“Widowhood and property inheritance in Zimbabwe: Experiences of widows in Sikalenge ward, Binga District”

Misheck Dube
“Widowhood and property inheritance in Zimbabwe: Experiences of widows in Sikalenge ward, Binga District”

By

Misheck Dube

A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Sciences (Social Work)

In the Department of Social Work and Social Development

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

University of Fort Hare

November 2008
DEDICATION

I dedicate this Research Project to my mother Mrs D. Mumpande for the endless support offered to me during the entire study period. Despite all the ups and downs since the death of my father in 1984, she has been by my side to see me progress in my academic career.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My major debt of gratitude goes to my supervisor, the Head of the Department of Social Work and Social Development at Fort Hare, Mrs N.J. Mesatywa, whose inspiration, encouragement and mentorship has been sterling so as to make this huge task a possibility. In the advisory role, Mr L. Lushaba, my co-supervisor’s patience, hard work and leadership made a positive impact in my work. My heartfelt thanks also go to the participants in the study, without them the study would not have been possible.

I am also glad to give special thanks to the staff members of the Social Work Department who gave guidance during the workshops held during the early phases of the study. The same gratitude goes to fellow masters students from the Social Work and other departments who contributed to the successful completion of the study.

No words are adequate to thank the Programme Officer for Ntengwe For Community Development Trust Mrs J. Mpala and the Director of the Organization Mrs E. Markham for assistance rendered during the data collection process. I also thank the Ntengwe staff for supporting me during the study. Particular thanks should go to Million and Mrs J. Mpala for the transport offered to reach the participants in the study.

Special thanks also go to my family members who provided physical, social and emotional support to rejuvenate my energy for the study, particularly my mother with her everlasting love.

Much gratitude should also go to Mr P.B. Buligwamano, the Schools Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Officer of the Ministry of Education for the District of Binga for proof reading my interview transcripts.
DECLARATION

I Misheck Dube do hereby declare that this work with the exception of quotations or references which have been attributed to their authors, is entirely my own and has never been submitted elsewhere.

………………

Misheck Dube

25 November 2008
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ACRONYMS

AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CAFOD - Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
COHRE - Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
FAO - Food and Agricultural Organization
HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAFM - International Anglican Family Network
IGPs - Income Generating Projects
LAMA - Legal Age Majority Act
MU - Mothers’ Union
NGOs - Non-governmental Organizations
NSSA - National Social Security Authority
‘O’ Level - Ordinary Level
STIs - Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund
WILSA - Women and Law in Southern Africa
WIN News – Women’s International Network News
ZAN - Zimbabwe AIDS Network
Zimbabwean widows need to inherit property when their husbands die. Property, be it material or financial in nature, is a source of sustenance and wealth. Depriving women of property inheritance rights has untold consequences.

This study focuses on the property inheritance rights of widows in Zimbabwe in the Sikalenge Ward of Binga District. The aim of the study is to understand how property grabbing affects widows and to find possible solutions and intervention strategies social workers may use. The literature reviewed in the study was drawn from both the legal field and social work to create a link between the fields. The study was shaped by radical feminism for conceptualising property grabbing while the formulated intervention strategies utilised the empowerment model.

The study is qualitative in nature using interviews to collect data from ten widows and five social service providers who constitute the total of fifteen participants in the study. Data was analysed qualitatively using interpretive approaches and presentation is textual rather than statistical.

The main finding of the study is that widows are still being denied their inheritance rights despite the provision of such rights by the Intestate Succession Laws promulgated in November 1997 by the government of Zimbabwe. Moreover, the widows are not aware of the inheritance laws of Zimbabwe and hence did not seek any professional intervention. The few who attempted the legal process for recourse were not successful.

Even though it was minimally attempted, the study established that the main form of failed intervention tried by the women was legal in nature and suggests and emphasises an eminent need for Social Work intervention to supplement legal intervention.