

Program Brief

Coalitions to Achieve Gender Equality at Scale:

Gender Development and Coordinating Subcommittees and Networks as Drivers of Change in Zambia



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*Gender Development and Coordinating Subcommittees
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Luangwa River, Mapungu, Western Province, Zambia.

Summary

Gender inequality affects development outcomes, and it results in sub-optimal returns to development investments. Formal structures have been put in place to address these issues, but their effectiveness is hampered by a number of institutional constraints. This brief summarizes the findings of a scoping study conducted to understand the strengths and areas of growth of the gender development and coordinating subcommittees at the district and provincial levels in western Zambia, and of the gender networks at the national level. The study was conducted by the CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems and

its global partner, Promundo-US, in February 2015. While the findings presented in this brief are specific to western Zambia, the challenges identified are shared across most districts and provinces in Zambia, as well as in many African countries such as Sierra Leone, where there are gender ministries and similar network structures, making the findings applicable to a wider context.

Background

By partnering with local, national, and international organizations to achieve large-scale development impact, the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Aquatic Agricultural Systems

(AAS) seeks to reduce poverty and improve food security for many small-scale fishers and farmers who depend on aquatic agriculture systems. The program focuses on Africa's inland waters, where the vast majority of people dependent on these systems are poor. AAS is working in the Barotse Floodplain in Western Province, Zambia. Over 80 percent of the population in Western Province lives in poverty³ and livelihoods are governed by flood pulses. In 2012, a Barotse Hub Development Challenge (HDC) was identified and agreed upon by a wide range of stakeholders. It aims "to make more effective use of the seasonal flooding and natural resources in the Barotse Floodplain System through more productive and diversified aquatic agricultural management practices and technologies that improve lives and livelihoods of the poor." The Barotse HDC forms the basis for developing stakeholder commitment toward the tackling of development challenges through agricultural research. AAS is currently operating in ten focal communities situated in or along the floodplain in four districts (Mongu, Senanga, Kalabo, and Lukulu).

The successful implementation of agricultural interventions that benefit women and men equally and improve gender relations in Western Province depends on support from a collaborative coalition of government, development, and research organizations (see Box 1). Working together by sharing ideas, approaches, technologies, and lessons learned, as well as by developing capacities to deliver on shared goals/objectives around gender, is important, and it is more effective than working separately and in isolation.

There is a need to support various platforms (e.g., networks, coalitions) that aim to build people's capacities to innovate and to influence the policy and practice of research and development (R&D) organizations, at multiple

levels, to help create gender-transformative change at scale. The support should be accompanied by systematic monitoring and evaluation in order to understand the effectiveness and efficacy of such platforms.

Box 1. Why Coalitions?

The CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS) recognizes that the underlying causes of unequal access to and control over agricultural resources between women and men must be transformed to achieve lasting and equitable development impact. Neither individual nor structural transformation happens in isolation. Coalitions and networks are seen as an integral part of promoting, supporting, and reinforcing gender-equitable practices. They can serve as platforms from which organizations and governments can exchange lessons learned around gender, share challenges in influencing gender-inequitable practices and attitudes, and seek guidance on what areas to strengthen. Furthermore, they can serve as spaces where actors can share their experiences implementing inclusive agricultural research in development, as well as advocate for others to carry out similar approaches. In short, coalitions and networks can be a means of creating an enabling and supportive environment for gender equality in agricultural research and development.

One platform that was identified is the existing gender development and coordinating subcommittees that operate at the district and provincial levels. It is believed that these government-supported committees might create an ideal space for a wide variety of R&D stakeholders to share knowledge, experiences, approaches, and technologies, in order to learn and act collectively to tackle the pervasive challenge of gender equality. To date, no systematic effort has been made to understand how these district- and provincial-level gender subcommittees (and the gender focal-point people who lead their coordination) function

3 Central Statistical Office (2012)

and provide opportunities for people to share knowledge and develop capacities.

AAS undertook a scoping study that aimed to fill this knowledge gap. This brief presents the study's key findings, as well as options for action to strengthen the gender subcommittees, making them more relevant, improving their function, and supporting them as knowledge-sharing and learning platforms that can catalyze collaborative action towards achieving gender equality at scale.

Overview of the Scoping Study

The scoping study aimed to better understand the functioning of the subcommittees, the challenges that prevent them from carrying out their roles and responsibilities and achieving their objectives, and possible actions to address these challenges. In February 2015, in-depth interviews were conducted with gender focal points (GFPs) and gender subcommittee (GSC) members in Kalabo, Lukulu, Mongu, and

Senanga Districts in Western Province, Zambia, and with representatives of organizations that work on gender or that are part of gender networks at the national level in the capital, Lusaka. District Administrative Officers (DAOs) – usually assigned as GFPs – were contacted first for an interview. After the completion of the interviews, the DAOs provided a list of potential interviewees – subcommittee members and other representatives from organizations working on gender at the district, provincial, or national level. Approximately 45 interviews were conducted over a two-week period.

Key Findings

Different perspectives among GSC members and non-members about the purpose of the GSCs

In general, study participants fell into one of two categories:

1. Those who viewed and thus treated the GSCs as an organization that provides services. For example, some members reported that the



*Woman weeding in her garden in Senanga District, Western Province, Zambia.
Photo credit: Nixon Chisonga, WorldFish*

GSCs' main purpose was to carry out activities on International Women's Day and provide services like violence counseling, while others reported that GSCs were created to sensitize people in communities on various issues such as gender-based violence. Study participants within the Ministry of Gender and Child Development (MGCD) voiced this view when they highlighted their need for more training on how to deliver better violence counseling services to people in communities.

"GSC mostly tries to engage women in development programs. For example, [during] the 16 Days of Activism we had victims of violence who came and spoke out. To get more women involved and speaking out when their rights have been violated."

- GSC Member,
Senanga District

2. Those who viewed the GSCs' role as providing leadership and supplying resources to members, as well as to non-member entities, who are implementing gender activities within the districts. These views were most common among study participants in Mongu and with civil society groups such as the Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC), a network of women's rights groups in Lusaka.

"[The purpose of the GSC is] to coordinate efforts of various stakeholders and do information exchange. This allows us to know what is happening on the ground - different activities addressing gender inequalities. We are all aware of the GSC and instead of individually doing things as organizations, we work together."

- GSC Member,
Mongu District

Notably, there was more variation in perceptions of the purpose of the GSCs *between*

districts and at the national level than there was *within* these locations, suggesting that senior leadership influenced these perceptions. For this reason, it may be critical for the MGCD to develop GFP capacities to coordinate and lead the GSCs in their districts and integrate gender approaches, including those that are transformative.⁴

Proper functioning of the GSCs limited by lack of funding

Almost all study participants in Western Province cited the lack of funding support - for fuel and transport, for communications, and for participation in meetings (e.g., lunch, travel reimbursements to members) - as a major hindrance to the proper functioning of the GSCs. This was mentioned less by stakeholders in Lusaka, which may suggest that funding support is not reaching outlying provinces/districts.

"Financial resources are sorely lacking - resources to pay for printing the letters, sending them, paying a driver to distribute the letters. You end up using your personal money because the committee is not funded."

- GSC Member,
Mongu District

Limited gender mainstreaming capacity and expertise

Few, if any, study participants reported receiving any kind of gender capacity-development training in the past one to two years. When asked what the term "gender" means, many study participants understood it to mean "equal numbers of men and women participate in programs." Many expressed frustration at being given little technical support and training to carry out the directives handed down to them from the national level.

⁴ Cole et al. (2014)

“Critical gender analysis skills are missing. More specifically, GSC members are unable to make the linkage between knowledge of gender roles and how to apply such knowledge and understanding to the practical work on the ground. For example, resources for implementation of construction projects or water projects/borehole drilling don’t consider location of boreholes, traditional roles, and myths that are prevalent in society. Will it increase or decrease women’s workload?”

– GSC Member,
Lukulu District

Lack of strategic direction from the top

The majority of study participants reported that they received little to no strategic direction or coordination from the MGCD, at the provincial or national levels, in terms of goals, objectives, or information on their roles or responsibilities. Additionally, study participants reported that they would appreciate the opportunity to meet other gender subcommittee members from other districts at least once a year to exchange experiences and lessons learned on promoting gender equality.

“Leadership is needed to ensure there are regular meetings and reporting from the GSC, with a vision for the district. Additionally, organize workshops with district administration and planners to strengthen the existing structures.”

– GSC Member,
Lukulu District

Understaffing and high turnover

The Provincial Planning Unit (whose members serve as GFPs for Western Province) is severely understaffed, with three out of 11 positions currently filled. From the point of view of the PPU, this limits their capacities to provide



A woman in a rice field in Senanga, Western Province, Zambia.

strategic leadership and facilitate coordinated efforts to address gender inequalities. Additionally, it was almost universally reported that GSC members in many districts seldom stay at their posts for longer than one to two years, further exacerbating the challenges that inhibit the proper functioning of gender subcommittees.

“Usually these [gender] issues are taken care of [by the] resources or planning department, but we get so involved in our things you find that they have scattered. Sometimes we are over-burdened by other activities. We need to have some gender officer of some kind – not someone assigned an additional duty, but [rather someone] designed to spearhead this issue.”

– GSC Member,
Kalabo District

“People move on, especially from government, where there are changes here and there and you lose key resources from the committee. Even NGOs if you have certain people moving or changing roles. This affects the composition. Because people have their core mandates in terms of what they are doing, and sometimes you don’t get all members actively participating or available when they are required, because they have key roles that they have to undertake.”

– GSC Member,
Mongu District

Options for Action at District, Provincial, and National Levels

Strategic direction and leadership

1. The MGCD should share or facilitate the development of documents that outline clearly the roles and responsibilities of gender subcommittees and GFPs, with all relevant stakeholders. Most subcommittee members and GFPs did not know or had varying ideas of the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of their positions, along with not knowing where to find this information. In Western Province, in particular, this information should be easily accessible. The hard and soft copies could be disseminated in meetings, via email, and on the MGCD website.

Capacity development

2. At the provincial level, the MGCD and its partners should take a multi-sector approach to capacity development on gender and invite different organizations to share examples of their work in agriculture, fisheries, early childhood development, education, and health. In each district, opportunities to engage government departments in training, mentorship, and coaching, beyond those members in the MGCD's Gender Focal Point Terms of Reference, should be identified. Concrete examples of what it looks like to “mainstream” or “integrate” gender, and challenge harmful gender norms that impede development across various sectors, should be collated.

3. The MGCD should, with GSC members, provide provincial and district support on strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation.



*Three girls posing for a photo from Lukulu District, Western Province, Zambia.
Photo credit: Steven Cole, WorldFish*

The MGCD drives the gender and development agenda, and it sets targets and goals. These should then be contextualized at the provincial and district levels. The MGCD should partner with organizations to guide and facilitate this strategic planning process at the district level. The Ministry should encourage district- and provincial-level members to engage with one another and to share experiences and lessons outside of the Provincial Development Coordinating Committee (PDCC).

Financial and human resources support

4. The MGCD should provide a gender-only focal person at the district level, link their performance to job reviews, and refrain from making the GFP an “add on” to a person’s job description.

5. The MGCD and its partners should provide financial support to GSCs so they can conduct (A) routine gender-subcommittee meetings, and (B) field visits to better understand how

to implement gender-transformative research and development activities or programs.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The creation of gender subcommittees highlights a commitment from national leadership to tackle gender inequality on a large scale. However, lack of leadership, coordination, and financial commitment (among other issues) has weakened the effectiveness of these structures. The information gathered from the scoping study highlighted several options, utilizing a variety of approaches, to strengthen the gender subcommittees in Western Province and at the national level. The results also informed the development of a high-level theory of change for the gender subcommittees (see Figure 1), which describes how GSCs can be strengthened to achieve greater development impact (including gender equality) over the longer term.

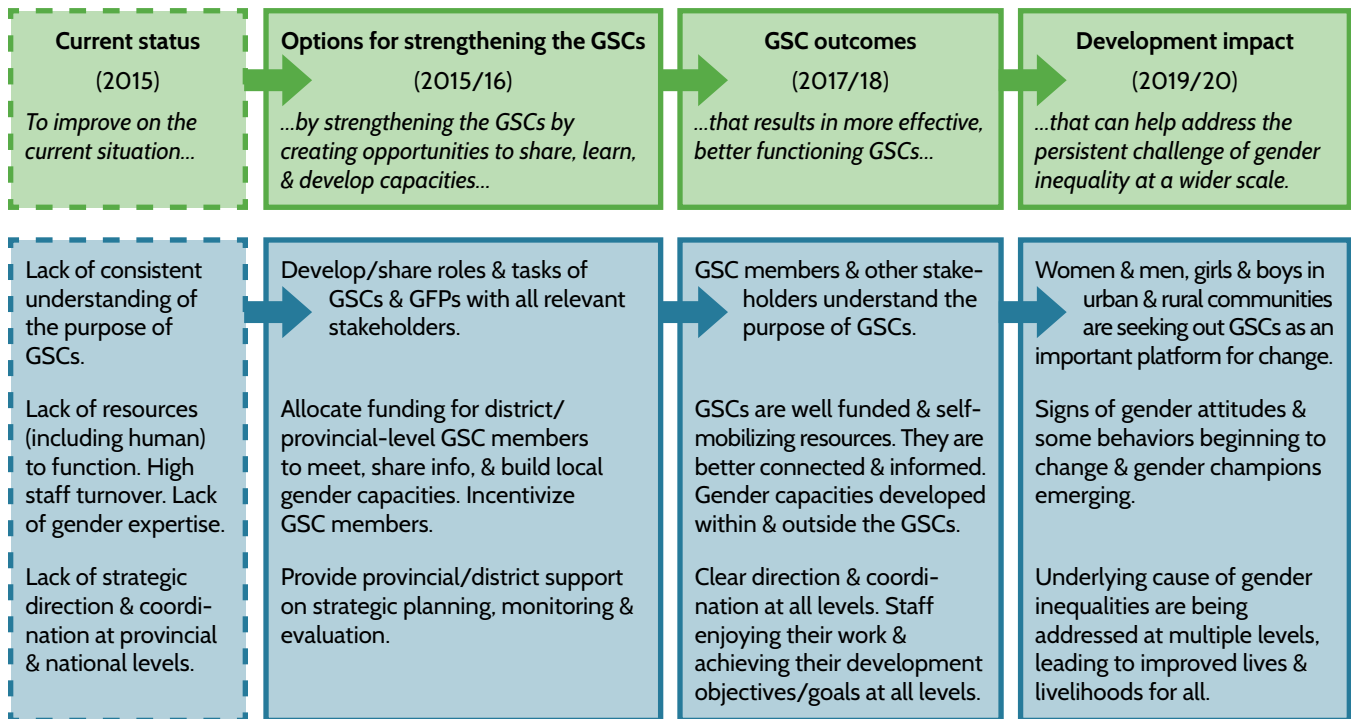


Figure 1. Gender sub-committees as key instruments for achieving gender equality at scale: A theory of change

Moving forward, the MGCD and its counterparts could use this brief for further engagement with GSCs and GFPs at the district, provincial, and national levels. A forum, made up of

stakeholders at multiple levels, could be developed to map a way forward and link it to current efforts by other stakeholders to develop capacities of GSCs, and in particular, GFPs.



*Woman cutting sugarcane in Senanga District, Western Province, Zambia.
Photo credit: Nixon Chisonga, WorldFish*

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Promundo

Promundo, for nearly two decades, has taken a global leadership role in driving the field of evidence-based advocacy, program development, and applied research on engaging men and boys to promote gender equality, improve health, and end violence against women and children. It is an applied research institute with nearly 50 staff members, across offices in Brazil, the United States, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Portugal, who work to test, evaluate, and advocate for programs and policies that promote gender justice and prevent violence. Promundo works with partners in more than 35 countries to improve the health, well-being, and rights of individuals and communities by focusing on engaging men and boys in gender-transformative approaches. Through structured group education, campaigns, and community action, men and women challenge and question violence, workplace and income inequality, and harmful stereotypes. Policy advocacy ensures that these individual and community changes have national and global impact. Promundo also carries out internationally recognized research, including rigorous evaluation, to measure the impact of this work.

For more information, visit www.promundoglobal.org.

WorldFish

WorldFish is an international research organization that harnesses the potential of fisheries and aquaculture to reduce hunger and poverty. WorldFish is a member of the [CGIAR](#), a global agriculture research partnership for a food-secure future. WorldFish is leading the implementation of a research-in-development program, in the Barotse Floodplain in western Zambia, called the Aquatic Agricultural Systems ([AAS](#)). The program recognizes that there are significant gender disparities in access to and control of assets and decision-making within aquatic agricultural systems, and that they greatly reduce people's abilities to harness the benefits of these systems for human well-being. Accordingly, the program seeks not only to integrate gender into other research, but also to pursue research that will help to fundamentally transform underlying gender norms and power relations. To this end, the program adopts an evidence-based, gender-transformative approach that challenges existing unequal gender norms and power relations; promotes power sharing, equal control of resources, equal decision-making, and support for women's empowerment; and creates lasting change at multiple levels.

For more information, visit www.worldfishcenter.org.



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