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SUCCESS STORY

Securing the Land Rights of Rural Zambian Communities



Mr. Ephraim Phiri of Chipata identifying his plot of land in Kasinzina Village, Maguya Chiefdom.



Cartoons by local artist, Kiss Abrahams, have been an effective approach to share the process with rural populations

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Telling Our Story

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Clear and enforceable rights are central to farmers' decisions to invest time, labor, and money in sustainable land use. In Zambia, the rights of smallholder farmers and communities are undocumented for the majority of the country. USAID is supporting local traditional leaders and government to pilot low-cost approaches that systematically document, and ultimately protect, the land rights of rural communities.

One of the main challenges of documenting large areas of land at once, is ensuring that all stakeholders, even those outside the community, know that their land will be surveyed. USAID's partner, Chipata District Land Alliance (CDLA), has deployed a robust communications campaign including community theater performances and cartoons, as well as community meetings.

The message reached Ephraim Kamoto Phiri of Chipata Town, who has family land in rural Kasinzina Village. Mr. Phiri noted: "When I heard that there are people in the village who are demarcating portions of land, I did not at first fully understand why they were there and so my first reaction was to rush to the village and defend my land. But upon reaching the village, the community explained everything and I was happy that my field too would be demarcated and protected from future grabbers of land. I further appreciate the work that CDLA is doing in making our communities aware of their land rights."

The importance of communication and outreach does not end at the field demarcation stage. After initial maps are created CDLA will deploy a corrections period to publically vet village maps, increasing transparency and conflict resolution before the local chiefs deliver customary land certificates.

Across Chipata District and with the growing threat of commercialization of traditionally held land, rural farmers are beginning to demand documentation of their rights. USAID's work is providing sustainable models to help government and civil society meet these needs.