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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

Supporting Transparent Land Administration in Zambia



Incoming Chief Mshawa (standing – second from left) and Acting Chief Mshawa (standing – second from right) with local partner staff during community consultation visit.

“In my reign of 13 years as Acting Chief Mshawa I have attended and solved more land problems than anything else.”

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The majority of land in Zambia, including that of millions of smallholder farmers, is administered by traditional authorities such as chiefs and village headpersons. As investment flows into Zambia, communities are increasingly looking to traditional authorities for guidance, support, and protection of individual and community land assets. Historically, traditional authorities have not documented their land allocation or land dispute decisions, leaving community members with tenure insecurity in the event of a change in leaders or outside pressures emerging for land. USAID is addressing these challenges by working with traditional authorities to explore models that build transparency and documentation into customary land administration, securing resource rights for local communities.

USAID is working with local implementing partner Chipata District Land Alliance to support local-level land administration. The activity focuses on building land administration capacity at the village and chiefdom levels, encouraging local leaders to become advocates for transparent land administration, and helping traditional authorities form positive working relationships with provincial and district governments. Acting Chief Mshawa highlights the importance of this program, and the land-related challenges that have afflicted communities in the past:

“In my reign of 13 years as Acting Chief Mshawa I have attended and solved more land problems than anything else; many unresolved boundary disputes, illegal allocation of land, issues to do with land inheritance. Every day of my life as chief, I have to attend to some person or group of people who have differed over land or who has/have been wrongly settled.”

Through sustained engagement with traditional authorities, USAID is facilitating a dialogue that will help rural Zambians and their traditional authorities respond to the 21st century land challenges facing Zambia.