



## Raising Awareness of Women's Rights in Swaziland

In October 2007, 17 participants from eight organisations gathered at Skillshare International's offices in Swaziland for training on the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), women's rights and the Swaziland constitution, which had been agreed two years earlier.

The workshop, led by experts on gender issues in Swaziland, was a step towards mainstreaming gender into the participants' respective organisations. Those organisations represented micro-finance, community-based life skills training, national radio and television stations, abuse and gender-based violence, reproductive health, and the environment. Participants gained an understanding of how policies and legislation in Swaziland can be viewed through the lens of gender analysis, and how that context affects the problems their clients face, the effects on service delivery, and their personal experiences and lives.



In July 2008 project participants were asked to report back about how the project had changed the way they work. The Imbita Women's Trust is a micro-credit institution that enables women to secure loans, open independent bank accounts, and have a safe place for saving their money. More than 100 Imbita members were trained during this project. Although this group of women were already empowered in financial terms, Swazi laws have a crippling effect on their ability to develop and live independently.

During the course of the project, as well as training the entire staff of Imbita on Swazi legislation in relation to women's rights, Imbita was able to train representatives from all their groups, who also went out and trained other groups. As a follow up to the project, Imbita's Director has made a commitment to mainstream gender across Imbita, with a view to improving the way the organisation addresses women's rights.

In the environmental sector, women, in their role as home-makers, are central to establishing sustainable household practices. Without their buy-in, efforts to introduce sound environmental living practices are futile. REASWA, a renewable energy organisation, reported their main challenges as a lack of knowledge on energy issues and a lack of consultation with rural women in developing user-friendly technology. Organisations working in other sectors but with a grassroots presence committed to including the environmental sector in their future activities.

The training in 2007 and 2008 was a step towards increasing the knowledge of the average Swazi woman about her rights and the actions she can take to address the anomalies within Swazi legislation and policies. This awareness is being promoted widely by one of the lead facilitators, who is now co-hosting a radio show on the only Christian radio channel in Swaziland.

Photo shows an Imbita peer-educators workshop.