitment process with scopes of work, and sets dates for completion of a draft country action plan for October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006. The draft annual country action plan, which will be completed no later than September 30, will detail what will take place, when, with whom, what result, what the benchmarks are, what will be produced or delivered, and by what earliest feasible timetable. In late September or early October 2005, representatives from the WLR home office team will travel to Rwanda to finalize the country action plan with USAID/Rwanda and stakeholders, train local staff, and ensure proper establishment of all project office systems.

B. Recommendations

The WLR team highly recommends that the WLR Rwanda coordinator be fully integrated into the USAID/Rwanda democracy and governance team of implementing partners, including participation at monthly democracy and governance meetings at the Mission. We also recommend close coordination with other USAID/Rwanda projects and other donor projects, including but not limited to the new USAID civil society project, PEPFAR initiatives, the USAID/RDI land law project, as well as projects being implemented by UNDP, UNIFEM, Avocats Sans Frontiers, and the American Bar Association - Africa.

SECTION IV

Key Meetings and Contacts

A. Meetings

Wednesday, June 29

- Met with the office manager of the ADAR project, a USAID initiative being implemented by Chemonics International. We discussed the logistics of project start-up, including establishing a bank account, locating office space, and registering the project with the Government of Rwanda. We also discussed personnel policies and Rwandan tax requirements.
- Initiated contact with Mme. Hadiza Linganwa, USAID/Rwanda Executive Officer, to further discuss project start-up logistics.

Thursday, June 30

- Went to the bank to open an account for the project office. Told to return with further documentation.
- Placed an advertisement in the newspaper for the accounting and administration manager.
- Visited the office of the FEWSNET project, a USAID project being implemented by Chemonics International. Saw potential WLR office space in the same building as the FEWSNET office.

Friday, July 1 (Rwandan holiday)

- Visited four potential WLR office locations in addition to the one visited Thursday. None of the locations were ideal.

Saturday, July 2

- Finalized interview questions for accounting/admin manager and coordinator.
- Confirmed meeting and interview schedule for the following week.

Monday, July 4 (U.S. holiday)

- Prepared questions for meeting with the USAID/Rwanda Executive Officer.
- Conducted an interview for the accounting and administration manger position.

Tuesday, July 5

- Met with Angèle Uwinganji, USAID/Rwanda Democracy and Governance program management assistant. We discussed the WLR contract with USAID/Washington and logistically how WLR could work best with USAID/Rwanda. Ms. Uwinganji will be our

main contact at USAID/Rwanda. She offered to help us obtain the proper documentation to proceed with project registration with the Government of Rwanda. Ms. Uwinganji also gave us contact information for several potential WLR partners. She also scheduled a meeting for WLR with the legal officer at the Ministry of Gender and Family Protection (MIGEPROF).

- Returned to the bank and succeeded in establishing a bank account. Required to return to the bank later to retrieve documentation of the account.
- Met with Yvonne Darkwa-Poku of the American Bar Association - Africa. ABA-Africa is implementing an access to justice for women, children, and vulnerable populations (PLWA). Introduced WLR and decided that we would meet formally to discuss synergies between the projects once we were back in Washington D.C.

Wednesday, July 6

- Gave a presentation of WLR to USAID/Rwanda staff. Discussed synergies between WLR and several USAID/Rwanda projects.
- Consulted with USAID/Rwanda Executive Officer on project start-up process. Discussed project registration, obtained a copy of Rwanda's local employee compensation plan, and verified USAID/Rwanda contacts for assistance in office space and equipment procurement.
- Interviewed a candidate for Rwanda coordinator position.
- Deposited money in two newly established bank accounts. Required to return to the bank to retrieve check books.
- Met with Mary Balikungeri of Rwanda Women's Network. Discussed priorities for WLR and potential collaboration with the Rwanda Women's Network. All agreed that WLR activities must be targeted to ensure project impact.

Thursday, July 7

- Met with Ben Ntanganira of the NCSC project. NCSC is promoting judicial budgetary independence. Mr. Ntanganira used to work on an ARD parliamentary strengthening project, under which training was given to members of parliament, especially members of the women parliamentarians' forum. Mr. Ntanganira mentioned that there needs to be increased coordination between the Ministry of Justice and the Parliament on the drafting and implementation of laws. Also noted a need for better coordination among donors working in the justice sector. Suggested that domestic violence could be an area of focus for WLR.
- Interviewed three candidates for Rwanda coordinator position.
- Contacted Wesley Ndamukunda at USAID/Rwanda. He offered to help us with procurement of office space, computer equipment, and office equipment and furniture.

Friday, July 8

- Met with UNDP and UNIFEM. Attendees were Stephen Kooshak, UNDP governance office; Felix Rusake, UNIFEM; Berthilde Gahongayire, UNDP gender office; Hyacinthe Budomo, UNIFEM. UNDP currently has a project with the women parliamentarians to

help them finalize a five-year strategic plan. UNDP and UNIFEM together are helping the women parliamentarians draft a law against gender-based violence. UNIFEM is also linking gender and HIV/AIDS, especially as they relate to gender based violence. Suggested that WLR could work with the Women's Councils. UNDP and UNIFEM are not doing as much work with the judiciary or the "enforcement sector." Suggested also that NGOs want/need training in legislative drafting and interpreting legislation (especially through gender lense). Clearly, we must coordinate our activities with UNDP and UNIFEM.

- Debriefed at USAID with Ben Allen, Bonaventure, and Angèle Uwinganji. Discussed possible WLR/Rwanda themes of gender based violence and inheritance/succession. All agreed that WLR/Rwanda will have to clearly focus activities to achieve real impact. Ben Allen also stated that he would like to review our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to make sure that performance based project management will help us remain targeted in our activity planning.
- Meeting at MIGEPROF with Justine Uvuza, Director of Gender and Women's Empowerment (former Legal Officer) and Oda Gasiuzigwa, woman parliamentarian. The Ministry is no longer implementing projects; their new role is to coordinate and monitor. One current Ministry priority is domestic violence. Suggested that training is needed for the *abunzi* (community mediators) and the Women's Councils. Ms. Uvuza stated that although a legal review is important, application of the current law would have a greater effect. The Ministry likes the idea of pilot projects that can have demonstration effect. The Ministry also needs help coordinating and monitoring all activities. They emphasized the need for project sustainability. Strongly encouraged the idea of institutionalizing a training curriculum for *abunzi* or other actors in the judicial sector. Note: The Ministry would like to review our training materials before we reproduce them.
- Interviewed two candidates for Rwanda coordinator position.

Saturday, July 9

- Reviewed applications and scheduled interviews with accounting and administration manager candidates.

Monday, July 11

- Interviewed two accounting and administration manager candidates.
- Spoke with Ms. Unwinganji and Mr. Tocco at USAID/Rwanda to obtain a letter to help us proceed with project registration. Will require follow-up from the U.S.
- Visited the office space in the FEWSNET building again and met with landlord.

Tuesday, July 12

- Met with Jean Haguma, Battonier of the Kigali Bar Association. The Association offers various forms of free counseling. Have worked with Avocats Sans Frontiers. Suggested that the students in the legal aide clinic at the University of Butare need additional training. We will meet with the Bar Association again later to discuss potential collaboration.

B. Contacts

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