

## **Women Organized: Building Community Philanthropy in 'Resource-Challenged' Settings**

Eva A. Maina Ayiera, Emerging Leaders, International Fellows Program ~ 2009

### **Abstract**

Women's merry-go-rounds or *chamas* have become an integral part of community life in Kenya. *Chamas* are self-help groups that seek to boost the economic capabilities of their members. They have facilitated economic empowerment for women and their families, particularly at the grassroots where patriarchy and the subjugation of women are common. In this paper, Eva A. Maina Ayiera investigates the potential of women's *chamas* to shape community giving patterns and empower women. In developing countries and in Kenya specifically, women stand on the periphery of community development designs. Their exclusion has hampered effective national and community development. At the same time, local communities are grappling with state apathy in facilitating community development. Institutionalized philanthropy, especially when tied to local groups like the *chamas*, presents a compelling case for direct citizen engagement in addressing the welfare challenges and improving their lives, without usurping the government's role or responsibilities.

Ms. Ayiera includes in her paper a series of recommendations of how *chamas* and other women's groups can be supported within Kenya. These recommendations include: documenting and sharing narratives of specific women within *chamas*; encouraging established institutions like the Kenya Community Development Foundation to partner with *chamas*; and connecting *chamas* with other on-the-ground women's groups that combine community empowerment and goals of social improvement.

To request the full version of the paper, please click [here](#).

