> *"I was taught to believe that a man should never cry, should never have compassion, true love, should never show love to the wife, and above all should always be in control – however he can do it – even at the expense of a woman. [Now] I am motivated to share with my brothers and cousins at home what happens if we do not take care of our feelings by bottling them up just because we are either men or women."*
>
> **Participant in Zambia Men's Network training course**[1]

Violet Shivutse, left, talks with farmers in rural Kenya. ©GROOTS Kenya

6 Community Empowerment

The previous chapter shows that household methodologies are astonishingly effective in empowering women, men and children to transform their lives by working together towards a common goal. However, the case studies also show that if women and their families are to fully realize their visions for a better life, changes in intra-household decision-making need to be accompanied by measures to change the wider environment in which they live. Returning to our empowerment framework, this involves targeted work on changing structures: both underlying cultural norms, and decision-making institutions of all kinds. This chapter looks at different ways of working to change structures at the community level. The approaches presented focus on supporting women as change-makers, enlisting traditional decision-makers as change agents, and getting men on board. [1]

The first case study, from Zambia, examines efforts by indigenous leaders to redesign customary, male-dominated decision-making systems with the aim of giving women a stronger voice in community forums, and to strengthen women's direct access rights to productive assets, including land and oxen. The second case study, from Kenya, explores how grassroots women's institutions have worked to protect and deepen access rights to land for HIV-positive women who had previously lost those rights upon becoming widows. This has been achieved by strengthening their voice collectively and enrolling various institutional actors. The third case study examines the work of the Men's Network in Zambia to engage rural men to support women as leaders.

CASE STUDY
Engaging traditional leadership for women's rights in Zambia [2]

Zambia is a multi-ethnic nation with 73 ethnic communities. Its constitution permits a dual legal customary and statutory law system. The multiplicity of ethnic groups and the use of two sometimes contradictory legal systems in one country impact significantly upon the ways in which women and men access and control productive assets. This also has knock-on effects for productivity and for women's ability to personally benefit from their work and from the work of other household members.

Although men and women are both involved in agricultural activities, women are widely discriminated against in terms of control over productive resources and in decision-making, particularly with regard to expenditure decisions and the management of assets. This appears to be the case whether they live within matrilineal or patrilineal systems, though there are significant differences between communities. Bemba women in one study conducted in the Northern Region reported, "Women are custodians of money but they do not spend it." [3] Explaining their apparent placidity in the face of overt exploitation by buyers who barter for their agricultural produce by exchanging it for salt, sugar, oil,

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1   Chapter 6 title page quotation: Men's Resources International (2006). *Zambia Men's Network Leadership Training*. Springfield, MA, US. http://www.mensresourcesinternational.org/documents/zambiareport.pdf. At p.6.

2   Where not otherwise noted, the material in this and other case studies in this chapter comes from contributing authors' records of their own field work.

3   Farnworth, C. R., Akamandisa, V. M. and Hichaambwa, M. (2011). *Zambia Feed the Future Gender Assessment*. Report to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). http://www.pandiawarleggan. com/pdf/Gender%20and%20Value%20Chain%20Study%20for%20USAID%20Zambia%202011.pdf.

crockery and cloth rather than money, another woman said, "We do not keep our money. We turn it into other goods. We want payment in cups and plates. This is harder to transform into other things." Others answered:

- Yes, that is the biggest problem we face. Men want to control all our finances.
- We don't keep our money, in most cases, in the village. We keep food.
- The problem is that men steal the food to exchange for beer or for another woman.
- Immediately the food is turned into cash it goes into the men's pockets.
- The man can send you to sell the produce, but immediately you come back he wants the money. He even pretends to be annoyed with you to get the money!
- We hide money with our neighbours.

These findings are very interesting because the Bemba are matrilineal, meaning that property passes down the female line – though often via maternal uncles, and men upon marriage traditionally move to their wife's village. Local people explained, "In Bemba chiefdoms people respect men more. This is rooted in people's minds. Even if a woman has an idea men say, 'Ah, she's making a noise.'" A male staff member at the District Agricultural Coordinator's Office said: "From birth on we are told the man should control the purse. Payment is given to the man who takes the produce to market, but the woman who does the work gets almost nothing." Another respondent noted: "Marketing is where the man comes in. The man determines how to spend the money even though women can look after it. Immediately [when] they start to do commercial [sales] it turns to the man. … In Bemba tradition a woman cannot spend without the assent of the man, even if the woman is a teacher." This said, the level of women's disempowerment in this Bemba community may not be typical. In other Bemba areas, women are noticeably more assertive.

Despite the generally dismal situation for many rural women in Zambia, socio-cultural norms that predate the colonial period and favour women's rights to property still exist

A village in the Barotse floodplain, Zambia. Georgina Smith, © WorldFish, Flickr

today among some ethnic groups. Among the cattle-keeping Lozi in Barotseland, for instance, women are encouraged to take cattle and other property to their husband's village during the first year of marriage so that they can benefit from them over the long term. This is expressed in a saying: "Bride, go to your marriage with cattle so that wealth may be enough for your household." The ownership of cattle by women contributes greatly to wealth creation by young couples. Children are given heifers upon their birth which they use to meet their needs in later life. Indeed, Lozi tradition allows both boys and girls to have equal rights over assets, and they inherit from both male and female lines. When marriage is dissolved, through divorce or the death of the husband, the woman may return to her home and be given land which she can use for her livelihood. Empowerment methodologies, such as household methodologies, can be readily connected to existing positive norms like these to help people make their livelihood strategies more effective.

However, among other ethnic communities in the country, women face serious constraints with regard to accessing and accumulating assets. In Southern Province, for instance, Tonga women repeatedly report their inability to control land, their labour and the outputs from their work. Tonga men, when demanding things from their wives, say things like: "Did you come with a field from your village?" and "Who owns the field you use to grow maize? Who do the oxen which ploughed the field belong to?" and "A married woman belongs to her husband, and all that she owns or raises belongs to the husband, too. If she wants to control things herself let her leave her husband's village." This said, of course some Tonga men are working more equitably with their wives, and women themselves are working for change. Nonetheless, the overall situation is that women are much weaker than men within this community.

The best way to work for change is to support change from within.[4] Across Zambia, traditional leaders are widely honoured and respected, particularly in rural areas, and they are also very powerful. A number of such leaders are now working to empower women within traditional decision-making structures. Senior Chief Bright Nalubamba of the Ila people, Namwala District, in Southern Province has established the Mbeza Rural Development Structure (MRDS) as an institution that promotes democracy, human rights, gender equality and development for his citizens. The chiefdom is now run by committees and has a management structure which is accountable and transparent to all citizens. The current five-year strategic plan was developed with all stakeholders. External and internal facilitators funded by partners such as the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), World Vision, Women for Change, and My Home Town, among others, were important to this process. The MRDS has worked to promote women in various ways. Whereas the previous chieftaincy institutions of the Ila were considered very oppressive to women, the MRDS vigorously supports women's rights. Many women have been appointed to leadership positions that were previously reserved exclusively for men. Indeed, it is now common to find women leading committees and owning productive assets such as land, oxen and ploughs. Due to the closeness and relevance of the traditional leaders to the people, their decrees are accepted and implemented even by remote communities in the chiefdom.

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4   This section draws on research by one of this chapter's contributing authors: Akamandisa, V. (2012). *Qualitative Study on Gender in Agricultural Water Technologies Adoption and Management in Zambia*. AgWater Solutions Project Case Study. International Water Management Institute. http://awm-solutions.iwmi.org/ Data/Sites/3/Documents/PDF/Country_Docs/Zambia/zambia-gender.pdf.

Livestock in the Barotse floodplain, Zambia. Georgina Smith, ©WorldFish, Flickr

Although there is a long way to go to convince all chiefs in Zambia of the importance of gender equality, there are a number of chiefs working for change.[5] They include Senior Chief Nzamani of the patrilineal Ngoni in Eastern Province, who has recently formed the Fumbeni Development Trust. Chief Sinazongwe, who stems from a matrilineal ethnic community in Southern Province, has formed the Maliko Development Trust, and a few other chiefdoms have followed suit. All these institutions are working to bring gender-sensitive development to the people within the chiefdoms.

It is valuable to reflect upon the drivers for change. In Senior Chief Nalubamba's case, his willingness to innovate for gender equality would seem to result from his exposure to different institutional settings and from his participation in various capacity development programmes. Before he became a chief he worked for several years in public service and in cooperatives, where he also learnt much about effective leadership. Chief Siangzongwe worked in the Zambia Electricity Supply Cooperation (ZESCO), and Chief Nzamani worked as a teacher and in ZESCO. Innovative chiefs, therefore, appear to be educated and to have wide exposure to all kinds of people and leadership styles beyond their immediate community.

Continued work with civil society organizations has been important. Such organizations help to deepen the capacity of chiefs and their communities to create effective change strategies. For instance, Senior Chief Nalubamba has continued to work with civil society organizations, such as Women for Change, on gender, human rights, democracy and development issues. Importantly, he has attended many such workshops with his traditional elders. There is no doubt that the presence of other key decision-makers from his community has been critical to enabling him to create a space for change.

Innovative chiefs have encouraged community-level institutions to change. Village heads and councils of elders have been encouraged to allocate land to women. Some chiefs have started providing customary land tenure certificates to women as well as men following education by the Zambia Land Allliance and other organizations.

These examples show that working within traditional institutions contributes to the relevance and the legitimacy of changing local decision-making structures to support women's empowerment. Local people understand their situation best and are aware of the different ways in which the powerful may seek to manipulate and manage change processes.

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5   See, for example: Chipoya, D. (2013). Pushing the gender agenda through traditional leaders. *Zambia Daily Mail*, 21 March. http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/features/1244.

Investment costs are low because change processes are managed at the community and district level. Furthermore, chiefs and their council of elders control significant resources. When these are used to address practical and strategic gender needs of women and men in communities, the impacts can be felt quickly and are far-reaching. The work of progressive chiefs for gender equality helps to legitimize this cause. Their advocacy makes gender mainstreaming initiatives more feasible and more likely to be adopted by other opinion leaders, such as civic administrators and politicians.

In terms of our empowerment framework, these examples show that changing decision-making structures to explicitly welcome and accommodate women's participation can greatly strengthen women's agency by enabling them to obtain assets and get involved in community-level decisions. This said, much more research is needed on how to support innovative traditional leaders. It is not clear, for example, how effective women actually are in leadership roles. It may be necessary to strengthen their leadership capacity and to support women's participation more broadly.

Other options include encouraging chiefs to support statutory rather than customary land titling processes, and working to standardize customary land tenure certificates. Providing forums for chiefs to meet and exchange experiences, challenges and opportunities would help push change. Currently, the House of Chiefs has only three representative chiefs per province (from over 286 chiefs in the country). Its role is limited to discussions of customs and traditions, yet in practice chiefs in rural areas of Zambia are the first point of call for people wanting to solve problems of any kind. Development agencies could support chiefs to meet, share ideas and practices, and consider how to implement gender-responsive development strategies in their chiefdoms. Exchanges, visits and study tours would help to expose chiefs and traditional leaders to best practices and motivate them to adopt change agendas.

CASE STUDY
Grassroots Women Operating in Sisterhood (GROOTS), Kenya

Structural change can come both from reorganization at the national and policy level and as a result of pressure from below. This case study explores some of the strategies grassroots women use to organize themselves in order to achieve changes in local structures.

GROOTS Kenya (Grassroots Women Operating in Sisterhood) is a network of women self-help groups and community organizations and it is a member of GROOTS International. Its vision is a society in which women and their communities participate effectively in their own development. GROOTS Kenya serves as a platform for grassroots women's groups and individuals to come together to share their ideas and experiences, to network, and to find avenues to directly participate in decision-making, planning, and addressing issues that affect them. It uses a number of strategies to achieve this, including peer learning exchanges, amplifying the voices of grassroots communities, capacity-building, advocacy, outreach and networking.[6]

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6   To learn more about GROOTS Kenya, visit http://www.groots.org/members/kenya.htm.

Women farmers who are working with GROOTS. © GROOTS Kenya

The experience of GROOTS Kenya is that empowering a grassroots woman is the first step to enabling her to articulate the issues affecting her in any sector, including agriculture. It is important that empowerment strategies help women link up with others in the same situation and that the strategy shows a clear link between the individual as a change agent and the individual as part of a collective voice.

GROOTS Kenya begins its work in a community by identifying the key issues facing women in rural areas. For example, in 2004, women caring for other women living with HIV/AIDS realized that the numbers of widows being thrown out of their homes and denied access to land had increased rapidly. GROOTS caregivers started to work with these widows using a mapping exercise to understand exactly what was happening. This involved speaking to the widows about their experiences, visiting the homes that they had been forced to leave, and viewing the land they had abandoned. GROOTS workers also spoke to local decision-makers. It became clear that local institutions were often powerless or uninterested in the issue. Key decision-makers did not coordinate with one another. Following the mapping exercise, GROOTS caregivers organized community feedback meetings and invited key decision-makers as well as widows. Women who had lost land shared their experiences. A major outcome of these meetings was that many women were resettled.

Since the key issue was the lack of coordination between decision-making bodies, GROOTS has continued working on local governance and accountability mechanisms. It uses a tool called Champions for Transformative Leadership (C4L) to train grassroots women to stand for committees such as the District Agriculture Boards, the Sugar Cane Growers Forums, and Community Development Funds Committees, and to work effectively within them. In

order to ensure that these women continue to be accountable to those they represent, the C4L tool is used to strengthen their interactions with constituents. The leaders are interviewed and asked how they understand their roles, and dialogues between with constituents are promoted to let grassroots women share their views on how leaders should promote their agenda, and let leaders explain the kind of support they need to be effective. The final step is to create a task force of constituents and leaders to meet regularly, identify women-specific issues for lobbying and advocacy work, and identify potential new leaders in the community to stand in local elections. Throughout the process, men who are supportive of women's leadership are identified and worked with.

GROOTS Kenya has learned that it is essential to organize women carefully and well. A long process is involved to take women from being isolated and focusing just on their own issues, to realizing that they share these issues with many other women, and getting involved in working for change as part of a large group. In our empowerment framework, this case study strengthens women's agency by helping them see their own situation in a broader context, and then it strengthens their relations by organizing women into networks. Through their collective action, they can then achieve changes in formal decision-making structures. It is not clear how much underlying norms are changed through this process, but it is likely that the changes on the ground have at least some impact upon such norms.

Development partners can support women's networks by allowing them to take the lead and set the agenda. They can help to fund capacity development workshops and premises from which to work, as well as fund key staff. Supporting stakeholder meetings is also critical.

CASE STUDY
The Men's Network, Zambia

The Zambian National Women's Lobby established the Men's Network Project in order to engage men for change in gender relations; it is part of the international MenEngage Alliance.[7] The Men's Network Project is developing methodologies to "reach men where they are found" – as opposed to trying to entice men to workshops and seminars. Whilst the Men's Network Project has not yet conducted significant work with farmers and thus does not address agriculture-specific gender issues, its work is included in this chapter as an example of good practice that could be built upon for work in the agricultural sector.

An interesting methodology developed as part of this project is the Men's Campfire Conference. This aims to locate and support men willing to work for gender equality. The Men's Network decided to use the idea of bringing men together around a campfire because in many parts of Zambia men often socialize at night, drinking beer and discussing various issues. However, women are not allowed to join them since this is considered wrong. In order to use this tradition in a more positive way, the Men's Network first approached traditional leaders to gain permission for holding a campfire meeting. Traditional leaders exert considerable influence over their subjects, and they are capable of mobilizing men to undertake specific activities. The Men's Campfire Conference is usually held around a

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7   To learn more about MenEngage, visit http://www.menengage.org. The Zambia project page is at http://www.menengage.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=61.

bonfire in the middle of a village. It gets men to contribute firewood, food sourced within the village, and non-alcoholic drinks. The men build the fire and eat and drink together whilst discussing issues raised by the facilitators.

Men who have come into contact with the Men's Network become the catalysts for organizing Campfire Meetings. Typically, such men are church leaders, community service organization members or volunteers, or traditional leaders. They start with the formalities of asking for permission from the local leaders, choosing a convenient site for the campfire, collecting firewood, publicizing the event, inviting the participants, and helping to prepare the drinks. The coordinator's office provides some logistical support and resource persons that may be required for the event. At the Campfire Meeting, burning topics with respect to gender are addressed. The emphasis is on examining the causes of any gender issue, the effects this issue has upon community relations, and solutions the men want to put forward. Later, Zambia Men's Network members monitor implementation of these solutions. This said, demand for Campfire Meetings is high and there are currently not enough volunteers to organize Campfires and assess progress. Money is needed to cover transport costs and per diems for volunteers to travel to outlying areas.

The concept of the men's Campfire Conference is gaining in popularity because it uses a traditional setup to allow men to discuss controversial and novel themes. It builds upon the oral cultures which are still strong in Zambia. As such it works well with illiterate and semi-literate people. Although to date few Men's Campfire Conferences have been

A farmer in the Barotse floodplain, Zambia. Georgina Smith, ©WorldFish, Flickr

held, things are already happening. During the elections in October 2011, some participants campaigned for women to take up leadership positions at different political levels.

Others have also gone to influence other men in institutions such as churches and community development committees. This has worked well because some participants in the Campfire Conferences are church leaders. They are working to get their parishioners to discuss gender issues in church meetings on the basis that love is a core value of the Christian faith. Working through the church has proven effective because it is possible to reach husbands, wives and children at the same time, since families attend church functions together. Furthermore, people of different social classes meet in church. This increases the "multiplier effect" and, since the message on gender equality comes from respected community figures, it has more legitimacy. In other areas, such as Chipata, Monze and Mongu Districts, Men's Network members have been engaged by women's groups to talk to women and men groups about gender equity and equality and their benefits for households and communities' development.

The Men's Network also organizes Boys' Campfires to talk about the rights of girls. Boys participating in the campfires have gone on to make public statements against child abuse and gender based-violence. The overall aim of this work, and with work in schools through the Boy's Network, is to encourage boys to adopt "positive maleness" in the hope that this will positively contribute towards gender equality in their societies.

Despite the progress made, the Men's Network faces important challenges. These include the fact that in Zambian villages, people often live on their own land holdings, quite far away from one another. This means that quite a lot of men do not attend the Campfires because they cannot travel at night back to their homes. Furthermore, some men have stigmatized men trying to empower women, calling them "women-men" and other epithets. This has proved an important barrier to encouraging men to become actively involved in supporting women and to change their own behaviour. Some Zambian women's organizations have also been ambivalent about the Men's Network Project, feeling that they are trying to hijack their agenda and attempting to cash in on the limited resources that they have mobilized. Finally, development partners have been slow to support the Men's Network Project – partly because "gender" is still seen by many agencies as being about support to women.

Viewed through our empowerment framework, this case study shows that the Men's Network Project has succeeded in achieving some change in "structures" by encouraging men to support women as leaders. However, work on transforming underlying cultural norms is proceeding slowly and painfully. The conceptual categories of "male" and "female" in Zambian societies remain quite rigid. Whilst a good number of men are proving willing to work for change, to be effective they need more support at a personal level to strengthen their "agency" and to feel confident about what they are doing. The Men's Network Project is therefore trying to bring men into one national legally registered network with provincial and district chapters to collaborate with other gender-focused government and private institutions. This will hopefully contribute to strengthening mutual support networks and relations. Development agency support for this proposed network will be important.

Ways forward

The case studies highlight a wide variety of locally driven approaches to working for gender equality in rural areas – and creating an "enabling environment" for women's empowerment. Very different approaches to transforming gender relations have been taken. GROOTS strengthens women's individual and collective agency by organizing them into networks – the relational aspect of empowerment in our framework. These networks have then worked to challenge and change decision-making structures by making them more accountable, by helping them to coordinate with one another, and by ensuring that women get elected to leadership positions within those structures. Traditional leaders in Zambia, meanwhile, have taken a top-down approach to transformation for gender equality. They have worked directly to increase the ability of women to participate in community-level decision-making by creating positions for them, and by ensuring that women have increased control over productive assets. The Men's Network Project is very different from both of these. It appeals directly to men rather than women. It asks men to critically examine and change their own behaviour, and thus to support changes in cultural norms. It also asks men to work towards overt structural change in their societies by supporting women as leaders.

It is clear from the case studies that each approach has the potential to achieve radical structural change. It is equally clear that it would be useful to consider working across the three dimensions of the empowerment framework in a more structured way to foster mutually supportive activities at all levels. Men also need to be empowered to change, and thus work on building their agency and developing support networks – relations, is important. Figure 6.1 summarizes the key points made in this chapter.

Agency
- Working to transform gender norms is very challenging in traditional environments. Change agents need to be empowered themselves. Support should be provided.
- Men who wish to change, and to support change processes, need peer support.
- Programmes to support boys and girls in examining gender relations and working for more equality are important. These children also need peer support and professional assistance.

Structure
- Engaging customary and other forms of locally legitimate leadership is a powerful way to create change in gender relations.
- Structures will not change unless they are challenged. Women's groups need to challenge key decision-making bodies through direct interactions. They need explicit support to prepare themselves for such meetings, including capacity development and leadership training.

Relations
- Promoting accountability between change agents and those they represent is vital in advocacy work. It is important to fund tried and proven methodologies.
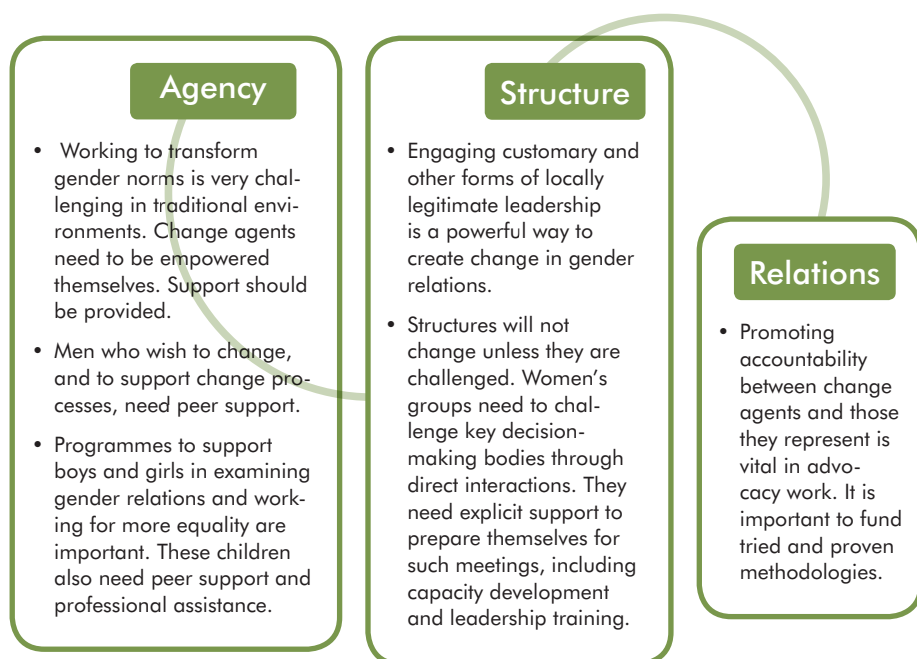
FIGURE 6.1 Linking work at the community level to work on agency and relations