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STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS TO CHAMPION GENDER EQUALITY IN ZAMBIA

LESSONS LEARNED PILOTING GENDER GUIDELINES FOR NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

INTEGRATED LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE TASK ORDER UNDER THE STRENGTHENING TENURE AND RESOURCE RIGHTS II (STARR II) IDIQ

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Cover Photo: Work planning for the implementation of the Gender Guidelines in the Mphuka Chiefdom in March 2022. Photo credit: ILRG.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COMACO	Community Markets for Conservation
CRB	Community Resources Board
DNPW	Department of National Parks and Wildlife
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HoC	House of Chiefs
ICF	International Crane Foundation
ILRG	Integrated Land and Resource Governance Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

I.0 INTRODUCTION

Between 2019 to 2023, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG) program provided technical and financial support to the House of Chiefs (HoC) in Zambia to increase the capacity of traditional leaders in championing gender equality and promoting inclusive development in chiefdom administration. The intervention aimed to enhance the capacity of traditional leaders to play an effective role in shifting harmful gender norms related to women’s land rights, and participation in land governance and natural resource management. Zambia’s customary chiefs play a central role in establishing the customary rules that govern natural resource management and, in the allocation and administration of over 75 percent of Zambia’s land area. They are also key guardians of local culture and social relationships, particularly gender norms, for the majority of Zambia’s population and as such are important champions to shift norms that restrict women’s land rights.

The development of the [Gender Guidelines for Traditional Leaders in Management of Natural Resources in the Chiefdoms](#) (from hereon, referred to as the Gender Guidelines) was an initiative of a selection of the Chiefs/Chieftainess in the HoC who desired to find a solution to the pressing gender equality issues in their chiefdom administration. The initiative was led by a team of six traditional leaders that formed the Gender Committee at the HoC in 2020 with the aim of developing a resource to aid gender integration in natural resource management and chiefdom administration. A consultative process identified various entry points, including sectors, themes, and cross-cutting issues:

TABLE I. OVERVIEW OF SECTORS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Sectors	Themes
Natural resources (forestry, wildlife)	Policy
Land	Governance
Water resources	Socio-cultural issues
Climate change	Empowerment of women
Agriculture	Gender-based violence (GBV)
Child, early, and forced marriage and unions	Knowledge management
Education	

The Gender Guidelines provide general direction for integrating gender equality into resource management and a set of practical measures that can be adapted and contextualized based on customs and traditional systems in each chiefdom. Once implemented, the Gender Guidelines were expected to increase the contributions of traditional leaders to the promotion of gender equality and inclusive development in Zambia. The Guidelines were launched in 2021 and subsequently disseminated to all 288 chiefs across the country. ILRG piloted and monitored the implementation of the Gender Guidelines in two Chiefdoms. This report documents the implementation processes in the two Chiefdoms, reflecting on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned in their use as a tool to strengthen the capacity of traditional leaders to shift harmful gender norms and increase the participation of women in land and natural resource governance. The report identifies opportunities and recommendations for stakeholders on how to further support traditional leaders to lead gender equality in local governance.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Gender inequality is recognized as one of the major developmental challenges for Zambia in its national development plans and the government is committed to implement efforts to reduce gender inequality and empower women to participate in the development processes at all levels (8th National Development Plan). Despite the provision of equal rights for men and women in the plan and Zambia's Constitution, gender disparities continue to disadvantage women's participation at various levels and limit their ability to benefit from development investments. The government of Zambia formulated the [National Gender Policy](#) with strategies for addressing gender inequality. According to the Policy, traditional leaders should act as champions of gender equality in fostering development at local levels. The 2011 Anti-Gender Based Violence Act and the Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2016 give legal mandate to the government and all other stakeholders to advance affirmative action, address GBV, empower women and ensure gender integration in development processes. However, despite these legal protections, Zambia's dual legal system allows statutory and customary law to operate side by side and as such, the rights which women enjoy under statutory law may not necessarily be observed under customary law. In some cases, state systems defer to customary law, such as in access to and inheritance of land. This leaves women, as well as other vulnerable groups, exposed to discriminatory practices and harmful gender norms.

Traditional leaders preside over customary law, and as a result have a large role to play in establishing, maintaining, and shifting acceptable norms. Zambia's traditional leadership structure consists of 288 chieftainesses and chiefs who work within a decentralized system. The powers of the chief, their advisors (known in much of the country as indunas) and village headpersons to administer the affairs of the chiefdom are based on evolved customs and traditions, and in many cases are adapted to the preferences of individual chiefs. As an institution, traditional authority in Zambia is widely accepted and valued across society. Their hereditary role is honored and highly influential among subjects and the source of their political, social, economic, and cultural power. They are seen as indigenous leaders who have the best interests of the subjects at heart. However, the traditional leadership system in Zambia is complex. The different chiefdoms have varying cultural histories, contexts, and traditional practices. The capabilities of individual chiefs are also varied, which can impact the rigidity of the traditional system and its influence on cultural and social norms.

What are gender norms?

Gender norms are the unwritten or informal rules about what is typical or appropriate in a setting, based on biological sex and/or social perceptions of gender. Gender norms determine how people should or should not behave according to their gender and how people of different genders should interact. Not all gender norms are negative, but harmful gender norms can normalize and reinforce gender inequality and limit women's access to resources and decision-making power.

Gender inequality is pervasive in both statutory and customary land access, ownership, inheritance, and control. Only 22 percent of land under state tenure is owned by women (National Implementation Plan, 2022) and women remain disadvantaged in customary areas (Spichiger R & Kabala E, 2014). Many norms and practices related to the administration of customary land are discriminatory against women. Women commonly access land through their spouse (and spouse's family), which leaves them particularly vulnerable to losing access to land in cases of divorce or spousal death. Even in matrilineal communities where a husband may access land through a woman's family, male relatives are the predominant decision-makers over land use, including land disposition and income from the sale of crops. Under customary law, chiefs act as the final decision maker on disputes over land and inheritance within households and communities. However, local headpersons and indunas carry out much of this enforcement of cultural norms and most issues never reach the level of the chief. For this reason of

their ability to influence chieftdom structures, headpersons and indunas are important potential gender champions of gender equality in land and women's land rights.

Key harmful gender norms around land in Zambia

- Land belongs to the man as head of the family. Women are not entitled to land ownership. The man pays a *lobola* or bride price to the wife's parents which establishes his right over the wife and children.
- Customary land is inherited often by sons or male relatives. Daughters are expected to marry and live in their husband's village.
- In matrilineal systems, property is inherited through the female line and land normally passes to the nearest matrilineal male, usually a nephew of the deceased and not necessarily the sons.
- In matrilineal systems, land is inherited by women, but men control decisions and are generally reluctant to invest in the land because the fruits of their labor would be inherited by their wives' male relatives.
- If a woman is divorced or widowed, she loses access to the land and must go back to her family.
- Women have access to land to provide labor and are expected to grow "women's crops" for household consumption, not for commercial sale.
- Divorced or widowed women and men are expected to remarry, but men maintain ownership of their land/property in case of a new marriage.
- Men control most decision-making and women should consent to their decisions.
- Leadership belongs to men – women who take up leadership positions are ostracized, considered rebellious or social misfits.

Extracted from Hall, M., et al, 2017: USAID Tenure and Global Climate Change Program

Women also face barriers in accessing forest and wildlife resources and sharing benefits derived from them. Although women are the primary collectors of fuelwood and often are heavily involved in the production of non-timber forest products such as honey, tubers, and fruits, they have limited decision-making power and control over resources at the household and community levels. In Zambia, natural resource governance is mostly devolved to the local level, through community governance institutions. However, these institutions are often weak and male-dominated. For instance, the share of women in Community Resources Boards (CRBs), governance bodies that manage wildlife resources at the local level, range from zero to ten percent (ZCRBA, 2020). Women's low participation is due to lower literacy levels and access to information, as well as gender norms that exclude women from public life and assign unpaid household and childcare responsibilities to women, constraining their time and mobility to attend public engagements. When women do participate in natural resource governance, they are often perceived as defying traditional gender norms by entering male-dominated public spaces. They may face public pushback, ostracism, and an increased risk of GBV. A 2020 pilot to increase the representation of women in community resource boards found that when traditional leaders encouraged women to participate in community governance, representation increased to over 40 percent (Malasha, 2020), demonstrating the importance of traditional leaderships as champions of gender equality in the natural resource sector.

Cultural systems are not static and indeed the cultural system in Zambia continues to evolve, and some harmful gender norms have started to change. Younger chieftainesses and chiefs, often with formal education, are increasingly open to inclusive development approaches in their chiefdoms (Hall, M. et al, 2017). However, while this openness may be seen at the level of the chief, indunas and headpersons are much slower to adopt changes, holding on to gender norms that disadvantage women. Indunas and headpersons are generally less exposed to information and education, including national policy and other influences from outside of the community, and may therefore be resistant to norms change. Additionally,

they are the “frontline” for social changes and face the challenges of implementing customary rules. In the case of gender norms, they will need to use their social influence to combat accepted negative practices. This can make these individuals wary of championing change. International and national non-governmental organizations have supported some chiefs/chieftainesses to successfully advocate for gender equality issues such as combatting child, early, and forced marriage and gender-based violence in their chiefdoms, but there has been less focus on advancing women’s empowerment related to land and resource governance. Interventions often target the chief/chieftainess but rarely focus on indunas and headpersons, ignoring the power and influence that exists at other levels of the traditional authority. In addition, interventions that target traditional leaders often focus on gender awareness and rarely offer practical approaches on how they can champion gender equality and bring change.



Launch of Gender Guidelines for Traditional Leaders with the presence of officials from USAID, the House of Chiefs, the Ministry of Gender, and the Ministry of Local Government.
ILRG

To address these challenges, in 2021 ILRG supported the HoC to develop Gender Guidelines to equip chiefs with knowledge and practical tools to promote gender equality in their chiefdoms. The resource was intended for traditional leadership to plan and implement locally driven gender innovations and effectively operationalize their mandate as champions of gender equality provided for in the National Gender Policy. A consultative process was adopted to develop the Gender Guidelines, led by the Gender Committee of the HoC. Five consultative meetings were held, including a validation meeting with chiefs in and outside the HoC whose ideas helped shape the final content. All 288 Chiefs/Chieftainess had an opportunity to provide input during dissemination meetings held alongside the Provincial Chiefs Council

meetings in September 2021. The Guidelines were subsequently launched in November 2021 by Zambia’s Minister for Local Government and Rural Development.

The Gender Guidelines give broad direction and are expected to be adapted to the local context during implementation. They provide guidance on how to strengthen gender equality in the chiefdom’s policies and governance and address discriminatory gender norms that hinder women’s participation in leadership and in land and natural resource governance (HoC, 2021).

TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE GENDER GUIDELINES

Sector	Critical Questions Addressed	Intervention Areas
Natural resource sector		
Land	Analysis of gender norms and practices in the chiefdom that impact gender equality in land, forestry, wildlife, water, climate change, and agriculture	Chiefdom policy
Forestry		Governance
Wildlife		Socio-cultural issues
Water resources	Constraints and opportunities for equitable participation and inclusion of women in land, forestry, wildlife, water, climate change, and agriculture	Empowerment of women
Climate change		Gender-based violence (GBV)
Agriculture		Knowledge management
	Strategies by traditional leaders to promote gender equality and	

	inclusion in land, forestry, wildlife, water, climate change and agriculture	
<i>Cross-cutting issues</i>		
Child, early, and forced marriage Education	<p>Analysis of gender norms and practices in the chiefdom that impact the education of girls and child, early, and forced marriages and unions</p> <p>Constraints and opportunities to address child, early, and forced marriages and unions and promote the education of girls</p> <p>Strategies by traditional leaders to address child, early, and forced marriages and promote the education of girls</p>	<p>Chiefdom policy</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>Socio-cultural issues</p> <p>Empowerment of women</p> <p>GBV</p> <p>Knowledge management</p>

3.0 PILOTING THE GENDER GUIDELINES

ILRG worked in two chiefdoms to pilot the implementation of the gender guidelines, the Muwezwa Chiefdom led by Chieftainess Muwezwa of the Ila people of Itezhi Tezhi District in Southern Province and the Mphuka Chiefdom led by Chief Mphuka of the Chikunda people of the Luangwa District in Lusaka Province¹. Their selection was based on their own expressed intention to facilitate capacity strengthening within the traditional leadership of their chiefdoms to advance gender equality. These leaders had also agreed that the activity would not be externally funded. Instead, the effort would be implemented primarily through the Chiefs' own resources and existing governance structures and meetings. This approach was designed to promote ownership and demonstrate that the Gender Guidelines could be implemented without external support, thus increasing opportunities for sustainability and replicability. The Chieftainess and Chief implemented the Gender Guidelines at the chiefdom level, starting with awareness raising, planning and consultation with the subjects, implementing activities, and coordinating partnerships in their respective chiefdoms. The section below outlines the implementation process of the Gender Guidelines and shares experiences from the two chiefdoms.

1. Dialogue and awareness raising with indunas and headpersons

In the Muwezwa Chiefdom, the implementation process started with the Chieftainess calling a meeting of all traditional leaders. Taking advantage of a scheduled Game Management Area planning meeting, the Chieftainess introduced the Gender Guidelines to the indunas and headpersons. The full-day meeting was held at a local school with 86 headpersons in attendance, along with other stakeholders that work in the Chiefdom. The Chieftainess divided the traditional leaders into nine groups, each tasked with reviewing a theme in the guidelines: land, forestry, wildlife, water, climate change, agriculture, fisheries, education, and child and early marriage. After reading their respective thematic section to understand the gender issues raised, the traditional leaders were asked to brainstorm measures that could be undertaken by the Chiefdom to address the issue. During the discussions, the Chieftainess emphasized that the headpersons should think of locally viable actions that could be implemented without (or with minimal) external support.

Staff from various organizations supporting development initiatives in the Chiefdom were invited to join the discussions to become familiar with the initiative and think about how their programs and activities align, or could align, with the Guidelines. These stakeholders included the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), International Crane Foundation (ICF), Birdwatch, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), area councilors, Ward Development Committee members, CRB members, government staff from the surrounding schools, health, fisheries & livestock, and veterinary departments, and a local community radio station. After the group work, each thematic group presented highlights from their discussion. The process helped to sensitize the traditional leaders and development actors on gender issues and priorities in each thematic area and to outline a proposed list of interventions.

A different process was followed in the Mphuka Chiefdom. The Chief began the session by presenting highlights from the Gender Guidelines for each thematic area, contextualizing the issues within the Chiefdom and drawing attention to what needed to change. The Chief then opened up the floor for discussion. The full-day meeting was held at the palace and attended by 87 indunas, village headpersons, and village committee members. After the discussion, the traditional leaders agreed to prioritize and act

¹ The traditional leaders for these two chiefdoms were members of the HoC and part of the Gender Committee during the development of the gender guidelines. However, at the time of implementation, their terms in the HoC had ended.

on gender issues in land, agriculture, wildlife, climate change, forestry, education, and child marriage. However, this first meeting did not reach actions to be taken, and a second meeting was required.



Gender Guidelines induna awareness meeting in the Mphuka Chiefdom in February 2022, ILRG

The outcomes of the dialogue and planning meetings in both Chiefdoms were mixed. While some headpersons were supportive of implementing the agreed-upon gender equality actions in the Chiefdoms, some were resistant and advised against altering traditional practices. In Muwezwa Chiefdom, the Chieftainess responded by initially working with the supportive group and later facilitating gender training for all leaders. This approach helped foster a better understanding of gender equality, thereby breaking down misconceptions and reducing resistance. In the Mphuka Chiefdom, the Chief allowed more time for

dialogue among the headpersons, weighing the merits and challenges of each point of disagreement to reach a conclusion. In the end, not everyone accepted the need for change, but all agreed to deprioritize the contentious issues and proceed to implement the Chiefdom action plan.

In the Mphuka Chiefdom, the traditional leaders formed a working committee (10 indunas and five headpersons) tasked with coordinating implementation. The committee was later incorporated as part of the Chiefdom Development Trust structure. The process presented risks, as the Chief/Chieftainess had to be powerful enough to guide discussions and move his/her advisors toward shifting traditional practices and social norms. While power is ultimately held by the chief, it is clear that each must use their own political and social capital to influence change. It is a delicate balance to press for changes in cultural practices and maintain the loyalty of indunas and headpersons. In each of the two cases presented, the Chiefs took responsibility themselves, but it could be helpful in other chiefdoms to work with smaller groups of champions to reduce the stress on the individual power of the chief.

2. Conducting of consultations and awareness raising among the subjects

At the village level, the indunas and headpersons were responsible for disseminating information to community members. They did this both through individual interactions as well as group meetings, highlighting the gender equality concerns raised in the Guidelines and proposed actions to address them. In Muwezwa, the Chieftainess invited 21 supportive senior headpersons (19 men and two women) and tasked them to collect and organize feedback from the villages on the Guidelines and proposed interventions. The reaction from community members in both Chiefdoms was generally positive but when it came to implementation, not all village headpersons carried out awareness raising, especially those that did not agree with the Guidelines. However, through cross-village interactions and chiefdom-level meetings, the message appeared to have spread through all villages. In Mphuka, the Chief used the traditional village visits and an annual cultural ceremony to disseminate the intentions of the traditional leadership to promote gender equality. In Muwezwa, the Chieftainess used traditional courts to create awareness of gender equality actions of the Chiefdom. In both Chiefdoms, the traditional leaders continued to disseminate the Gender Guidelines to stakeholders during courtesy calls and when invited to various meetings. While some of the NGO partners have changed their implementation strategies and carried out direct work on gender norms at the community levels, this work has not evaluated the community impact of the engagement. We expect that further follow up would be required to examine the extent to which individual community behaviors have been influenced by the process.

3. Developing of an action plan

The planning stage of the work occurred differently in the two Chiefdoms. In Muwezwa, the committee of supportive senior headpersons decided to deprioritize activities to address gender equality in the mining sector, a thematic area that was less of an issue to the Chiefdom and focus on all other thematic areas. There were several contentious gender issues that the indunas and headpersons opposed. The headpersons strongly argued against implementing the Gender Guidelines independently, instead favoring an integrated implementation approach that focused on broader development issues in the Chiefdom. As a compromise, the Chieftainess allowed the team to review the list of gender actions and add other pertinent issues based on feedback from the villages to prepare a consolidated action plan. This request was welcomed, as it indicated that the leaders were considering the most pragmatic ways to continue the work.

In the Mphuka Chiefdom, the working group committee held a 2-day meeting hosted by the Chief at the palace to consolidate the action plan. They reviewed the actions that were agreed on during the awareness meetings and considered the feedback from the villages. The committee developed an implementation strategy that included actions that could be implemented using the traditional system and Chiefdom resources and actions that required external support. The committee allowed sufficient time for planning, which gave further opportunities for dialogue between the Chief and advisors to reach common ground. Despite the lack of consensus on the planned actions, the Chief allowed implementation of the non-contentious issues to commence, opting to delay implementation of the contentious issues to provide more time for awareness raising and discussion with community members on the benefits of the proposed changes. The Chief instructed the formalization of the Chiefdom Trust Fund, a fund established to receive donations from the local community. The action plan was shared with all village headpersons and later with other stakeholders working in the chiefdom. Identified stakeholders in Mphuka chiefdom included government (Agriculture, DNPW, Community Development, Ministry of Education) and NGOs (Medeem, Medici Land Governance, BioCarbon Partners, Conservation Lower Zambezi, Child Fund).



Advisors to Chieftainess Muwezwa in Itezhi-Tezhi District during a meeting on the Gender Guidelines. ILRG

TABLE 3. CONTENTIOUS ISSUES IN THE CHIEFDOMS

Muwezwa Chiefdom	Mphuka Chiefdom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child, Early, and Forced Marriages and Unions: Headpersons maintained that their culture allowed a man to have control over a wife, and a girl to get married once she has reached puberty, especially if she is not in school. The feedback from the community consultations also revealed that most subjects were resistant to change. • Gender-Based Violence: There was a fear that the social empowerment of women could upset traditional gender norms that require women to be subservient to men and lead to a reversal where men faced increased risk of GBV. Headpersons also objected to supporting women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing women to be allocated land. Headpersons insisted that the traditional practice on land continues to hold in favor of men. The tradition recognizes men over women for land allocation, considered heads of the household, and therefore have the right to land. • Banning charcoal trading. In many communities, charcoal trading is women-dominated, and a source of income to help feed families. They feared banning charcoal trading could worsen hunger as women would be failing to provide for families. • Regulation of field activities to curb human-wildlife conflict. The conflict affects women and children more than men because of crop

<p>in leadership roles, which they felt went against the gender norm of men being leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s Economic Empowerment: Women’s economic empowerment was objected to and seen as a source of conflict in the household. Traditional leaders held misconceptions about women’s empowerment, associating it with giving women the power to disrespect their husbands and demean their role in the family. 	<p>farming which is traditionally role for women and as means of livelihood. As a result, women and children often come into conflict with animals, as Mphuka borders Lower Zambezi National Park. The traditional leaders, mostly men, were not willing to put up any regulation to change the role of women in providing labor for the fields.</p>
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4. Engaging with stakeholders

To ensure organizations working in the Chiefdoms were aware of the gender activities being undertaken by the traditional authority, stakeholder consultative meetings were held in both Chiefdoms. In Muwezwa, external stakeholder involvement was initiated at the very beginning of the process i.e., during the dissemination of the Gender Guidelines and after the action plan was developed another meeting for stakeholders was held. A meeting with stakeholders allowed the Chieftainess to understand areas of interest for various organizations and identify opportunities for collaboration. In Mphuka, the involvement of external stakeholders was done after the action plan was developed and agreed upon. The Chief organized a stakeholder meeting to share the implementation plan, promote collaboration, and seek external resources for implementation. This was particularly important in the Mphuka Chiefdom because some headpersons were not keen on investing their own resources to implement gender equality actions, instead expecting NGOs to invest.

In both cases, the stakeholder meetings produced a shared agenda between the traditional authority and organizations present in the Chiefdom. Organizations were impressed with the traditional authority’s commitment to addressing harmful gender norms; in the Mphuka Chiefdom, organizations noted that strong harmful gender norms negatively impacted their work, but they had experienced little cooperation to date from the headpersons. Most of the organizations that attended committed to integrating gender into their programs to support the efforts of the traditional authority.

The two Chiefdoms had different social, economic, and cultural contexts, with different gender equality issues and harmful gender norms.

TABLE 4. CONTEXT AND KEY GENDER NORMS IN THE CHIEFDOMS

	Mphuka Chiefdom	Muwezwa Chiefdom
Context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hunting and militaristic tradition, with present livelihoods relying on fishing and farming. 2. Some cultural values and traditions shifting due to the proximity to urban life and migration due to fish trading. 3. Subjects are required to give a token of appreciation, money or otherwise but something of good value (<i>impaizhyo</i>) to chieftainess or chief to be allocated land. Traditionally men pay the <i>impaizhyo</i> and women are rarely able to do so due to lack of control of finances, resulting in more men being allocated land. 4. GBV is tolerated against women. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tradition and culture are shaped largely around cattle herding, fishing, and some agricultural activities. 2. Strong presence of polygamist tradition. 3. Land is only allocated to men and availability of land is low since most of the land belonged to larger families through inheritance. 4. In addition to traditional practices that allow child and early marriage, poverty motivates families to marry young girls off to obtain resources through bride price. 5. GBV against women is tolerated.

Key Harmful Gender Norms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Men are providers and women provide labor and take care of the household. 2. Men are expected to go out to fish and women to the field to find/ produce food. 3. Men are responsible for the sale of harvested crops, even when women are doing most of the farming activities. 4. In the event of a spouse's death or divorce, a woman is expected to leave the land and return to her home village, as the land is seen as belonging to the husband's family. 5. Women can only access water resources in certain places and men often sexually exploit women to provide them with access to water. 6. Men are considered heads of household, so land is allocated to men. 7. Parents can marry their daughters when they reach puberty. 8. Traditional leadership is men's domain. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Men are providers and women provide labor and take care of the household. 2. Men are responsible for the sale of harvested crops, even when women are doing most of the farming activities. 3. Women can only access water resources in certain places and men often sexually exploit women to provide them with access to water. 4. Women only grow "women's crops" such as groundnuts and only use traditional, labor-intensive practices, while men can plow fields using cattle. 5. Parents can marry their daughters when they reach puberty. 6. A man can elope with a girl (<i>kutihya</i>) without parental consent. 7. Wealth is measured by the number of cattle owned and hence women are mostly viewed as poor. 8. Only men and boys can herd cattle.
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5. Coordinating implementation and monitoring

Despite contextual differences, the implementation of Gender Guidelines provided a forum and tools for the planning and implementation of activities by the traditional authority and other stakeholders around gender equality and other development issues. Implementation of the agreed action plans took place at three levels:

- 1) Training and sensitization to increase gender equality knowledge among the traditional leaders and the women and men in the Chiefdoms;
- 2) Development and dissemination of rules or by-laws on gender equality; and
- 3) Implementation of empowerment activities to promote social and economic benefits for women.

Training, sensitization, and empowerment activities were largely implemented in partnership with organizations that work in the Chiefdoms. In Muwezwa chiefdom training and sensitization of traditional leaders on gender equality and GBV in natural resource management and for cooperatives was facilitated by ICF and COMACO. A total of forty-five (45) headpersons attended the training, 9 women and thirty-six men. In Mphuka sensitization on child early marriages was facilitated by Child Fund. The traditional authority also held sensitization meetings with BioCarbon Partners. The rules and by-laws were directly implemented by the traditional authority through directives issued by the Chieftainess or Chief and discharged by the headpersons. Empowerment activities to support women included the formation of cooperatives and training women in these cooperatives. Two cooperatives were formed in Muwezwa and the process of forming a cooperative started in Mphuka Chiefdom.

4.0 ACHIEVEMENTS FROM IMPLEMENTING THE GENDER GUIDELINES IN CHIEFDOMS

Although the implementation process was similar in the two Chiefdoms, their experiences and impact varied, mostly because of the contextual differences mentioned earlier. A summary of the main achievements of the process is provided below, highlighting differences between the Chiefdoms as appropriate.

TRADITIONAL LEADERS DEVELOPED A SHARED VISION TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITIES IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Chieftainess and the Chief engaged indunas and village headpersons to discuss the benefits of addressing gender inequalities in natural resource management. Although the message and the agenda were not immediately welcomed by every traditional leader, the majority appreciated the new knowledge and approaches to addressing issues. For some, it was their first time learning about gender norms and the value that gender equality brings to the family and community. The dialogue process helped individuals challenge their own beliefs and perceptions about gender equality and debunk commonly held misconceptions that gender equality means that men lose power to women. This shared knowledge and vision enabled everyone to understand the importance of addressing gender issues through the Guidelines. It also helped begin to encourage a change to the negative social norms that discriminate against women and the social ills that were seen as normal practices such as spousal abuse and intimate partner GBV.

THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY ISSUED DIRECTIVES TO INCREASE GENDER EQUALITY ON LAND ALLOCATION AND FISHERIES

In Muwezwa, the traditional leaders put measures in place to address harmful gender norms and empower women in the allocation of land. The Chieftainess issued a directive to change traditional practice to allow women to pay the *impaizhyo* (traditional token of appreciation/tribute for land allocation) and to ban land grabbing from divorced or widowed women. In fisheries, the Chieftainess revised restrictions to allow women easy access to use bodies of water for fishing.

In Mphuka, the Chief ordered a land audit to increase opportunities for women to be allocated land. The audit targeted land that remained unoccupied for years with the goal of allowing women who had been disadvantaged to own land. The traditional leadership changed practices to allow women to inherit land and devised a land reallocation plan that allowed more women to have access to land in the Chiefdom. Implementing the land reallocation plan was, however, contentious and remained at the discretion of the Chief as headpersons were afraid of backlash from the subjects.

THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS PROMOTED EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN AND IT BECAME A STANDARD RULE FOR ALL COMMITTEES

In the Muwezwa Chiefdom, the traditional leadership issued a directive for equal representation of women and men on all committees, which enabled women to get into leadership positions. The directive was implemented across the Chiefdom. Women were allowed to join formal committees on fisheries and wildlife. In the Mphuka Chiefdom, the Chief appointed additional women advisors, headpersons, and village committee members to be part of the traditional authority. This was a departure from traditional gender norms, and the Chief took advantage of the expanded village leadership to bring more women in. The village committees were being established in every village to

support the village headpersons in the administration of the chiefdom affairs at the village level. The Chief used this approach to involve more members in traditional leadership. Four out of the 12 indunas in Mphuka are now women, promoted from among the 10 appointed women village headpersons. The Chief also mandated 50 percent women's representation for all training happening in the Chiefdom, on village committees, and for any new formal employment opportunities (i.e., community scouts, mining activities, etc.). The 50 percent mandate was disseminated to all villages and stakeholders. Village headpersons were tasked to monitor compliance, while the working committee at the Chief's palace monitored the performance of village headpersons. Although it can be an important first step to promoting women's participation, gender quotas cannot be perceived as the only or best solution, as it does not address women's meaningful participation or the pushback that women involved in public leadership can face.

THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY BANNED HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

The traditional authorities in both Chiefdoms banned the practice of child and early marriage and encouraged girls to remain in school, although this was highly contentious. In Muwezwa, the Chieftainess adopted guidelines on child marriage, limiting early marriage to girls who are not in school. In Mphuka, the Chief adopted formal mechanisms allowing for the withdrawal and dissolution of marriages involving children. A register of vulnerable families at high risk of practicing child and early marriage was compiled in each village to help identify high-risk individuals to better target them for economic empowerment and development activities. The traditional leaders started to collaborate with an NGO, Child Fund, to support vulnerable families and prevent incidences of child early marriages. In the past Child Fund did not receive support from headpersons on this kind of work.

THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY STRENGTHENED THE AWARENESS OF AND RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE CHIEFDOM

Both chiefdoms banned GBV and came up with stiffer rules for punishing offenders, especially violations by traditional leaders. The ban was issued by the Chieftainess and the Chief and disseminated to the subjects through headpersons. Punishment for traditional leaders included demotion from leadership roles in the chiefdom. In Muwezwa, the Chieftainess collaborated with an NGO, International Crane Foundation, to facilitate training for headpersons on GBV. The Chieftainess also used the traditional court to punish offenders, support survivors, and encourage headpersons to reflect and report on progress toward changing harmful practices in the villages. In Mphuka, the Chief implemented measures to decrease economic GBV. To increase women's control over earned income, the Chief established a reporting mechanism and stiffened punishment for misuse of family income. Women can now report when their husband withholds or misuses household funds. Women were also included in the Chief's Advisory Council to make it easier for women to report such cases.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES WERE IMPLEMENTED WITH THE SUPPORT OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS

In the Muwezwa Chiefdom, women's economic empowerment initiatives were promoted in the agriculture sector targeting vulnerable women. Herding cattle is a role reserved for men. In the event of conflicts involving cattle, women are often intimidated by the animals' owners and less able to protect their interests. According to a new rule, women became eligible for compensation in the event of crop damage by cattle owners. They were also allowed to practice crop diversification, removing limitations on farming practices for women. Traditionally, women are expected to grow "women's crops" such as groundnuts. As a result of the change, the Chieftainess encouraged the establishment and training of cooperatives for women. The recently established livestock cooperative, composed entirely of women, received 100 cattle and the bee-keeping group received training facilitated by an NGO, COMACO. In Mphuka, to promote women's role in forest conservation, the Chief banned the sale of charcoal and formed women's cooperatives for forest products, fishing, and mining. Charcoal sale is a common

income-generating activity for women that contributes to deforestation. Women who joined the cooperatives were mostly trading in charcoal, fish, forest products and sand mining. In cooperatives women were provided with training and increased opportunities to access markets for alternative livelihoods, shifting away from charcoal trading and sand mining that impacted the environment negatively.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY AND STAKEHOLDERS STRENGTHENED

In both Chiefdoms, the traditional authority continued to deepen engagement with stakeholders, monitoring their approaches to ensure that they were fulfilling their commitment to gender-responsive development. In Muwezwa, relationships were formalized between all stakeholders, creating a common recognition that gender represents a cross-cutting issue. The Chieftainess wrote to all stakeholders to identify their areas of interest and plans to advance gender equality in the Chiefdom. As a result, the traditional authority became more aware of stakeholders' interests and investments in gender equality, increasing transparency and accountability for both parties. For instance, in Muwezwa Chiefdom, the collaboration between the traditional authority and the NGO, WorldFish Centre was expanded to focus on empowering women to become leaders of the community committees in natural resource management. WorldFish Centre committed to work with the traditional authority to strengthen community structures in fisheries management. The process also helped solicit new ideas and increase the level of support for Chiefdom priorities. In Muwezwa, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) became aware of the water management issues the chiefdom faced and helped to open dialogue to address water and gender equality issues in the Chiefdom. In Mphuka, the traditional leaders took on an advocacy role to support NGOs on issues such as health and education, while championing gender equality.

Both traditional leaders initiated or were invited to collaborative meetings with stakeholders, a gesture that incentivized stakeholders to invest more resources in the two Chiefdoms. COMACO working in forestry, Women for Change working in fisheries, ICF working in wildlife and GIZ working in water management all committed to include gender activities to support the chiefdom. As a result, COMACO and ICF facilitated skills training on gender for their staff and for ICF, the training was extended to traditional leaders. In Muwezwa, the Chieftainess used courtesy call meetings to persuade stakeholders to collaborate with the traditional leaders to advance gender equality. This approach led not only to more efficient and effective delivery of current work across the chiefdoms, but also established the Chiefs as progressive leaders, and increased the likelihood of additional funding coming to the areas in the future.

TRADITIONAL LEADERS MOBILIZED THEIR OWN RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTED GENDER-RESPONSIVE CHIEFDOM PLANS

The traditional authority in both Chiefdoms initiated and implemented actions to promote gender equality using their own resources. Meetings were often held at the palace and some traditional leaders worked with the Chieftainess and Chief to mobilize related food and transport costs. In Mphuka, the working committee members held several meetings at the palace to support and monitor implementation at their own cost. During dissemination of the new rules, the working team members also used their own resources to monitor and support village headpersons. In the Muwezwa Chiefdom, the headpersons implemented several decisions as directed by the Chieftainess. At the village level, these rules were disseminated through group meetings and one-on-one conversations at the expense of the headperson. The investment of the Chiefdom's own time and resources demonstrates the value that leaders place on the process and also creates a positive example that other chiefdoms can adopt the tools without outside assistance.

OTHER TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES SHOWED INTEREST IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THEIR OWN CHIEFDOMS

Chieftainess Muwezwa has been invited by other chiefs in the Southern Province to share her approach to promoting gender equality and has been invited to speak about it at a number of forums. Both Chiefs have shared their experiences with more than 40 chieftainesses and chiefs in the formal House of Chiefs. This championing and potential mentorship can undoubtedly support sustainability and scaling.

5.0 LESSONS LEARNED

GUIDELINES ACT AS A PRACTICAL TOOL TO FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF SHIFTING HARMFUL GENDER NORMS

The Gender Guidelines provided a general blueprint that allows context adaptation to the traditional authority. Chieftainess Muwezwa and Chief Mphuka presented the Gender Guidelines to the advisors and headpersons as their tool to help them plan a chiefdom-based response to address issues and promote gender equality. They ensured that the presentation and discussions were contextualized to the local challenges, issues, and strategies. The issues and measures in the Gender Guidelines provided a vehicle for fruitful discussions and brainstorming during the awareness-raising stage. They helped frame dialogue with indunas and headpersons to understand gender equality issues in the Chiefdoms, identify the negative impacts of some gender norms, and suggest concrete activities and measures to address them. The dialogue process made it easy for traditional leaders with lower literacy to understand the value of investing in gender equality. Anchoring the discussion by theme also helped to lower resistance and understanding the relevance of the gender issue to the context. This helped debunk existing misconceptions among traditional leaders by giving practical examples of how harmful gender norms impact families and restrict progress in the Chiefdom. Further, narrowing the discussion to local contextual issues and solutions made the discussions relatable and geared toward practical solutions. At the same time, the dialogue enabled individual reflections among traditional leaders, allowing them to challenge their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The tool simplified, informed, and made the message common to every member of the traditional authority.

SENSITIZATION AND OPEN DIALOGUE ARE A KEY FIRST STEP IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND BUILDING SUPPORT CAN TAKE TIME

The Chief and Chieftainess faced pushback from some indunas and headpersons around the Gender Guidelines, often stemming from a lack of understanding of gender equality. Thus, sensitization became the first key step in the implementation process. One widely accepted misconception was that gender equality was an agenda to usurp the power of men, which evoked defensiveness among traditional leaders who were mostly men. They felt that working on gender equality would upset traditional practices and social norms and perhaps make them unpopular with subjects.

In the Mphuka Chiefdom, some of the influential indunas accused the Chief of acting outside the culture by advancing the Gender Guidelines, and it took patience and repeated dialogue meetings to resolve this tension, which delayed implementation. Chief Mphuka's strategy was to stay out of the conversations to allow unfiltered dialogue to happen between the indunas and headpersons. His goal was for them to arrive at a decision that was acceptable to everyone. In Muwezwa, a few headpersons supported the Chieftainess' promotion of women's rights. During the initial meeting, some of the village headpersons (mostly those in polygamous marriages) teamed up to pushback against the suggestion to empower women with land and cattle ownership. However, after the training, one of the men became a strong advocate for women's rights in the traditional court, counseling men to respect the land rights of widows and divorced women. During subsequent meetings, the same headperson also contributed personal resources such as cows, chickens, fish, and transport to support the Chieftainess with the logistics of implementation.

Sensitization and dialogue, which allowed stakeholders to express their views and reach some level of consensus, were thus a key approach to garnering sufficient traditional leadership support to advance the Gender Guidelines. A small initial group of leaders were early supporters of the Guidelines and helped build buy-in among other leaders over time. Despite the initial resistance, over time the majority

of traditional leaders in both Chiefdoms were supportive of the measures. A core learning here is to allow sufficient time to enable meaningful discussion and debate, build awareness and relationships among lower-level traditional leaders.

PRE-EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONS WORKING IN THE CHIEFDOMS CAN EXPAND REACH AND IMPACT

The development of chiefdom action plans demonstrated the traditional authority's commitment and leadership around gender equality. With regard to resources, the traditional authorities were limited but showing commitment stirred interest and enthusiasm from other stakeholders. Concerted outreach efforts by the Chief and Chieftainess provided opportunities for closer engagement and collaboration between the traditional authority, government, and NGOs. The traditional authority used stakeholder meetings to share the Gender Guidelines and subsequent action plans, outlining their context-appropriate ideas to address gender issues. The NGOs used the opportunity to closely engage with traditional leadership on other issues, which also expanded collaboration in other development areas. The traditional leaders appreciated the collaboration, which allowed them to serve as a partner in the NGOs' work. Some stated that in the past, their only role was to inform subjects to attend NGO meetings, without being given sufficient information on what was being planned or implemented. This lack of communication discouraged their participation and weakened their leadership role. In Mphuka, a traditional leader shared that in most cases when an NGO invited him to attend a meeting and speak with the community, he was not confident as he had very little understanding of the topic. This renewed collaboration and information sharing has the potential to enable greater alignment of NGOs and traditional leadership in a vision for chiefdom development.

CHIEFDOMS CAN IMPLEMENT THESE ACTIVITIES WITHOUT EXTERNAL SUPPORT, BUT IT TAKES A MINDSET SHIFT

Some headpersons came to the dialogue meetings expecting to be told what to do and given allowances, a practice commonly used by NGOs and other actors in the development sector. However, in both chiefdoms, meeting logistics were organized by the Chieftainess/Chief with limited external support. This caused frustration among some when allowances were not made available. Although the expectation of allowances was well managed by the Chieftainess and the Chief, it caused tension with some indunas and headpersons who demanded payment to implement activities. Some, however, changed their minds and even offered logistical support out of their own resources. In Mphuka, for instance, the Chief managed to convince traditional leaders to work without allowances by reminding them that the Chikunda culture expects the homeowner to dictate the rules or feed the visitor. He used this cultural tradition to reduce expectations that NGOs should pay traditional leaders. In Muwezwa, the Chieftainess was very involved in the activities and used her own example to reduce demand for allowances and demonstrate that a leader works and leads by example for the betterment of the community. In the end, they both managed to reorient the thinking of the traditional leaders around them and influenced them to lead differently. The demand for allowances to carry out community activities in Zambia is entrenched among traditional leaders and potentially undermines traditional leadership roles in development. However, this experience shows that a shift in mindsets and a truly locally led process are possible.

CONTINUED AND PATIENT COMMITMENT OF THE CHIEF/ CHIEFTAINESS IS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the agreed-upon gender actions demanded unwavering leadership and commitment from the Chief and Chieftainess because not every induna or headperson was immediately sold on the idea. Initially, both leaders expected to hold only one dialogue meeting and then move on to implementation. However, more time and more dialogue was required to achieve buy-in. In Mphuka chiefdom, four

dialogue meetings were held before the start of implementation. In Muwezwa, it took three dialogue meetings and one gender training to achieve sufficient buy-in for the agenda to start implementation. In addition, even during implementation, progress on more contentious issues was delayed, such as the ban on land grabbing, child early marriages, GBV, or actions on empowering women in polygamous marriages. This is not unexpected; working to promote different and potentially contentious social and gender norms change often takes time.

There is also a risk for the chiefs and chieftainesses who encourage change, as their reputation could be hurt and their actions could spur conflict within the traditional leadership. Navigating these conflicts requires patience and compromise. To defuse tension in Muwezwa, the Chieftainess allowed the discussion to broaden to other issues that affected the Chieftaindom while maintaining a strong focus on gender equality. This helped to achieve a win-win situation and created buy-in among more reluctant traditional leaders. In Mphuka, the Chief stepped away from the conversations to allow the influential indunas and headpersons to dialogue among themselves to reach an agreement. Before embarking on the implementation of the Gender Guidelines, other chiefs and chieftainesses need to be aware that their personal commitment and willingness to compromise are critical for success.

WOMEN INDUNAS AND HEADPERSONS DID NOT NECESSARILY SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY

Before the HoC created the Gender Guidelines, there were a few women within the existing traditional leadership structure. In meetings, these women rarely gave their opinions on contentious issues, leaving much of the discussion to men. In Mphuka, there were a few women in higher positions such as palace indunas or senior headpersons. However, during the discussion and planning for gender actions, they were among the least supportive of the work. In Muwezwa, only two women leaders attended the planning meeting, and they were largely disengaged and hardly spoke. This illustrates a few important points. First, any gender equality efforts need to be mindful of the different interests and backgrounds of women who may be in powerful roles or who may seek these roles, as they may not have the same empowerment objectives of gender equality focused initiatives. Second, women in leadership in male-dominated environments need to carefully navigate their precarious position and oftentimes can resist change, as it could lead to them losing the little power they do have. Finally, affirmative action such as gender quotas does not necessarily lead to meaningful participation. Having a seat at the table is the first – and not the only – step for women to influence change. Targeting women traditional leaders with training on gender equality concepts and leadership and empowerment skills can build their self-confidence to share their views and support gender equality initiatives.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation of the Gender Guidelines in the two Chiefdoms increased attention to gender equality, expanded the capacity of traditional leaders to lead gender norms change, and strengthened collaboration among stakeholders to advance women's rights in land and natural resources. With an increased understanding of the benefits of shifting harmful gender norms, the traditional leaders in Muwezwa and Mphuka have helped accelerate the pace of change in the Chiefdoms. Women have been brought into the leadership structures and men are accepting their presence. Stigmatization of women in public spaces has been reduced, although women's assertiveness and meaningful participation remain a challenge. The leadership of the Chieftainess and the Chief on gender equality is increasingly appreciated by the headpersons, who expressed that this was their first opportunity to learn about the benefits of gender equality and that they now understood that some practices they had accepted as normal and encouraged had a negative impact on families and the community. Reports also suggest that community members have a positive view of those headpersons implementing gender actions; they are seen as leaders and champions for gender equality. While NGOs and government departments have been implementing women's empowerment and other gender-focused programs in these Chiefdoms in recent years, this particular traditional leader-led approach allowed for the creation and implementation of a holistic vision for gender equality and social inclusion in the chiefdom, with changes embedded in the culture and tradition of the community.

The implementation process, however, requires long term engagement and persistence to achieve results. Shifting the mindset among traditional leaders must be managed at a pace that does not lead to or escalate conflict as this has the potential to undermine the commitment of the supportive traditional leaders. Similarly, self-serving interests among traditional leaders, such as expectations of allowances, can override community service and have potential to delay or frustrate progress if not well managed.

The following recommendations can be applied to the approach to strengthen the capacity of traditional authorities to advance gender equality:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHIEFTAINESSES/CHIEFS IMPLEMENTING THE GENDER GUIDELINES

- Sequencing thematic discussions to create awareness over time. The Gender Guidelines were useful in creating gender awareness in a practical and relevant manner for the headpersons to understand gender issues as they pertain to the chiefdom. However, discussing gender equality issues across all the themes proved overwhelming. In the future, these thematic discussions should be broken up over a few sessions to build support and awareness over time.
- Building gender awareness among the headpersons should be thought of as a process rather than a one-time effort. Understanding gender inequality and its impacts happened at different points in the dialogue for different traditional leaders. Allowing the dialogue to develop at a comfortable pace is important to build support and consensus over time.
- Recognizing and working with supportive leaders is important to keep gender equality on the agenda for a chiefdom. Not every traditional leader in the chiefdom was supportive of advancing the gender guidelines and some traditional leaders that were against these measures were very influential among other traditional leaders and the community. The commitment of the Chieftainess and the Chief, however, allowed the dialogue to continue amidst resistance. Flexibility during the implementation of the guidelines should be embraced to allow projects to respond to issues and challenges as they emerge and win over as many traditional leaders as possible.

- Continued advocacy for the rights of women during traditional leaders' meetings can increase attention on gender equality issues. Traditional leaders, particularly the Chieftainess/Chief, indunas, and headpersons meet often to discuss the affairs of the chiefdom. These meetings are important advocacy platforms, and a chance to share updates on initiatives that are working well in some areas to gain additional buy-in. Tracking change, and continuing to discuss the evolution of gender norms in the chiefdom can be a powerful tool to encourage early adopters, and bring along those who are slower to act. It can also keep the issue at the top of the development agenda and encourage more investment from outside stakeholders.
- Promoting women in the traditional structures sets an example and can help demonstrate that the chiefdom is putting its message about changing gender norms and promoting gender equality into practice. Women in traditional leadership can be better supported with leadership and empowerment skills training to increase their confidence and assertiveness in their roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

- Working through an institution such as the HoC increases the ownership of the agenda and eases the work of the Chieftainess / Chief to influence social norms change in a chiefdom. The House of Chiefs authenticated the Gender Guidelines, lending credence to the work and message of the Chieftainess and the Chief on gender equality issues and shielding them from accusations of working against the culture.
- A simple and practical tool that lays out gender issues and potential responses, like the Gender Guidelines did, can help traditional leaders understand, contextualize, and identify entry points for change. Contextualizing discussions on gender equality helps to identify and address points of contention and increases uptake. The Gender Guidelines can be used in work with traditional leaders to initiate dialogue and help plan for potential responses.
- Personal engagement and commitment at the highest level of the chiefdom authority is cardinal, but engaging the traditional leadership at all levels is crucially important to speed up the pace at which change happens.
- Shifting harmful gender norms begins at the leadership level. Changing individual beliefs takes time. For programs to be successful and have impact leadership desires, long term engagement should be factored into activity planning.
- Focusing on gender issues viewed as pertinent in the chiefdom can sustain the interest and commitment of traditional leaders. The chiefdoms used the Gender Guidelines to develop and implement action plans to promote gender equality. The planned actions cut across most of the themes in the Gender Guidelines, but pressing issues in selected few areas such as land, agriculture and child and early marriage received the most attention and action.
- Working through the chieftainess or the chief is an important approach that can promote uptake of the initiative by traditional leaders. Expectations of allowances can potentially frustrate efforts for collaboration between the organization and the traditional leaders if not well managed. When chieftainesses or chiefs hold traditional meetings, allowance expectations do not arise but traditional leaders understand that NGOs give allowances, hence any meeting associated with external actors the issue of allowances needs to be agreed from the start. Allowing chieftainess and chiefs to drive local implementation is therefore cost effective.

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