



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR IN ZAMBIA

Gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive in the natural resource sector. Commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the 2020 groundbreaking study *Gender-based violence and environment linkages: the violence of inequality* by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020) brought attention to the linkage between GBV and women’s access to and use of natural resources from forests and wildlife, as well as in conservation and anti-poaching efforts. This brief supports the growing evidence base around this link, highlighting multiple forms of GBV faced by women in natural resource governance committees and wildlife enforcement career pathways in Zambia. The goal of this brief is to raise awareness of GBV risks within the sector and identify mitigation responses by governments, civil society organizations, donors, the private sector, and communities.

BACKGROUND

The natural resource space is a growing economic sector in many developing countries, but it remains largely male dominated. Yet women’s participation in natural resource governance and enforcement can lead to improved conservation and socioeconomic outcomes. As they are frequently the main people responsible for collecting water, food, and fuel for their families, women have a strong vested interest in how natural resources are managed and bring unique knowledge and perspectives. A growing body of evidence shows that women’s participation in community resource governance brings benefits not only to women, but to their families, communities, and conservation efforts more broadly (see Beaujon Marin & Kuriakose, 2017; Leisher et al., 2016; Mwangi et al., 2011; Agarwal, 2009).

Women’s participation in the natural resource sector increases their income earning potential, through formal employment or sharing benefits from commercializing resources. This in turn can increase their

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decision-making power in the household and lead to improved spending on education, health, and nutrition. Involving women in governance and enforcement increases the adoption of sustainable practices that decrease pressure on forests and other resources. It also enhances rule compliance and dissemination of information through women's formal and informal networks, often influencing others in the community to follow rules, be vigilant, and report intruders. Finally, as women hold a disproportionate share of caring responsibilities, their engagement in resource management instills a conservation ethic in children, contributing towards sustainable conservation in the future.

Despite the many benefits associated with greater gender equality in community resource governance and law enforcement, women remain largely excluded. Moreover, women's engagement in these male-dominated spaces can lead to multiple forms of GBV. The relationship between GBV and natural resources has been increasingly documented and analyzed.

Following the 2020 IUCN study, USAID continues to fund research and innovative programming to better understand and address GBV in the environmental sector. The 2020 report showed how GBV can be used as a form of socioeconomic control to maintain or promote unequal and gendered access, ownership, use and control of natural resources like forests and wildlife. A subsequent gender assessment of the wildlife sector in Zambia carried out by the [USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance](#) (ILRG) program found that women and girls are frequently exposed to physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence when accessing and using resources (Malasha & Duncan, 2020). As combating wildlife and forestry crime becomes increasingly militarized, women face risks of physical and sexual violence perpetrated both by enforcement officers and poachers (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020). Finally, GBV risks are particularly high in community natural resource governance structures and law enforcement that remain highly male-dominated.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is any harm or potential of harm perpetrated against a person or group on the basis of their gender or gender identity. It includes several expressions of violence such as physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation of income, property, and resources. GBV affects women and girls disproportionately and is perpetrated by individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions. This violence happens in the household, workplace, schools, streets, and any other public or private space. GBV has direct and indirect, tangible and intangible consequences for individuals, households, communities, and society, constituting a major barrier to development outcomes.

The potential for GBV related to natural resource management is particularly increased when there are environmental stressors and threats that lead to scarcity of resources, and when there is potential for economic gain – for instance through management of government and private funding (e.g., from hunting licenses) and through illegal wildlife trade. Women are often exposed to GBV risks as enforcement institutions use them in sting operations to attempt to obtain information about trespassers and poachers. Women who manage to break into the male-dominated field of wildlife or forestry enforcement are particularly at risk of experiencing GBV on the job (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020).

Women holding positions in natural resource governance and enforcement can also experience violence at the household level and in the broader community, as they are perceived to challenge gender norms about roles considered appropriate for men and women. When norms are being challenged without the engagement and sensitization of men and the broader community, it can lead to backlash. Women's empowerment in the natural resource sector may lead to increased physical and psychological abuse as men attempt to re-establish control over natural resource management (Haberern, 2021).

As is the case in many countries, experiences of GBV are widespread in Zambia. According to the 2018 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey, 36 percent of women have experienced physical violence at least once since the age of 15 and 32 percent of ever-married women have experienced controlling behaviors by their husbands (Zambia Statistics Agency et al., 2019). Despite the adoption of the Anti-

Gender-Based Violence Act in 2011, GBV is deeply rooted in wider gender inequality and remains pervasive and tolerated, especially in rural areas (Malasha & Duncan, 2020).

Despite the risks, women continue striving to enter and remain in the sector. Given how many women still want to play a role in natural resource management (and the downstream environmental and community benefits from greater women's involvement), the USAID ILRG program has been working with stakeholders to raise awareness of and, critically, to mitigate the risks of GBV so these women can continue to be effective agents for change in their communities. Over the past several years, ILRG has been working with government institutions and a range of civil society and non-governmental organization (NGO) stakeholders to increase women's participation in the wildlife and forest management sectors in Zambia, both as elected members of community governance committees and as wildlife enforcement officers.

ILRG used findings from the gender assessment of the wildlife sector in Zambia and the IUCN report to inform program design and generate awareness within the sector of the critical need to develop mitigation strategies to reduce GBV risks while empowering women in wildlife governance and law enforcement. In addition to raising awareness about the benefits of greater women's participation in the natural resource sector and the risks of GBV with community members and traditional leaders, ILRG has worked to equip women with the technical and socioemotional skills to meaningfully participate in their new roles. The project has also provided newly elected male and female community governance committee members and wildlife scouts with training on gender equality and social inclusion, including a unit on GBV risks and mitigation efforts and information on GBV referral pathways.

As part of this continued follow-up and support for partner organizations and women leaders, ILRG collected qualitative data and case studies about GBV experiences from women committee members and women wildlife scouts. These were not necessarily women with whom ILRG directly worked and supported but a broader sample of women leaders working in the natural resource space. The interviews were used to inform future work on GBV and to give a snapshot of sector-wide dynamics, both within and outside of ILRG-supported engagements. This continued collection and analysis of evidence on the relationship between women's participation in the natural resource sector and GBV is critical to further advance stakeholder awareness, inform GBV-responsive programming, and draw lessons learned and best practices that can be applied in Zambia and other countries.

The brief identifies the forms of GBV faced by women in wildlife community governance roles and in wildlife law enforcement, describing how violence occurs both in private and public spaces, perpetrated by different people and institutions. These stories illustrate the inherent challenges that come with women entering traditionally male-dominated spaces, and the backlash they sometimes face within the household, community, and institutions. The brief also describes how the USAID ILRG program has worked to mitigate these GBV risks while empowering women to take on leadership positions in natural resource governance (throughout the brief and in the conclusions and recommendations at the end). The findings have helped inform further ILRG program adaptation and recommendations for donors and agencies working to promote women's participation in the natural resources space, highlighted in the final section of this brief.

The individuals mentioned have given their consent to have their stories shared; their names and other potentially identifying information have been omitted/changed for their privacy and safety. The photograph used does not depict any of the women or specific events described in the document.

WOMEN IN COMMUNITY RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Evidence shows that women's inclusion in natural resource governance brings significant benefits to conservation and development (Beaujon Marin & Kuriakose, 2017; Mwangi et al., 2011; Agarwal, 2009). Nevertheless, women face barriers to participate in community-level natural resource governance in

Zambia, including lack of information and support networks, gender-biased rules and regulations, and discriminatory gender norms that associate public engagement with men and assign a disproportionate share of household and unpaid care responsibilities to women (Malasha, 2020).

Since 2020 USAID has worked with the government and civil society organizations to promote gender-responsive elections for community resources board (CRB)¹ positions, leading to an increase in women's representation in four chiefdoms from 21 percent to 50 percent at the village level and from five percent to 23 percent at the CRB executive level (Malasha, 2020).² As these leadership positions are traditionally held by men, women who manage to get elected have historically faced several challenges, including GBV. According to the gender assessment of the wildlife sector in Zambia, women who hold leadership positions in CRBs and committees stated that the threat of GBV is a major deterrent for engagement (Malasha & Duncan, 2020). USAID ILRG consulted women holding governance positions in wildlife governance bodies (for a number of years or newly elected), who shared experiences of violence in the household, in the community, and while carrying out their duties at the institutional level.

VIOLENCE IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Gender norms in Zambia, particularly in rural areas, assign leadership roles and decision-making at home and in public spaces to men. Women are expected not to be outspoken or freely interact with men outside of their family. As such, the participation of married women in a community leadership role is often seen as “insubordination to the husband” (Malasha & Duncan, 2020). When women take up a position that is socially construed as a man's role, this tends to affect family relationships. Husbands and extended families may exercise psychological and emotional pressure, accusing women of stepping into men's roles and neglecting their own traditional role as caretakers and bringing shame to the whole family.

“Sometimes I would miss the meetings just to maintain peace. Things only changed when the CRB started giving us some allowance for attending the meetings. I would give money to my husband and that is when he became supportive. I buy my peace.”

- F., committee member

Being a member of resource boards or committees creates demands on women's time to attend meetings and other engagements, bringing tension to the family. Husbands are often not supportive for fear that they will be seen as weak and become subject to mockery by relatives and friends for allowing their wives to get into “men's roles” instead of staying home to serve them. Threats of physical violence and divorce are common and often lead women to leave committees or forfeit their elected posts even before serving in the positions. Getting support from the husband is often perceived as attempting to take control over him. According to a woman committee member, when she is out on committee business her husband cooks for the children and takes care of the home. His friends have mocked him by calling him “maid of the house.”

Resistance and emotional pressure are exercised not only by husbands, but by extended family members as well. Another woman recounted that when her parents learned that she intended to run in the CRB elections they repeatedly asked her to withdraw, saying that she was risking the respect that the family enjoyed in the community. As she went ahead and won the election, her mother continued to remind her that she was putting her children at risk. In order to mitigate this threat, ILRG worked with government and civil society to promote gender-responsive CRB elections, which included pre-election

¹ CRBs co-manage wildlife resources with the government. They are community platforms for representation, control, and decision-making on wildlife resources and related revenue. Elections are held every three years and there is no limit on the number of consecutive terms an individual can serve. CRBs are composed of the 10 members from the lower-level village action groups (VAGs) with the highest vote.

² The gender-responsive election model is currently being implemented in other areas in Zambia.

community sensitization sessions to highlight the importance of women’s participation and garner male and community member support.

VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

During elections for community resource governance positions, women experienced physical and psychological violence and threats of social exclusion to pressure them to drop out. This was perpetrated by community members who saw their participation as a challenge to traditional gender roles, and by competing male candidates and their supporters. Women candidates reported being verbally and physically assaulted. A woman who ran for elections but did not win said that after the results were announced, supporters of the winning male candidate went to her house to boo and taunt her until the morning, accusing her of being disrespectful to tradition and mocking her for lacking money to win. She stayed inside her home for two weeks due to concerns for her own safety.

“They gave me a nickname of ‘foreigner’ and one day I was approached by a group of women. One shouted out ‘watch your husbands!’ and they all walked away.”

- M., committee member

During elections, when men realize that a certain woman candidate is popular, it is common for them to resort to threats of physical violence and the use of witchcraft against them, believing that women will be intimidated and fearful for their safety and that of their children. Some women who experienced such threats appealed to local traditional leaders, often leading to perpetrators being reprimanded or punished, underscoring the importance of developing the capacity of traditional leaders to support gender equality and discourage GBV.

“I was on my campaign trail with my friend when a group of men supporters for a rival candidate grabbed both us and started beating us. We were rescued by another group. We immediately reported it to the chief, who called their leader and punished him. Our chief is supportive of women.”

- M., committee member

To address this issue, ILRG is working with traditional leaders at the national and local level to raise awareness of GBV and implement guidelines on GBV in natural resources. The [guidelines](#) provide a set of practical tools for strengthening gender responsiveness in areas and practices where chiefs have legal and social power. This includes encouraging women’s participation in local resource boards and in wildlife law enforcement and establishing community mechanisms to minimize the risks of GBV. Institutions and services for people experiencing GBV are seldomly available in rural

areas, so traditional leaders play an important role in addressing GBV.

Women elected to resource governance positions reported that they often experience verbal, psychological, and social abuse by community members. When there are arrests in the community related to misuse of wildlife resources, CRB members are accused of siding with law enforcement officers. When poachers are arrested, CRB members become the target of retaliation; women and their children are at high risk because people feel more emboldened to threaten them than men. In such instances, women protect themselves by limiting their movements and that of their children, which can impact their livelihoods and mental health, as well as the children’s education.

“Before taking up a role in the CRB, no one paid attention to me. Even the attention I get from my husband was not there, now he watches every step I take. It is like you have to be watched to be kept in line. Family members and even community people just don’t trust you have good intentions.”

- L., committee member

Becoming a leader exposes women to GBV risks that did not necessarily affect them when they were ordinary members of the community. They are often called derogatory names and accused of being prostitutes or of having abandoned family and tradition by both male and female members of the community. This is worse for single women, who are accused of joining resource committees to have

sexual access to men. Other women in the community refuse to be associated with women in CRBs, leading to rumors and social ostracism. As this demonstrates, the perpetrators of GBV in communities are both men and women, whose actions are fueled by gendered social beliefs and norms.

VIOLENCE IN INSTITUTIONS (RESOURCE BOARDS)

Despite recent advances in gender balance, women remain the minority in wildlife resource governance structures, reproducing and sustaining harmful gender norms. Women's contributions during meetings are frequently ignored and undermined. Women said they are often accused of talking too much and told that their contributions are either inconsequential or not valuable, causing feelings of embarrassment and pressure to remain quiet. Getting elected to leadership does not, by itself, guarantee women's meaningful participation; they tend to be sidelined in the daily running of committee operations. Without the opportunity to develop and practice leadership skills, women often succumb to intimidation and leave governance positions. To mitigate this risk, ILRG developed a women's leadership and empowerment training program for women elected to natural resource governance positions, so they can develop both technical and socioemotional skills for meaningful participation, GBV prevention, and redress-seeking. ILRG is deploying this training program with the staff of over 15 NGOs across Zambia so they can better support women leaders in a scalable and sustainable way. ILRG is also providing an initial gender orientation to men and women elected to CRBs to promote awareness about gender equality and GBV risks at the household, community, and institutional level.

"We have two men and six women in our VAG and we are supposed to be implementing a project as a team but only the top two men have all the information and are engaged in the financial transactions. I spoke to my fellow women, and we raised the concerns. The men later followed me and told me that am only a woman, and I should not push my luck too far!"

- A., committee member

Excluding and intimidating women is particularly worse when it relates to financial matters. Men deliberately keep financial information away from women and take advantage of opportunities for financial gain, such as receiving allowances for community work. A woman recalled an occasion when members signed for an allowance payment, but when the money was paid, the amount was less than what was on paper. When she tried to query the chairperson, she was told that "a boss is a boss" and there was nothing wrong with her being paid less. In a context of pervasive gender inequality where they are "newcomers," women often feel intimidated to assert themselves and to report potential wrongdoing and GBV for fear of repercussions. Therefore, ILRG is working closely with the Zambia CRB Association to promote overall accountability and transparent financial management, which can decrease the risk of intimidation and GBV for women who enter community governance.

WOMEN IN WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT

Women's share of employment in the wildlife sector in Zambia is minimal, even in entry level positions such as community scouts, which offer an important employment opportunity for youth in rural areas where jobs are scarce. Residing in game management areas (GMAs) or open areas, community scouts provide policing and protection to wildlife across Zambia's 36 GMAs. Scouts are recruited and hired by CRBs and private sector operators; their salaries are paid from revenue generated from tourism and safari hunting. Once trained, community scouts have a higher chance of getting long-term employment in the public sector as wildlife police officers or community liaison assistants. However, access to scout positions is highly gendered. Prevailing gender norms dictate that wildlife policing, through ground patrols and bush operations, requires physical strength and bravery, and therefore should be reserved for men. The 2020 USAID gender assessment of the wildlife sector in Zambia found that these gender stereotypes, as well as recruitment processes that do not target women and address their needs, lead to the continuous underrepresentation of women (Malasha & Duncan, 2020). Currently less than 15 percent of community scouts employed in the country are women.

In 2020 USAID supported initiatives to promote women’s access to formal employment in the wildlife sector, working with civil society and private sector partners to address gender biases and barriers in the recruitment of wildlife community scouts in Zambia. ILRG worked with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife trainers at Chunga Ranger Training Centre to support increased recruitment of women as a pathway to formal employment in wildlife law enforcement. As a result, 50 percent of recruited scouts were women, which was the highest-ever percentage and a significant increase from 30 percent in the previous intake.

Zambia’s first all-female unit has been deployed by the local organization Conservation Lower Zambezi to carry out patrolling operations in areas surrounding Lower Zambezi National Park. In addition to gender-sensitive recruitment, USAID also supported the delivery of women-inclusive and gender-responsive community scout training for a cohort of 56 newly recruited scouts (both men and women), including a specific module on gender equality, challenges and benefits of women’s participation in natural resource management, women’s empowerment, and GBV. The training increased awareness of gender norms and GBV in the context of scouting, and women scouts gained skills to better navigate a male-dominated work environment. ILRG frequently followed up with trained women community scouts for over a year after training and facilitated GBV conversations with new and long-term women scouts to continue to empower them to reflect on deep-rooted beliefs and gender norms underlying GBV.

ILRG has also carried out discussions across the country with women scouts who did not go through the gender-responsive training sessions to better understand their experiences. The forums provided women with a safe space to share experiences of discrimination and GBV that will, in turn, inform ongoing programming by the government, NGOs, and private entities working directly with scouts so they are aware of and devise measures to mitigate and respond to GBV risks.

In this field, women are particularly at risk of experiencing GBV when performing their duties. Illegal wildlife trade has high commercial value and wildlife enforcement carries risks for those involved (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020). Institutional GBV is also pervasive, as scouting remains a male-dominated environment. In addition to on-the-job GBV, women scouts are at risk of experiencing physical, psychological, social, and economic violence in the household (from intimate partners and extended family) and in their communities. As the wildlife scout position is entry level, most women recruited are young (in their early 20s), which can add to their vulnerability to GBV in different settings.

VIOLENCE IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Although a majority of unmarried women consulted wanted to further their careers, they mentioned that the moment they got the scout job they faced pressure from their extended families to get married. This pressure reflects deep-seated gender norms and stereotypes about female behaviors and roles. Families fear that if women fail to get married quickly, they will become “toughened” by the job, making it more difficult to find a husband as most men resent the idea of marrying women who are considered strong. Married scouts, like most young married women in Zambia, also experience pressure to have children. Under Zambian employment law, women are only eligible for parental leave after two years of continuous service and most of them would like to wait for this benefit. However, few husbands agree to this, and one scout said the pressure from her husband was “emotional torture.”

“One day I just returned from patrol and was really tired because I had been recalled just when I started my break, so this was my second shift in a row. I just wanted to have some rest, but my husband kept demanding sex and when I refused, he accused me of sleeping with my boss and threatened to beat me, so I just gave in.”

- J., community scout

Intimate partner violence is highly prevalent, including physical, emotional, sexual, and economic. According to one scout, when she is home from work her husband is always suspicious, saying she is

engaged in prostitution. He demands to see her work WhatsApp messages. She feels her privacy is violated, but if she refuses to show her phone she is threatened or beaten. Married scouts stated that their husbands suspect that each time they go out on patrol with men they sleep with them. As a result, often when a woman returns from patrol the demand for sex from her husband is intense and if a woman refuses, the husband takes it as a confirmation that she had sex while on patrol. This leaves women with no option but to endure sexual abuse to avoid other forms of violence.

“It’s a raw deal for me, my hard work only means that all the family responsibilities are offloaded on me, and I have to support my parents and siblings. Although I did not get support from my family to take up the scout job, they want my money. Still, they don’t stop to talk ill of my job.”

- J., community scout

Although women would like to have more control over their time and sexual life, this is complicated by the nature of their job. They stay away from home for long periods of time and when they are home, they are expected to take care of all household obligations and provide sex on demand. Because of their job, the burden of providing for children and for their extended family is pushed on them by their husbands, who also feel they are doing their wives a favor by allowing them to take the job. While having to continue to perform caring tasks traditionally assigned to women, community scouts also

reported that husbands become more resistant to provide financially for the family. Scouts also face economic violence through pressure to share their income and limited ability to make independent decisions on income use. When they complain, they are threatened with divorce. They fear being divorced because it would fuel social stigma associated with the job and increase their concern about their children when they are away. To mitigate these risks, ILRG is engaging conservation NGOs and private entities working with wildlife scouts to develop their capacity to facilitate mentorship support for women scouts and to respond to GBV.

VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

As women in wildlife enforcement are challenging gender roles and stereotypes, backlash from community members is common. The psychological violence and social exclusion often faced affects their family as well. When women first apply for scout jobs, they encounter resistance from community members as these are seen as “men’s jobs” and their ability to be recruited is often doubted and belittled.

Once they become scouts, women are often accused by neighbors and others of engaging in sexual behavior because they spend time with men in the bush during patrols. The accusations of breaking away from tradition are used to instill fear in women scouts about their future or to seemingly justify negative events in their lives. One scout mentioned that she became the leader of the canine unit and is constantly told by community members that according to tradition if she continues to handle dogs, she will not have breast milk when she has a child. Another scout said that when one of her female colleagues died, people said it was because she did not follow tradition, which scared her and made her think about quitting her job. However, her scouting job provides the family’s sole source of income, so she stayed on despite her fears.

“Five years ago, when I started, my family wouldn’t allow it. I secretly took my application letter. It was hard. The chief and the headperson were also against it. It was seen as breaking culture and tradition. When I finally got the job, my family was visited by the chief and headperson (a woman) and threatened to be chased out of the village. They went further and approached my employers to discontinue me. Now these same people have been at the forefront sending their children to become community scouts.”

- C., community scout

Such rumors and reactions cause great emotional distress and limit the scouts’ interactions within the community, with some finding it difficult to frequent public spaces such as the clinic or water collection point. Rejection from the community can also cause financial distress – one scout mentioned that when she got recruited, she agreed to find and share accommodation with another colleague; however, the community was unwelcoming and blocked their attempts to find accommodation by giving them

“At one point I was on patrol for almost 3 months, and this fueled the perception that I was sleeping with my workmates in the community. My husband was convinced about such rumors.”

- J., community scout

unaffordable rental rates until they gave up. Violence and pressure in the community can also increase women scouts’ vulnerability to intimate partner violence, as it affects their husbands’ perceptions and attitudes. As GBV is closely linked to broader gender inequality and reinforced by harmful gender norms, ILRG’s intervention includes dialogues on gender norms with communities and with traditional leaders, who can be critical champions for changing negative attitudes and norms towards women in leadership.

VIOLENCE IN THE INSTITUTION (WORKPLACE)

The working environment is highly challenging for women in male-dominated wildlife enforcement. Gender discrimination, GBV, and harassment cause physical, psychological, sexual, and social harm to women, while also limiting their career and financial prospects.

Discrimination and unequal treatment were the main forms of GBV encountered by scouts in the workplace. They are either assigned tasks considered less important, such as cleaning or cooking, or assigned excessively demanding physical tasks so they can “prove” that they are “like men” and/or be forced to give up. Women scouts are told by supervisors – who are mostly men – that they are not capable of being assigned higher level roles and responsibilities. Even when a woman is assigned a lead role, she is constantly undermined by men, who face no consequences for their insubordination, which is very demoralizing.

“The organization trained me to drive an operational vehicle but men in the team always criticized my driving and when it is rainy season, they would insist that a woman can’t drive. I got frustrated and this has affected my confidence.”

- J., community scout

If a woman shows determination, she is deliberately given unrealistic tasks, with the expectation that if/when she fails, it serves as a reminder that women cannot do the job. On operation during the rainy season, one woman recollected that the male team leader would ask her to carry a 10kg (22 lb) tent on her back all the time while on patrol, which was not demanded from the men. When she raised this, he told her to just carry on and not complain because she chose a man’s job and that that was how she would learn not to get into men’s roles. Although women and men scouts get equal pay, men usually get more recognition in terms of promotion and rewards. The militarized culture that discourages asking questions, combined with gender norms that dissuade women’s assertiveness, allows male decision-makers to continue discriminatory treatment.

“We arrested some poachers and the organization decided to reward us. To my surprise the men got more than I did but it was difficult for me to complain because I didn’t know the formula that was used in sharing out the money.”

- T., community scout

During training and after, women scouts also experience sexual harassment and violence. Young women in particular face constant pressure from male instructors or supervisors to have sexual relationships, in some cases with promises of professional favors. Turning down such overtures is not taken well and often attracts subsequent psychological harassment and mistreatment, including threats of losing their jobs. One scout said one of her colleagues was told by their supervisor that women officers doing well and advancing in their careers did so because they had sex with their supervisors. The young officer colleague believed it and had sex with the supervisor, which led to depression and a deterioration of her mental health. She never received a promotion. ILRG is supporting NGOs that train and employ scouts to develop tailored and easily understood resources on mitigating, preventing, and responding to GBV in the workplace and field operations.

“When giving assignments, he [supervisor] would deliberately target you if you had refused his advances and give you hard tasks so that you fail or in the hope that you would give in in exchange for a bit of an easier life.”

- T., community scout

As women are underrepresented, the working environment fails to address women’s needs, particularly related to menstrual health management (MHM). Male supervisors’ lack of awareness about MHM causes them to be intolerant of women’s needs and suffering. Women are constantly accused of being lazy when experiencing menstrual pain. A scout recounted that she often has extremely painful dysmenorrhea that could keep her in bed for a day or two, but her supervisor kept making remarks that she was a lazy person who just wanted more time to stay with her husband. The experience of women wildlife scouts in Zambia contributes to the growing evidence on the relationship between MHM and GBV (WoMena, 2020). Another scout said that men are rarely concerned about women’s needs, which are instead perceived as a weakness. Once during a security meeting, she suggested constructing toilets at the picket for easy sanitary disposal, as the lack of such facilities was making the job harder and less safe for women. The suggestion was initially laughed off, causing her emotional discomfort, although the supervisor eventually reconsidered it after one of the scouts was almost attacked by wildlife when attending to hygiene needs in the open.

“I was put on punishment for reacting late to the whistle. [My supervisors] made to soak myself in water and roll in sand while on my period. I tried to plead but they didn’t listen. It stressed me and almost gave up.”

- T., community scout

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes are carried into wildlife enforcement operations and the workplace, with women forced to cook and clean for male colleagues. During mobile patrols, men leave the food preparation and washing of dishes to their women counterparts. Although women scouts have tried to speak out against this to their supervisors, they say nothing has changed. These gender norms and roles have also translated into an expectation that women scouts are used to lure poachers in sting operations, a dangerous role that makes women especially vulnerable to GBV (Malasha & Duncan, 2020). Interacting with poachers poses a high risk of physical and sexual violence for women in wildlife enforcement. The women interviewed noted that poachers frequently have less tolerance for being investigated or arrested by a woman than by a man. Many resent the idea of being caught by a woman. When arrested, poachers and their families make threats against women officers and their families, including their children. A woman scout recalled a time when detained poachers threatened to kill her children in front of her, even though she had not worked directly in the operation leading to their arrest.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing women’s participation in natural resource governance and enforcement is important, as it can lead to improved conservation and socioeconomic outcomes. When women have greater decision-making power in natural resource management, their interests are more likely to be taken into account. Women’s participation in the natural resource sector increases their income earning potential, contributing to improved education, health, and nutrition outcomes for them and their families. Involving women in governance and enforcement increases the adoption of sustainable practices, crucial in both adapting to and mitigating the growing threat of climate change. Women pass this ethos of conservation onto their children, ensuring that wildlife and natural resources are treated as an inheritance for future generations.

Yet the natural resource sector, like most traditionally male-dominated sectors, presents an inherent risk of GBV to women who enter this space. Women joining community resource committees and wildlife (or forestry) enforcement are perceived to be challenging traditional gender norms and stereotypes, which can lead to intra-family and intra-community tension and backlash, as well as institutional violence and harassment.

GBV related to women’s roles and participation in natural resource governance and enforcement is perpetrated by spouses or partners, extended families, community members, co-workers, supervisors, and the very institutions they join. If women do not feel safe and experience harassment and GBV in

their workplace, they cannot meaningfully contribute to natural resource management (CIRDI, n.d.). GBV and its psychological, physical, sexual, social, and economic effects can prevent women and girls from entering in or continuing to participate in natural resource governance and enforcement, undermining conservation and development goals (Haberern, 2021).

It is widely established that GBV is frequently underreported due to related stigma, gender norms that make GBV acceptable, and challenges in accessing support resources and avenues to hold perpetrators accountable (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020). It has also been reported that GBV can be an unintended consequence of programming that seeks to promote women's participation and empowerment, and therefore adequate measures need to be considered throughout program design and implementation (CIRDI, n.d.; Castañeda Camey et al., 2020; Conservation International, 2020; Fraser, 2012).

Yet given the strong conservation, empowerment, and socioeconomic impacts of greater women's involvement in the sector, this work is still worth doing. Furthermore, women themselves, despite the inherent risks, are still eager to enter into the sector. It is thus the role of the development community to both help transform the sector to be more gender inclusive, and to mitigate the risks of GBV for those women currently working there.

The findings shared in this brief come from the experience of women leaders and community scouts from across the sector in Zambia. This illustrates a broad pattern of gender discrimination and GBV risks in wildlife management. Raising awareness of organizations and stakeholders in the sector about the prevalence of these risks is a critical step for effective response. This brief fills this gap and provides information to catalyze important discussions and continued programming in Zambia and elsewhere. Drawing upon these findings, ILRG is working with a number of government, NGO, and private sector partners to increase their capacity and political will to identify and mitigate GBV risks for the women leaders they work with, while advocating for sector-wide responses. ILRG's response to date includes:

- Engaging with government and NGOs to create awareness on GBV risks and prevalence in the sector;
- Integrating GBV into broader efforts to shift harmful gender norms, including the development of gender guidelines for chiefs at the national level and local gender norms dialogues for traditional leaders and communities;
- Working with government and civil society organizations to promote gender-responsive elections for CRBs, including pre-election extensive community sensitization about the importance of women's participation in order to garner male and community member support. This included dialogues with candidates' spouses so they better understand what the job entails;
- Providing initial gender orientation to men and women elected to CRBs to promote awareness about gender equality and GBV risks at household, community, and institutional levels;
- Developing a women's empowerment and leadership training program and training staff from government, civil society, and private organizations working with women elected to governance positions so they can equip women with technical and socioemotional skills for meaningful leadership and with GBV awareness;
- Developing GBV content for the initial training offered to newly recruited wildlife scouts at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Chunga Training Centre. Scouts' families and spouses are also invited to scout graduation ceremonies so they have a better sense of what the training program and job entails, in order to garner more familial support for their new role;
- Monitoring GBV risks during and after elections and for women in community scout jobs and in community resource governance boards; and

- Recognizing that specialized organizations and services are best placed to provide direct services to people experiencing GBV, creating information sheets and resources that partner organizations can use to respond to specific cases of GBV.

The following additional recommendations offer guidance for donors, government agencies, and other stakeholders working to promote women’s participation in the natural resource space to better mitigate, prevent, and respond to GBV. They are informed by ILRG’s discussions with stakeholders in Zambia and by the women in CRBs and in wildlife enforcement that contributed to this brief.

- Meaningfully integrate **gender norms change** and implement comprehensive strategies to **shift discriminatory norms** in communities, targeting key influential groups at household, community, and institutional levels to prevent and respond to various forms of GBV in the natural resource sector.
- Increase **awareness about and normalize the role of women in natural resource management and GBV** among spouses, men and women in communities, and community leaders.
- Increase institutional awareness on GBV risks and provide **training (including socioemotional training) and referral pathways for GBV support and services in the communities** available for women involved in resource management and enforcement.
- Create awareness and support the development of **gender-responsive and anti-GBV policies within institutions** in the natural resource sector, such as community resource committees and wildlife conservation and enforcement organizations.
- Create awareness and implement **safe mechanisms for women to report GBV** in male-dominated environments, with meaningful accountability measures.
- Support policies and **practical solutions to respond to women’s needs**, especially related to menstrual health management, pregnancy, and breastfeeding.
- Provide **socioemotional training and support for women** occupying positions in male-dominated spaces to build their confidence to meaningfully participate and report GBV.

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All individuals featured in the photograph in this document have given their consent for their image to be used in ILRG publications. The photograph does not depict any of the women or specific events mentioned in this brief.

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