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Zambia Country Forest Note: Is it a sustainable roadmap for managing forests?

Forests and related resources in Zambia represent the lifeline of rural economies and daily subsistence. According to the World Bank's Country Forest Note (December 1, 2019) the forest sector is a provider of both formal and informal employment to 1.5 million people (21 percent of the total labor force); provider of energy for about 80 percent of Zambians in the form of fuelwood and charcoal; and critical resource as "the lungs" for Zambia's climate change strategy.[1] The country's current high rate of deforestation (250,000 - 300,000 ha. or 0.6 percent per year) threatens the natural capital of the forest landscape, which encompasses 61 percent (46 million ha) of the country's landmass and is central to their carbon emissions reduction target of 47 percent of 2010 levels by 2030.[2]

Zambia is richly endowed with an abundance of natural resources, ecosystems, and rich biodiversity. The Miombo woodland in particular represents the most dominant forest type (68 percent) and provides wood for construction, fuelwood (including wood for charcoal), and several Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs), including edible fruits and insects, honey, game, mushrooms, and many medicinal plants.[3] Other major forest types in Zambia include Mopane and Kalahari woodlands.

Zambia is a lower middle-income country with high demographic pressures and significant reliance on extractive industries and expanding agricultural production, all of which are contributing to heightened risks of deforestation. Accordingly, the World Bank (WB)'s publication of the Country Forest Note (CFN) is welcome and sets the stage for a broader discussion of how best to reinforce weak institutions that are ill-equipped to support the country's strained natural capital. If properly managed, Zambia's forests can shape the country's sustainable development through export of processed wood products, and the burgeoning ecotourism and safari sectors. As the CFN explains, boosting this sector will require robust transformations in forest governance and law enforcement coupled with an increased ownership of forest resources by the local populations. Conversely, unabated illegal and informal logging will continue to decimate forests.

As a country, Zambia is plagued by challenges linked to deforestation, institutional and legal lapses, land use change and competing land uses, lack of public and private sector investments, and lack of qualified and well-trained individuals to sustainably manage the forests. The CFN highlights that consistent illegal logging of native species, such as the high-valued mukula, for international markets continues to play a critical role in forest degradation.[4]

1 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE: ZAMBIA -- TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE WAY OF MANAGING FOREST, WORLD BANK GROUP, DEC. 2019, P. 2.

2 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 6, 34.

3 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE P. 8.

4 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 27.

Underpinning many of these challenges is the omnipresent threat of climate change and natural disasters which exacerbate existing food security issues as well.[5]

The Zambia CFN offers the following key points in reference to these challenges: It

- Aligns with the WB Forest Action Plan, addressing actions needed both inside the forest sector and outside, such as land tenure arrangements, agriculture, and ecotourism;
- Addresses cross-cutting themes, namely institutions and governance, rights and participation, and climate change and resilience;
- Touches on the importance of ecosystem services to Zambia's development;[6]
- Highlights the need for additional resources to mainstream forests in other sectors such as agriculture and energy;
- Acknowledges the role civil society holds in facilitating communications between investors and local peoples;[7]
- Discusses measures aimed at integrating stricter oversight for large-scale mining and agricultural operations;
- Describes the Bank's role as a conduit for resources from institutions, particularly the Forest Investment Program, that can reach Zambia REDD+ Strategy priority areas;
- Presents Zambia's growing ecotourism and safari sector as essential to developing more formal revenue streams and benefit sharing arrangements; and
- Notes Zambia's push to apply Climate Smart Agriculture more widely by 2022.[8]

On integrating forests in other sectors, the CFN recognizes the significance of climate change mitigation and adaptation through the promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices. Such efforts can be realized through conservation agriculture, agroforestry and linkages to other sectors such as forestry, energy, land use, and infrastructure development. While none of the methods are explicitly or substantively discussed in the CFN, Zambia is a 2017 recipient of the World Bank-managed Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (ISFL) which supports the $37 million[9] Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Program advancing climate-smart agriculture and sustainable land use, as well as a $110 million Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (2011). These programs aim to catalyze the development of low-carbon rural economies and build in climate resilience, while simultaneously creating livelihood opportunities for communities and overall reductions in emissions from unsustainable land use.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

While the CFN covers a broad spectrum of important issues, it needs to more substantively address the following:

- Develop alternatives to charcoal/woodfuel in the form of distributed renewables or the launch of an affordable clean cooking stoves program (nothing in the WB/International Finance Corporation (IFC) project pipeline);
- Formalize land tenure for smallholders and traditional communities to prevent agricultural land occupation by external forces;
- Promote and building capacity for implementing the National Agriculture Policy (p. 36);[10]
- Integrate WB efforts with those of other donors/ partners;
- Make clear inclusive practices for vulnerable forest populations (e.g. women, children).

Given the importance and fragility of Zambia's forest systems, it is alarming to see the continuing support for large-scale mining operations in forest areas.[11] While the CFN acknowledges the risks posed by these activities, it noticeably omits World Bank and IFC engagement on curbing negative externalities stemming from the weak compliance by large-scale corporates. Copper production, historically the country's dominant export, is also expected to increase as demand for low-carbon technologies accelerates. Current figures show more than 1.1 million hectares under mining concessions of registered mining enterprises (mainly copper) while the artisanal mining sector occupies a much smaller area, estimated at 52,000 ha.[12]

5 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 13, PARA. 20.
6 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, PP. 13-14.
7 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 36.
8 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P 5.
9 OF WHICH $12 MILLION FROM ISFL (INCLUDING $4 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT), $17 MILLION FROM IDA (THE WORLD BANK'S SOFT LOAN WINDOW), AND $8 MILLION FROM THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY.
10 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 36.
11 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 33, PARA. 121.
12 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 33, PARA. 120.

According to a World Bank analysis, in the last 5,000 years about 550 m/t of copper has been produced. The world is forecast to need the same amount of copper in the next 25 years to meet global demand. This will create unsustainable pressures on the forest sector without corresponding robust policy and institutional support to protect forests and restrict mining to areas where living natural resource values are lower. The World Bank's $65.6 million Mining and Environmental Remediation and Improvement Project (approved December 2016) addressed some of these issues but has not addressed the expected expansion of mining or artisanal mining.

The CFN also does not offer explicit information as to how the Bank's $330 million committed lending volume in 2018 for energy development will result in subsequent declines of fuelwood and charcoal consumption. Likewise, directly addressing barriers to expanding access to clean cookstoves and cleaner fuels would make this CFN more valuable as a strategic guide towards enhancing sustainable forest management (SFM) practices. Zambia could benefit from the Clean Cooking Fund (CCF), as did Uganda, another country dependent on solid biomass fuels such as charcoal and wood.[13] Cursory analysis of both WB/IFC project pipelines show no clean cooking programs earmarked for Zambia as of June 2020.

Zambia's National Forest Policy (ZNFP) of 2014 and the subsequent 2015 Forest Act are milestones in the country's efforts to develop conducive policy for SFM. Unlike the former ZNFP, the new version acknowledges the need to support community livelihoods through an "integrated approach" by encouraging community forest management and benefit-sharing mechanisms for SFM. While this is certainly a welcome approach, the CFN fails to identify how this method will be effective at establishing sustainable fuelwood and charcoal supply systems to meet the expected demand.

According to the CFN, construction consumes a lion's share of domestic consumption of logs, sawnwood, and poles (40 percent).[14] Of this, only 20 percent of the volume is supplied by plantations, while the majority is harvested from natural forests.The CFN makes no mention of whether plantation development will be limited to strictly degraded lands or if natural forests will be targeted for conversion. Going forward, in order to maintain adequate forest carbon sinks, the Zambian government will need to strengthen efforts towards identifying and planning plantation development on degraded lands.

The CFN also spotlights the Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project (ZIFLP) aimed at addressing the key challenges confronting the country's forest sector.[15] To execute this project, the Bank is relying on trust funds such as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and other development partners to fund direct, pro-forest interventions in Zambia. The Bank serves as an implementer for the former and convener for the latter. However, the CFN excludes any clear indication as to how the Bank intends to work with the trust funds or other development institutions to address the coordination and capacity-related challenges constraining pro-forest work in the country.

CONCLUSION

This CFN showcases the scale of institutional capacity challenges inhibiting pro-forest development in Zambia. The finance available through international partners and donors clearly sets the stage for successful integration of pro-forest policies and sustainable development. However, while the World Bank has successfully served as a conduit for resources from trust funds, particularly the Climate Investment Funds, the CFN fails to identify how the Bank will substantively coordinate efforts with other donors. While an explicit cooperative arrangement is mentioned between the World Bank and the AfDB, it is less clear how coordinated efforts will be managed with the GEF and bilateral institutions. Integrating these efforts should be a priority in order to create stronger programmatic changes to Zambia's low-capacity institutions such as the Forest Department.

It is clear that recent land-use policies in Zambia are more conducive to future inclusion of both forest and climate-smart interventions. The significant emphasis placed on building capacity for effective community forestry management suggests more well-defined land use rights will emerge. The ample flow of international resources also reinforces conclusions that Zambia is well-positioned for pro-forest/climate development. As a roadmap, this CFN offers clear guidance on establishing a policy framework aimed at addressing sustainable forest value chains. Given the informal nature of charcoal production, land conversion, and the expanding artisanal mining sector, this CFN offers a positive contribution towards the development of sustainably managed forests. Although the CFN could offer more details on how to successfully apply forest safeguards, we welcome the Zambia CFN's clear identification of forest contributions and challenges. We hope that future CFNs contain a similar degree of commitment towards community-based forestry and the enhancement of adaptive capacity of local communities.

13 UGANDA RECEIVED THE UGANDA CLEAN COOKING SUPPLY CHAIN EXPANSION PROJECT (APPROVED MAR. 2016) TO FOSTER THE SALE AND ADOPTION OF CLEANER AND MORE EFFICIENT COOKING TECHNOLOGIES.

14 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 25.

15 COUNTRY FOREST NOTE, P. 37, PARA. 146.