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SUCCESS STORY

Integrating Participatory Appraisal and Spatial Technologies to Strengthen Customary Land Tenure in Eastern Zambia



Photo: Matt Sommerville

CDLA Community Facilitator, Misozi Phri presents on a GIS map that she developed through USAID-funded training.

Conflicts over land are ubiquitous in rural Zambia, including disputes over boundaries, inheritance and land grabbing. By supporting local institutions and traditional authorities in community resource mapping and land certification, USAID's Tenure and Global Climate Change project, is helping to reduce conflict and strengthened land tenure security.

The project supports processes that integrate participatory rural appraisal techniques with spatial technologies such as GPS and GIS. Training on these technologies is building a cadre of Community Facilitators with strong spatial mapping and interpretation skills.

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USAID is piloting approaches to document the customary land rights of individuals and communities in rural Zambia. Yet currently there are less than 40 certified land surveyors in all of Zambia, which presents a significant challenge to efforts aimed at documenting and strengthening the land rights of rural Zambians. To address these constraints, USAID is building the capacity of a local grantee, the Chipata District Land Alliance (CDLA), to integrate high-resolution satellite imagery and basic GIS technology into its community engagement approaches.

Project staff developed a series of trainings that build the skills of CDLA Community Facilitators in both the soft skills of facilitation and the technical elements of spatial data collection and analysis. From August to October 2014, ten CDLA facilitators participated in four 3-5 day trainings on GPS/GIS Basics; Mobile Data Collection; Participatory Rural Appraisal; and Data Integration. This was the first training series of its kind for all of the participants. The courses were structured around a hands-on, interactive approach, and the time between the training modules provided a chance for the facilitators to deepen their skills and identify new questions. CDLA Program Coordinator, Noreen Miti, says: “[The project] has helped the CDLA move from being an organization that responds to conflicts after they emerge to now assisting farmers and traditional authorities to secure their rights and avoid conflicts.”

Community Facilitators learned how to manipulate GPS units and develop community maps using two free mapping platforms. They then learned how to link spatial information to data collected from participatory sketch maps and discussions with community members on land governance. Finally, the facilitators developed a customized work flow that will allow them to map community land uses and document village-level resource governance rules.

There is a clear hunger for training in spatial and participatory mapping skills. Since the training, one CDLA Community Facilitator, Moses Kasoka, has registered in a USAID-funded online GIS training. He notes: “After my work with CDLA, a Master’s degree in GIS will just be review.” Additionally, the Zambia Land Alliance has asked the project to train its staff in these processes and methodologies. Even these efforts to expand local technical capacity will not be adequate to meet the growing need for basic spatial mapping skills. Over the coming months, the project will develop spatial mapping trainings aimed at traditional leaders, particularly Indunas, the primary advisors to and administrators for Zambia’s 273 Chiefs. It is hoped that by working directly with Zambia’s traditional authorities and building on their largely existing structures, a sustainable and legitimate system for documenting and more transparently administering customary lands will improve customary landholders’ tenure security within Zambia’s existing legal framework.