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Making the Gender Agenda Happen

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a major development challenge in Zambia. It is also a social, health, economic, psychological, and human rights challenge that requires coordinated efforts of all relevant stakeholders. Records at the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Zambia Police Unit show an increase in reported national GBV cases, with most of them usually taking place within the family circle where the perpetrator is in a position of power. During 2016, there were 18,540 cases of GBV reported country-wide, in comparison with 2015, which recorded 18,088 reported cases.

In response to this problem, the Zambia-United Nations Joint Programme on Gender-Based Violence was developed in May 2012 to support the Government and people of Zambia to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The programme funded by the government of Sweden and the Republic of Ireland, with core resource contributions from UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and ILO, was established to form an integrated and multi-sectoral mechanism for implementation of the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011.

An independent evaluation of the Joint Programme on Gender Based Violence (GBV) done in 2017, showed that the construction of fast-track courts is a positive and necessary response to counter the delayed dispensation of justice. Magistrate Exnobot Zulu from the Choma Subordinate Court welcomed the move to use fast-track courts to reduce the duration of case disposal. “Most victims drop the cases because of protracted delays while waiting to identify the witness, fast-track-courts offer support to victims”, Mr. Zulu said.

The construction of fast-track court within the GRZ-UN Anti GBV Joint Programme in Choma is regarded as an example of a best practice on how coordination, cooperation and communication has led to strengthened networking for an improved GBV response. The Programme in Choma is implemented in collaboration with the Judiciary, Zambia Police Victim Support Unit, the National Prosecution Authority and Legal Aid Clinic for Women (LACW). The Ministry of Community Development, Social welfare is also an important institution as law mandates them to be present when trying juvenile cases and the department provides support to juveniles throughout the process.

Inspector Achaje Magai of the Lusaka Victim Support Unit noted that, “the VSU is the first stop for GBV survivors”. Its purpose is to ensure effective prevention, investigation and prosecution of GBV crimes against women, children and the elderly.
Strengthening Capacities and Accelerating Response to Climate Change in Zambia

Roida Zulu, 40, and her family live in Mambwe District in Zambia’s Eastern Province where the lack of rainfall has made it difficult for them to grow maize, their staple crop. Their indigenous knowledge of previously predicting the weather has resulted in low yields and sometimes even no harvest at all.

“Many years ago, we predicted the weather and knew when to plant,” Roida recalled. “But these days, the weather is unpredictable. Now the dry season can bring continuous rain while the hot season is too wet.”

These hardships could have been avoided, but climate change has robbed the farmers of their ability to predict the weather, a skill passed down through generations and sharpened by years of experience.

With much of Zambia’s rural population dependent on rain-fed agriculture, the negative impacts of climate extremes are being felt by all. Lower yields are increasing prices for staple food, like maize, and reducing revenues from key crops such as sorghum, millet, groundnuts, sunflower and soya beans.

Zambia has experienced some of its worst droughts and floods in the last two decades which has affected the quality of life for vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers. Significant rainfall deficits at critical stages of crop growth have frequently led to a serious shortfall in crop production. This has also contributed to a reduction in the generation of hydro-power which has invariably increased the production and use of charcoal, a core livelihood income and source of energy, not just in rural areas but also in urban areas.

It has been estimated that in the past 30 years droughts and floods have cost Zambia more than $13.8 billion equivalent to 4.0% of the annual GDP growth. Environmentalists here say if no action is taken, and in the absence of adaptation measures, rainfall variability could keep an additional 300,000 more Zambians in poverty.

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-supported study on the impacts of climate change in Zambia indicates that climate variability could cost the country USD$4.3 billion in lost GDP over the next decade reducing annual growth by 0.9%.

To help address the issue, the UNDP-supported Climate Information and Early Warning Systems Project is working with the Government through the Meteorological Department and the Ministry of Agriculture to promote climate smart agricultural practices – to support rural Zambian farming families to improve livelihoods through building their resilience to climate change.

With funding from the Global Environment Facility for Least Developed Countries Fund (GEF-LDCF), the project provides regular weather forecasts and agriculture advisories for farming communities, aiming to minimise the impact of adverse weather on crops and boost agricultural production. Currently, the project is piloting community level early warning systems for extreme weather events in the three worst affected provinces in Zambia, namely Southern, Western and Eastern.

“The use of weather and climate information assisted me to plant in good time and I have increased the maize production from less than a tonne per hectare to five tonnes per hectare. I will keep one tonne for consumption and sell four tonnes to help pay my children’s school fees”

Roida Zulu – Smallholder farmer

For smallholder farmers like Roida, adapting to climate change can help them avoid future losses, and enable them to invest more in farming or other livelihoods to support their families with basic social services such as education and health.

“The government’s partnership with UNDP to reduce the vulnerability of communities to climate change impacts is helping the country follow a climate-resilient development path, consistent with our poverty reduction and sustainable development objectives”

Hon. Brian Mushimba - Minister of Transport & Communications
Aside from supporting agro-meteorological services, UNDP is collaborating with the Government on many fronts including support to Zambia’s implementation of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, which is key in unlocking the country’s potential to pursue a climate resilient and low-carbon emission growth. The UNDP partnership is designed to ensure that inclusive and green growth across the country will improve water, energy and food security, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. UNDP has also provided support in the development of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) and in promoting natural regeneration of indigenous forests.

“UNDP is dedicated to working with the Government and people of Zambia to support innovative ideas that reduce carbon emissions and better prepare communities for the impact of climate change. ‘Knowing how much rain will fall and when the rainy season will start and end, is one of the most valuable tools smallholder farmers need to prepare for climate uncertainties and improve yields in a good season.’

Mandisa Mashologu - UNDP Zambia, Country Director

Following an awareness-raising event with traditional leaders in Serenje District on the impacts of climate change, Chief Chitambo happily said “I am setting aside 12,000 hectares for community forest management and support for the regeneration of indigenous forest in my area. I will also encourage people to start raising trees and plant them in degraded forests.”
UNDP-GLOBAL FUND SUPPORTS STRENGTHENING SUPPLY CHAIN SYSTEMS FOR DRUGS DISTRIBUTION IN ZAMBIA

Since 2003, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has partnered with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to support implementation of programmes targeting the three diseases in low and middle-income countries. In Zambia, UNDP assumed the role of interim Principal Recipient (PR) of Global Fund grants in 2010, with the aim of strengthening national capacities in key functional areas. This resulted in the Zambian Ministry of Health resuming the Principal Recipient role in 2015. After this key milestone demonstrating national capacity development, UNDP continued to provide support on supply chain management of the Medical Stores Limited (MSL) and capacity development of the Ministry of Health and other sub-recipients under the Global Fund grants.

The total volume of health commodities handled by the Medical Stores Limited (MSL) has dramatically increased since 2009 and will continue to do so under the new Global Fund grants. This has resulted into a critical shortage of storage and distribution space at the central MSL warehouse in Lusaka and in the country. With support from UNDP and other partners, in 2015 Medical Stores Limited developed an Infrastructure Master Plan to address its current and projected infrastructural needs. Part of this plan is the creation of regional pharmaceutical warehouses (hubs) to transfer drugs from the central Lusaka warehouse to health facilities across the county. In support of this Master Plan, UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Churches Association of Zambia has designed and is building four regional pharmaceutical warehouses in Mansa, Mpika, Chipata and Choma, to strengthen the supply chain for health facilities to get timely access to much needed drugs and equipment for people affected by HIV&AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The funding for the construction of the regional warehouses is financed through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the regional pharmaceutical warehouse in Mansa on 26 August 2017 Health Minister said:

“...the construction of the warehouses will ease supply chain of essential medicines to the people and help decentralize operations of the Medical Stores Limited”.

Hon. Chitalu Chilufya – Minister of Health

UNDP Zambia will continue to work in partnership with the Ministry of Health and MSL to move toward concrete implementation of the Infrastructure Master Plan and the supply of essentials drugs and equipment to address HIV & AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The four regional pharmaceutical houses will be completed in the new year and handed over to Medical Stores Limited.
Ireen Munyevu, 20, and Judith Katembu, 32, could barely hide their delight at the thought of being elected to serve as Vice Chairperson and Secretary of their respective Village Action Groups, putting them at the helm of community-based structures seeking to improve the sustainable management of natural resources such as land, water, forests and wildlife.

“In prior to my election, I had no say when it comes to decisions in my community. My views were not valid and could not therefore influence a man’s decision in any way. In the past, women were not allowed to serve in leadership positions over men.”

Ireen Munyevu – Chairperson, VAGs

Katembu remembers: “During those days, when we attended meetings, we rarely spoke and we were not given the chance to ask questions. Only the men did the talking and decided what was good for us. Men are held as heads of households while women are housewives, responsible for fetching water, taking care of the children and cooking food.”

Like other women, Munyevu and Katembu had no choice but to comply with decisions made by their husbands – or by their fathers and brothers. Such decisions, in many instances, resulted in degrading natural resources which negatively affects women’s economic status.

This predicament reflects how entrenched patriarchal attitudes in Zambia held back women’s rights in decision making regarding natural assets which took no account of their interests, needs and concerns.

“Such practices are detrimental to the management of natural assets as they silence women who may have valuable knowledge and leadership to offer.”

Mandisa Mashologu - Country Director, UNDP Zambia

In Zambia, the impact of natural resource loss and degradation disproportionately affects poor rural women because of their dependence on natural resources, especially women who live in ecologically vulnerable areas.

Women face barriers to their inclusion in governance systems, decision making and benefit sharing related to natural resource management that marginalize their roles, contributions and rights. These barriers stem from policy, economic status, societal norms and cultural practices.

Women constitute 51 percent of the country’s nearly 14 million people, but men still dominate the political landscape, and the issue of violence against women and girls is of great concern. Activists say socially, and culturally constructed norms and roles have shaped gender relations, leading to unequal power relations. Women have substantially less access to health care and education services than men and are vastly under-represented at all levels of government.

Aiming to tackle these issues, a UNDP-supported project – Strengthening Management Effectiveness and Generating Multiple Environmental Benefits Within and Around the Greater Kafue National Park and West Lunga National Park in Zambia – is working with rural communities to collectively manage natural assets as a shared resource and responsibility.

The initiative is a partnership between UNDP and the Government of Zambia through the Forestry Department, under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife at the Ministry of Tourism and Arts. It is being funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
The Village Action Groups meet regularly to discuss how to use their land sustainably and, little by little, the community forests are coming alive with environmentally-friendly activities, ranging from honey production to the regeneration of community forests.

Members of the community are also farming more sustainably by using crop rotation and other techniques that keep land fertile, in addition to cutting back on and managing slash-and-burn agriculture, a traditional practice that leads to uncontrollable bush fires that damage huge swathes of land. Through the Village Action Groups, local communities are beginning to have serious conversations about protecting wildlife and conserving their forests – making sure that they do not gradually destroy their precious natural resources.

The project has promoted rural women as leaders of farming cooperatives and small-scale companies and trained them as community managers of the natural resources around them. As a result, more rural women in the project areas have acquired technical environmental and agricultural knowledge and are now performing tasks previously considered suitable only for men.

Christine Musonoyi, 54, Secretary of Shalamba Village Action Groups in Kalumbila District said women in her community are now keen to accept management responsibility because they see the long-term economic benefits of sustainable utilisation, and they are willing to invest time and resources in natural resource management, in a significantly proactive way.

Since the UNDP intervention, Munyevu, Katembu and Musonoyi said traditional attitudes on the role of women are no longer holding them back. They have become change agents, inspiring other women and girls in an ongoing effort to navigate traditional practices and become leaders in the communities. They are also providing hands-on support to fellow women in resolving immediate domestic disputes.

For women in these rural communities, their involvement in the responsible management of the natural resources has made a big difference, providing a sense of security and leadership, which means they are investing more into protecting their environment and curbing climate change.
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