



Annual Meeting

FREDERICTON

2026

June 11-13

*Deep roots.
Renewed growth.*



**Member
Education
Forum**

Connected Communities: Solutions from Around the World
Jaclyn Johnston (org), Nolwazi Mahlangu, Thulani Nkosi



Rooftops Canada
Abri International

Rooftops Canada Abri International

A world where everyone has a secure place to live in peace and dignity

About Us

Rooftops Canada is the international development program of social and cooperative housing organizations in Canada. We work to improve housing conditions, build sustainable communities and develop a shared vision of equitable global development.

Our vision is to achieve a world where everyone has a secure place to live in peace and dignity.



Our History

Since 1984, we have proudly carried co-operative values into our international work.

Co-op members play a vital role in Rooftops Canada's work through:

- Governance and Leadership
- Fundraising and Financial Support
- Knowledge exchange and capacity building
- Recognition and Awards



Women's Spaces Project



Local Partners



Kampala, Uganda
Shelter and Settlements
Alternatives

Huambo, Angola
Development Workshop

Johannesburg, South Africa
Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa

Nairobi, Kenya
Mazingira Institute



30

laws, policies and programs strengthened to protect women's rights to land, housing, and livelihoods

15

local practices transformed to better support women's access to land and housing

20,700

people in 4,000 households directly benefiting from more secure tenure, food security, and paralegal support

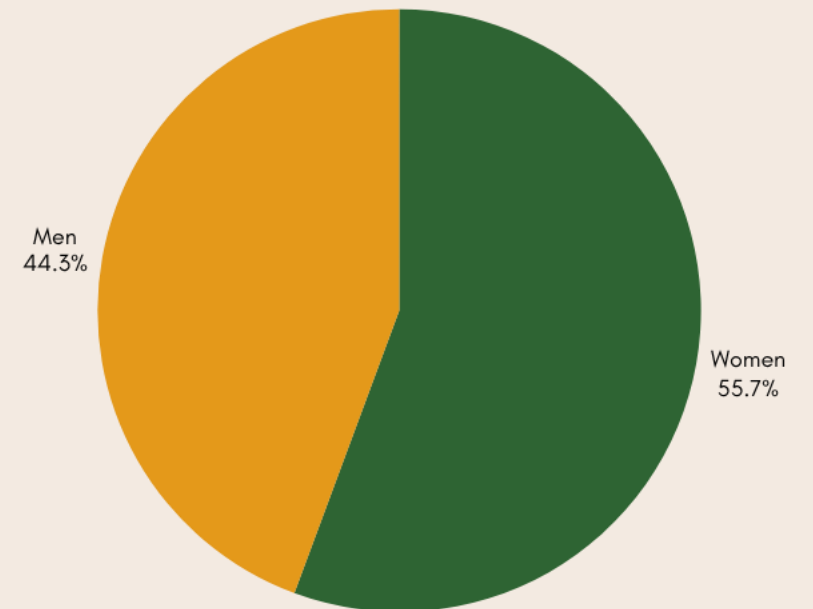
320+

households in Uganda applied for ownership certificates – over half will be issued to women

109,860

people benefiting from stronger legal frameworks and gender-responsive housing and land use policies

Total Project Beneficiaries 2022-2025





Rooftops Canada
Abri International



Rental Disputes in Inner-City of Johannesburg

12 June 2026

Nolwazi Mahlangu and Thulani Nkosi, SERI

Overview of the Rental Housing Sector

Rental housing is vital

- Approximately 22% of households nationally rent their accommodation.
- Over 40% nationally reside in conditions characterised as slums.
- Faces substantial challenges, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Three Key Rental Typologies

- Social and state-supported rental, delivered through social housing institutions and Community Residential Units (CRU).
- Inclusionary rental housing, produced by private developers through municipal planning requirements and incentives.
- Small-scale and informal community-based rental, including backyard dwellings and subdivided inner-city buildings.

Mixed Methodology

Primary Data

ICF group consultations with inner city residents.

Focus group with women inner city residents.

Expert Interviews:

Legal housing practitioners

Rental Housing Tribunal Practitioners

Secondary Data

Stakeholder engagement with Plan Act.

Literature

The Four Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Types of Rental Housing Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Mechanism #1 — Statutory Tribunal Resolution

- Formal dispute resolution through Rental Housing Tribunals (RHTs), specifically designed to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants.

Mechanism #2 — Litigation

- Formal legal proceedings in Magistrates' Courts or the High Court. The judicial litigation framework explicitly allows for court involvement.

Mechanism #3 — Legal Services

- Extra-judicial legal support (outside courts) Illegal advocacy, mediation, and pro bono services provided to vulnerable populations by NGOs and law firms.

Mechanism #4 — Community-Based Dispute Resolution

- Collective action, self-organization, and mutual support networks among tenants. Often not recognised formally yet proven effective in practice.

Five Recurring Dispute Patterns

Across the data, five recurring dispute patterns emerge:

1. Contractual and Administrative Violations

- Lease Non-Compliance
- Deposit Non-Compliance

2. Financial Exploitation

- Unlawful Rent Increases
- Unlawful Service Charges

3. Coercive Pressure Tactics

- Unlawful service disconnections
- Unlawful Lockouts

4. Poor Living Conditions and Landlord Neglect

- Lack of Maintenance
- Unlawful Eviction

5. Unlawful Service Charges and Billing Practices

Statutory and Judicial Dispute Resolution Mechanisms – weakness in the formal system

Regulatory Gaps and Inconsistencies

- Vague or missing definitions: The Rental Housing Act of 1999 fails to clearly define key terms such as 'hijacker' and 'dwelling', inviting conflicting interpretations.

Procedural Complexity and Formalism

- Increased formalism: Regulations introduced complex procedures difficult for laypersons to navigate; lack of plain-language guidance makes RHT processes intimidating.
- Lack of structured jurisprudence: RHTs have not developed a coherent body of case law decisions can feel arbitrary or unfair to tenants.

Financial Barriers and Trust Deficits

- Cost orders: Tribunals may impose legal fees on tenants who lose, discouraging low-income tenants from pursuing valid claims.
- Perceived bias: Some Tribunals decline to hear matters solely because tenants were in arrears, fuelling perceptions that the system favours landlords.

Tribunal Weaknesses: Practical and Institutional Failures

Weak Enforcement of Tribunal Rulings

- RHT decisions are not consistently enforced. Tenants may obtain favourable decisions, yet landlords face few consequences for ignoring orders.

Delays, Backlogs, and Capacity Constraints

- In cities like Johannesburg, Tribunals and Magistrates' Courts face heavy backlogs. Cases can take months or even years to finalise — leaving tenants exposed to ongoing harm.

High Cost of Litigation in the Courts

- Court proceedings are expensive, and many tenants appear without legal representation. Self-representation can weaken cases even when tenants have strong legal grounds.

Procedural Shortcuts Due to Overload

- Heavy caseloads sometimes lead judicial officers to rush or skip procedural steps, compromising fairness and the safeguards tenants rely on.

Legal Services: Extra-Judicial Mechanisms

Extra-judicial mechanisms refer to legal assistance, advice, advocacy, and negotiation that occur outside the courts and Tribunals.

Common Extra-Judicial Interventions

- Drafting letters of demand to landlords
- Mediating directly with landlords
- Verifying property ownership (especially in owner-abandoned buildings)
- Assisting tenants in filing Tribunal complaints
- Negotiating settlement agreements
- Pre-litigation dispute resolution to avoid formal hearings

SERI's Role in Inner-City Johannesburg

- Helping tenants articulate legal claims
- Assessing whether a matter should go to the Tribunal or the courts
- Preventing fraudulent rent collection
- Challenging unlawful eviction threats
- Facilitating mediation between landlords and organized tenant groups

Community-Based Dispute Resolution

Community-based mechanisms arise from collective organising among tenants, social rather than legal, relying on internal governance, mutual support networks, and building-level decision-making.

Privately Owned Buildings Without Committees

- Tenants act individually, leaving them vulnerable to intimidation, unlawful service disconnections, and retaliatory rent increases. ICF/SERI assist with letters of demand, ownership verification, and Tribunal referrals.

Privately Owned Buildings With Committees

- Committees act as intermediaries between landlords and tenants organising tenants, channelling grievances, negotiating rent issues and maintenance, and preventing landlords from singling out individual tenants.
- ICF emphasizes mediation first, with litigation used only when negotiations fail.

Self-Managed Buildings

- Where landlords are absent or inactive, tenants take over governance coordinating repairs, enforcing building rules, and mediating disputes. ICF provides negotiation support and legal guidance when disputes escalate.

Gendered Dimensions of Rental Disputes

Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

- Insecure or unaffordable rental housing makes it difficult for women to leave abusive relationships. Women are often forced to remain in exploitative environments because shelters offer only short-term relief and long-term rental options are scarce.

Forced Evictions

- Women suffer disproportionately when evicted facing discrimination in accessing alternative accommodation, carrying primary responsibility for children, and facing greater vulnerability to violence and economic insecurity.

Childcare Burden

- Rental disputes place a disproportionate burden on women, who carry primary responsibility for childcare and household management. Evictions and displacement intensify these pressures.

Gendered Dimensions of Rental Disputes

Poverty & Rental Vulnerability

- Black women, rural women, and female-headed households face higher unemployment and precarious work
- Cannot afford formal leases or deposits pushed into unsafe, informal arrangements
- Poverty limits access to legal protections, increasing exposure to eviction and exploitation.

Barriers to Formal Protections

- Most rely on verbal agreements with no written leases, receipts, or proof of payment making legal challenges nearly impossible
- Care duties, slow tribunal processes, and fear of landlord retaliation keep women away from formal dispute channels

Gendered Surveillance & Power Imbalances

- Sublettors monitor women's movements, visitors, and relationships undermining privacy and autonomy
- Informal arrangements (subletting, backyard rooms) offer no enforceable protections, leaving women exposed to arbitrary eviction and inflated charges

The Cost of Being a Woman

Safety, Security and Gender-Based Violence

- Safety is often the first and most decisive factor shaping women's housing choices.
- South Africa faces a national crisis more than 35% of women, an estimated 7.8 million, have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Children and Caregiving

- Women prioritise proximity to schools, clinics, and employment opportunities.
- They often choose more expensive housing simply to meet caregiving needs or remain in unsafe arrangements to preserve their children's education.

Gendered Financial Pressure

- Single-income, female-headed households regularly spend more than half their monthly income on rent.
- Women are often denied flexibility in negotiating payment plans or challenging unfair charges.

Health Risks Borne by Women

- Poor sanitation, uncollected waste, and damp living conditions contribute to chronic illness disproportionately affecting women who manage domestic tasks.
- SERI consultations has documented mental health burdens which includes constant threats of eviction, harassment by landlords, and the ever-present fear of violence.



ICF Women's Desk

DISPUTES BEFORE THE COURTS



Dladla v City of Johannesburg 2018 (2) SA 327 (CC)

- This case concerned the constitutionality of the Rules put in place to govern the people who were residing in a government sponsored accommodation.
- The rules separated married couples and permanent life partners of the opposite gender. In other words, the rules created a situation where men and women, regardless of marital status and family ties, were placed in different sections of the building.
- In addition to this, the rules prohibited what was called “loitering during the day.” To prevent loitering during the day the rules provided that the residents could not be in the building during the day.
- SERI argued that the rules were unconstitutional in that they infringed on a number of rights of the residents.
- This case has become the blue print of what is allowed and not allowed not only in government sponsored accommodation, but in every accommodation regardless of its nature.

Joseph v City of Johannesburg 2010 (3) SA 55 (CC)

- This case was about the legality of electricity disconnections in a rented accommodation.
- The issue was that the residents paid their rent together with charges for services to the landlord. However the landlord, who had a contract with the City, was not paying over the money for the services to the City.
- The debt escalated and as part of its debt recovery the City disconnected the electricity supply in order to compel payment. The landlord was not affected by this because he was not living in the building.
- The residents were as a result caught between a rock and a hard place. They decided to sue, not the landlord but the City for disconnecting.
- The Court found that because the City knew there were people living in that building, the City owed those people a public law duty to inform them that their electricity bill was not paid and that disconnections would follow.
- Because the City did not inform the residents, the disconnection was found unlawful. This case has assisted and continues to assist residents in rented accommodation who pay for the services to the landlord from being victims of disconnections in the event that the landlord does not pay the service provider.



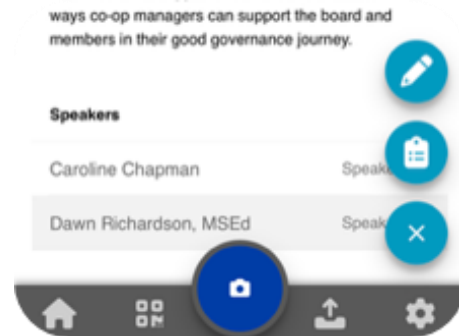
BASIC SERVICES LITIGATION ON GOING

- We have recently lodged a new case where we are challenging the City for failing to provide basic services in its sponsored buildings.
- We have grouped several City sponsored buildings, looked at the extent to which basic services like water, electricity and sanitation are provided or made available to the residents. We found that in many of the City sponsored buildings.
- We found that basic services were either not provided at all or were provided in an inconsistent haphazard manner. We are challenging this on constitutional grounds.

Before you go

We need your help to do better!
Fill out a paper evaluation, fold in half and leave it in the room.
Or fill out a digital evaluation using our conference app.

Thanks!



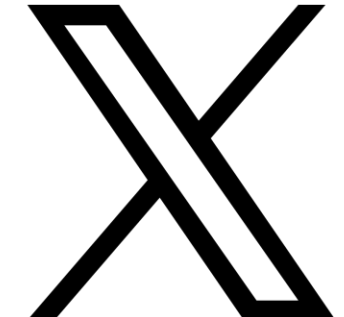
When you get home

Find today's workshop materials in the resources section on our website:

chfcanada.coop/education/resources

Share what you've learned on social media!

- Post photos, favourite moments, or key learnings from today's workshops on social media
- Tag us @chfcanada
- Use the hashtag #CHFCanada2026



The National Education Committee presents

ONLINE LEARNING

Self-Paced

Move through the content when it suits you.



Courses

Fulfilling your legal duties as a board director

Taking effective meeting minutes

Chair like a champion

Personal information protection

Identity affirming language

Maintenance 101

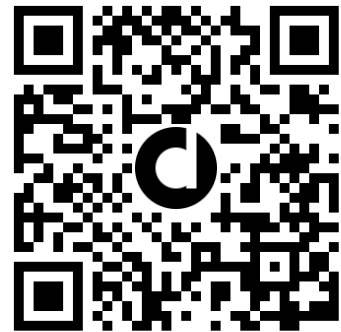
Financial statements 101

- ✔ For board directors, co-op members, and staff
- ✔ \$30 per course
- ✔ Many courses to choose from
- ✔ 30 minutes per course
- ✔ Requires internet connection
- ✔ Develop practical skills and gain knowledge



TAKE ACTION TODAY!

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**YOU HOLD
THE KEY**

Protect affordable homes
Renew rental assistance now



Reminders

- **Voting in CHF Canada National Business meeting happens on Saturday.** Your co-op's delegate must be there in order to vote. The delegate can pick up a voting device at conference services.
- **All coffee breaks will be held in the tradeshow area!** Make sure you visit all the tradeshow exhibitors so that you can complete the bingo card (found in your bag) and have a chance to win prizes.