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GENDER ASSESSMENT OF THE WILDLIFE SECTOR IN ZAMBIA

BRIEF

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

The government of Zambia recognizes the need for community involvement in management and conservation of natural resources and has taken steps to decentralize natural resource governance to the community level. Rural livelihoods are dependent on forests and wildlife as an important source of both food and income. It is estimated that 60 percent of rural households rely on forests for income, and in some areas forest-related goods contribute to up to 20 percent of rural household income, providing at least 1.4 million jobs nationally (Wathum, Seebauer, & Carodenuto, 2016). Forests also provide a safety net in times of climatic stress and shocks.

Women and men have distinct social roles and responsibilities at the household and community levels that shape knowledge and understanding of the local environment and the use of natural resources. These gender differences between women and men play an important part in natural resource governance and management. Depletion of these resources also impacts women and men differently.

The assessment was carried out to analyze the drivers and threats to Zambia's wildlife and forestry resources management in relation to gender issues, with the aim of providing information and recommendations for the United States Agency for International Development's Integrated Land and Resource Governance Program to integrate into strategies, scopes of work, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans and to act as a resource for Zambia's wildlife sector on gender inclusive natural resource management.

FINDINGS

LAW AND POLICY: Zambia's existing laws protect women's rights and encourage community participation in forest and wildlife management. Reforms of the last 10 years have increased

attention to gender integration, but were found to be insufficient to meaningfully address systemic gender issues, which are embedded in strong culture and tradition. Policy implementation for gender integration in the wildlife sector remains weak and uncoordinated.

RESTRICTIVE GENDER NORMS: Strong negative gender-related cultural norms continue to perpetuate unequal participation and discrimination against women. The culture of women taking on roles subservient to men remains strong, and gender stereotypes work against women to get elected into leadership positions. Men generally exercise control over household resources, decision-making, and income. Polygamy is common, and often further undermines wives' roles within the household and vis-à-vis their husbands.

WOMEN'S ROLES IN NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES: Communities have rights to manage wildlife and forestry, but there are no guidelines on women's roles within these governance systems, only strong gender norms that support male dominance in these sectors. Hence women are sidelined and largely invisible in wildlife resource management and benefit-sharing discussions. The limited resources of community resource boards (CRBs) are generally not being used to serve women interests and there is a striking lack of transparency and accountability in resource use for some communities. In terms of representation, women's representation and voice in resource management institutions such as CRBs and community forest management groups (CFMGs) are very low, zero percent in some CRBs. For example, Chikwa CRB has three women out of ten members and Chifunda CRB has no women out of the ten CRB members. At the village action group (VAG) level, participation of women is slightly higher, but they are seldom represented in top leadership roles. Out of 76 CRBs in Zambia, 72 are led by men and only four are women led. The few women participating experience challenges in asserting themselves within the male-dominated structures.

EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS: Women are not given the same employment opportunities as men in the wildlife sector and inequitable training criteria for scout selection excludes even well-qualified female candidates. Negative attitudes towards employment of women in the sector are fueled by prevailing gender norms and stereotypes. No policy exists to encourage employment of women by the state or by CRBs. In fact, few women are ever employed: only three out of 38 community scouts working for Chikwa CRB are women, and Chifunda CRB has only three women among its 57 total scouts. Where employed, women scouts are disproportionately hurt by common practices of non-payment (for up to a year), as this limits their households' acceptance of their employment. Women employed in poacher "sting" operations appear to face significant risks of gender-based violence (GBV).

Alternative livelihoods efforts have been effective in supporting women's economic opportunity as well as forestry/wildlife conservation, but face constraints. Women often lack entrepreneurial skills, experience limited income growth, and are less mobile than men and therefore less able to access better markets.

Men largely engage in poaching but women are increasingly involved in the illegal sale of bushmeat, particularly in the local market (three out of 10 recent convictions were women). Compared to men, women lacked the connections for large-scale marketing of illegal forestry and wildlife products and have mobility constraints due to household responsibilities and cultural constraints (e.g., women who travel for work, leadership opportunities, or other purposes are often considered to be prostitutes). However, men are now increasingly drafting women to transport and sell illegal wildlife products.

Women are often at a higher risk than men in management areas because of greater exposure: women more than men are involved in the collection of firewood, fruits, nuts, seeds, roots, mushrooms, plant-based medicines, caterpillars, and grass for thatching houses. Women also spend weeks in unsafe fishing camps to support household consumption. In some cases, women spend months sleeping in their fields to prevent crop damage from wildlife, exposing themselves to risks and constraining the time available to devote to family care and nutrition.

LAND RIGHTS, FORESTRY, AND WILDLIFE: The search for new agricultural land and mining is leading to encroachment in wildlife and forestry areas. Village headmen usually allocate land to men, rather than women, for these purposes, but women provide unpaid farming labor. In instances of family relocation from wildlife areas, women and men face disparate levels of harm. Women with secure land rights expressed a desire to invest more in their plots for instance, through conservation agricultural practices and faced less pressure to venture out into the forest.

GBV CONCERNS: GBV is prevalent in the assessment areas, and widely tolerated. Women face increased risks for a number of reasons linked to wildlife and forest sector engagement, such as speaking up at meetings, taking up leadership roles, carrying out family care activities like firewood collection, entering male-dominated employment like taking up a scout position, and searching for livelihoods such as fishing. Young girls' access to education is curtailed due to household responsibilities, including firewood collection or involvement in other household resource needs, leading to drop out of school and early childhood marriage and pregnancy. Married women's participation in community leadership was often seen as insubordination to the husband. Single women participating in meetings faced accusations of prostitution for being found in the company of men and being away from home, creating even fewer incentives for women to take on leadership roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Support the development of strong and gender-inclusive district and chiefdom-wide integrated development planning processes and enforcement mechanisms that take into account forestry and wildlife resources and use, including those that are gender-specific. Create awareness on women's involvement in the wildlife sector, share best practices, and demonstrate a case for increasing trends on the role of women in law enforcement.
- Advocate for government adoption of specific quotas for trainings, recruitment, and hiring by both the government and CRBs in all wildlife sector employment. Quotas will not in themselves resolve the gender inequities, but they are an important starting place.
- Review sector guidelines for the community level (particularly in CRBs, VAGs, and CFMGs) and adopt measures that explicitly require gender participation and representation, and support leadership.
- Review the VAG and CRB election guidelines; improve gender inclusivity by simplifying the rules of the game and removing costly provisions while maintaining transparency of the process.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL NORMS CHANGE:

- Target traditional authorities as focal points for community-led change that will benefit women. Once women are elected into resource management groups, provide "couple-focused" gender and leadership training to members of the governance structures, targeting leaders and their spouses.
- Integrate household-level interventions for behavioral change to encourage more women to seek leadership positions in natural resource management and adopt measures to empower women once in office.
- Once women are elected into resource management groups, provide training to both women and men and their spouses, to increase knowledge and capacity to address gender issues as well as specific leadership and empowering skills for women

- Build cadres of gender champions at the community level to raise awareness on GBV to challenge traditionally accepted practices.
- Build cadres of gender champions at the community level for advocacy within customary decision-making systems and gender norm change, including at the household level.

EMPLOYMENT:

- Work with relevant stakeholders to better understand and address the roles and risks for women employed in wildlife management.
- Advocate for a gender-sensitive training curriculum for wildlife police officers and community scouts and support for all-women wildlife scout trainings and groups if/where possible.

LIVELIHOODS:

- Support alternative livelihoods and entrepreneurial skills for women to reduce pressure on wildlife and forests.
- Prioritize women's political, social, and economic empowerment interventions to benefit women within the CRB and VAG structures, such as women's leadership courses to build confidence, exchange visits or convening for women CRB members in different regions, access to information and skills development opportunities.
- Increase access to productive resources and technology for women to enhance livelihoods activities through asset transfer.
- Strengthen and clarify land and resource rights within chiefdoms through continued customary land certification processes.
- Encourage better coordination between chiefs and headmen in land allocation practices within customary areas.
- Support trainings to engage community governance structures on leadership, gender, and GBV, also involving spouses for those that are married.

REFERENCES

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