



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ZAMBIA

CASE STUDY

Bringing Government Back to the People

Local constituency offices connect government and citizens



Photo: Pact Zambia

Speaker of the National Assembly Amusaa Mwanamwambwa meets the people of Kanyama at the town's new pilot office.

"I've seen a change in the people," said Edith Moono. "People were in the dark before but now they know that what Parliament discusses is for them."

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Challenge

Edith Moono is one of 83,352 constituents in the rural Dundumwenzi region of Zambia's Southern Province. Her village is 75 kilometers from the closest town. Like most of her neighbors, Moono used to know little about Zambian Parliament. "I just thought Parliament did work for people in Lusaka since Parliament meets in Lusaka," says Edith.

Initiative

Thanks to an initiative supported by USAID and the Zambian National Assembly, knowledge of Parliament is increasing in Edith's region. Dundumwenzi and eight other regions were chosen to be bases for new, nonpartisan offices that would allow Parliament to improve communications and better serve local constituencies.

Edith Moono was hired as the Dundumwenzi office assistant, to keep records of schools, clubs and other community organizations. She also maintains a log book where constituents can record questions and comments that their representatives can read and respond to.

Results

Emmerson Mudenda, the representative for Dundumwenzi, said his constituents have had a positive response to the office, and it has made it easier for him to respond to local needs and bring those needs before Parliament. In response to a complaint about wild animals killing domestic livestock, Emmerson began working with Parliament and a conservation agency to create a plan to alleviate the problem and compensate residents for lost property. The Dundumwenzi office has also become a focal point for community activities, including acting as a distribution center for a shipment of rice in March 2004.

Edith keeps a collection of newspapers in the office library to help residents stay informed. She says the office has spurred an increased demand for news of Parliamentary activities. "I've seen a change in the people," said Edith. "People were in the dark before but now they know that what Parliament discusses is for them." Because of the success of the pilot offices, the government planned to open 15 new offices in 2005.