

Partnerships for Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls in Southern Africa

Zambia: Religious and Traditional Actors Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls

Confronting the Challenge

In Southern Africa, violence against women and girls (VAWG) is among the most severe and widespread human rights violations. Between half and two-thirds of all women state that they have experienced violence at some point in their lives; violence by a male intimate partner is the most common form (Zambia Demographic Health Survey: 2013/14).

Christianity is the official religion in Zambia (constitutional since 1996), with the majority of the population belonging to Protestant, Catholic or Evangelical denominations. Religious bodies have a broad legitimacy and enjoy a high level of trust.

Zambia recognizes both statutory laws and customary practices. Thus, traditional authorities (tribal chiefs and headmen) are often responsible for justice and brokering marriages on the grounds of customary law, while civil matters, including marriages, are handled by civil servants.

The role of religion and tradition as a factor for development is also increasingly recognized globally. Stakeholders in Zambia recognize the large influence that religious and traditional actors have on norms and attitudes around gender relations and gender-based violence (GBV). However, a study conducted by the PfP programme showed that **these actors are not sufficiently engaged in prevention efforts.**

Religious and traditional actors hold very diverse views on gender and GBV depending on their interpretations of theological scripture and culture. Therefore, activities need to bear in mind the **ambivalence of religious and traditional authorities**, which are potential 'agents of change' for and adversaries of woman's rights.

Building Partnerships

Considering the magnitude of VAWG in Southern Africa, a broad-based effort is required. The programme supports the formation of **multi-stakeholder initiatives** that leverage financial and technical contributions from governments, civil society organisations, private sector companies, the media and academia.

Flagship name	Religious and traditional actors preventing violence against women and girls
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Southern Province, Zambia
Key stakeholders	Provincial Administration Southern Province, Ministry of Religious Affairs and National Guidance, Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs, Caritas, church mother bodies
Duration	12/2017 – 11/2020

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS



The flagship will bring together religious actors representing various faiths and denominations as well as traditional authorities (tribal chiefs).

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The initiative is coordinated under the Provincial District Gender Sub-Committee with involvement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs. The NGO Caritas acts as the key implementing agency and coordinates the activities.

The flagship project is a joint initiative with the GIZ Sector Programme 'Values and Religion in Development Cooperation'.

Taking Action

In 2018, a **religious and traditional actor mapping** was conducted to analyse which religious and traditional actors are present in the project area and what development activities they are engaged in. Importantly, the mapping also included an inventory of the views espoused by these stakeholders in relation to gender and GBV.

The findings of the mapping are used to inform a series of **round table discussions**, where religious and traditional actors meet to share and discuss their views, including on theological interpretation of scripture. At the end of this process, participants sign a **'statement of commitment'** that represents a consensus among the actors. Importantly, the consensus must be in line with the statutory laws of Zambia and present messages that help to prevent GBV.

Finally, the consensus will be used to produce a **guideline for the pastoral work** of the religious actors, such as marriage counselling and preaching. This guide is distributed to clergy and laymen and -women. This way, preventative messages are disseminated to women and men throughout the project area by some of the most important opinion shapers.

Sharing Evidence

Despite global investment and publications that demonstrate progress in the past years, **evidence on which approaches are effective in preventing VAWG** - in which context, under which conditions and by means of which processes - is still much needed to inform policy-making and programme development.

The PfP flagship projects will be accompanied by operational research to **create relevant and practice-oriented information** through different forms of evaluations as well as lessons learned-studies that document processes and results. This will help to better understand what works under which conditions and provide useful information on how to replicate interventions.

The findings and lessons learnt will be documented and published for sharing among practitioners in Southern Africa (research uptake). To this end, the programme will also support **specific formats for regional exchange to promote scaling-up**.

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