
***MORE THAN 2,300 TURN OUT FOR IJM-HOSTED COMMUNITY THEATER,
A CRITICAL PART OF LAND RIGHTS PROJECT IN RWANDA***

Rwanda, October 10, 2008 – From September 29 to October 1, 2008, International Justice Mission (IJM) hosted the community theater component of the USAID-funded Land Dispute Management Project (LDMP) in its project area of Jali Sector. An awareness-raising initiative to educate Rwandans about their land rights and to equip them to resolve land disputes justly, the community theater was a resounding success with more than 2,350 men, women and children attending.

Additional facts about the IJM-hosted community theater:

- The community theater was staged as part of IJM's land rights project in Rwanda. This project aims to protect the land rights of vulnerable Rwandans, notably widows and orphans, through legal aid and assistance, will-writing, education and awareness raising, and aftercare for victims of land rights violations.
- More than 2,350 men, women and children attended and the community theater, making it a resounding success. The community theater production was presented in three different cells of Jali Sector: Muko, Nyaburiba and Buhiza. Individuals from the neighboring cells Nkusi, Agateko and Nyakabungo also attended in great numbers. Prior to the show, a sound system played lively Kinyarwanda music attracting people from the surrounding area. Before the actors took to the stage, IJM Legal Consultant James Nuwagaba introduced IJM and the purpose of the community theater. He also conducted pre-test audience participation questions about land rights. After the performance, post-test questions were conducted to determine whether the audience understood more about their land rights as a result of the production. Further, following each production, IJM distributed fliers and invited IJM clients to testify about their experience with IJM and how a land dispute was resolved through mediation.
- The community theater was originally developed as a component of the USAID-funded Land Dispute Management Project (LDMP) implemented by Associates for Rural Development (ARD), the Rural Development Institute (RDI) and ARD subcontractor Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development (RISD). In June 2008, civil society representatives working in land rights were invited to use the government-approved LDMP material in other parts of Rwanda.
- IJM requested and obtained written permission from USAID and its partners to stage the LDMP community theater in Jali Sector in Gasabo District.
- IJM worked with the actors of the LDMP community theater, mostly local leaders of the neighbouring Sector of Gatsata in Gasabo District, to contextualize the theater to the Jali audience. IJM also worked with local authorities in Jali Sector to advertize and stage the theater. IJM announced the theater at the monthly Umuganda (a public work project held every last Saturday of the month) and hung posters advertising the theater. All the publicity materials issued by IJM acknowledged USAID, RISD, ARD and RDI as the organizations that developed the community theater.

- A DfID representative attended one of the presentations, as did a journalist from Radio Rwanda. Representatives from the National Land Centre, USAID, ARD and RDI also expressed interest in attending the community theater. Unfortunately owing to weather conditions, the final presentation scheduled for October 2, 2008, had to be cancelled. IJM intends to reschedule this presentation for a future date, and sees it as another critical opportunity for men, women and children in Rwanda to enjoy some entertainment while learning more about their land rights and the work of IJM.

For further information about IJM, please contact media@ijm.org or Amy E. Roth at aroth@ijm.org.

About International Justice Mission

International Justice Mission is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, land grabbing, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local governments to ensure immediate victim rescue, to prosecute perpetrators and to strengthen the community and civic factors that promote functioning public justice systems. IJM's multi-national staff work in 12 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.