



Helping Zambia benefit from REDD+

Photo by Jeff Walker

The USAID-funded, CIFOR-led Nyimba Forest Project in eastern Zambia has been a major contributor to the country's efforts to formulate a strategy for reducing forest-related carbon emissions and their role in climate change.

Formulating a sound strategy is crucial if Zambia is to benefit from future financial incentives — whether market-based or fund-based — made to developing countries for the UN-backed Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) program.

Apart from assisting with the National REDD+ strategy (NRS), the 20-month Nyimba Forest Project has achieved major progress in:

- Aligning the NRS with local and national needs according to international standards;
- Building the ability of community and district agencies to successfully monitor forest inventories and sustainable forestry practices;
- Developing community-based prototypes for measuring, reporting and verifying (MRV) national forests, open forest, and game management areas;
- Jointly developing community forest management plans for selected forests.

CIFOR and its partners have achieved these goals through a range of activities, including:

- Providing in-depth research on rural livelihoods, forest resources and traditional forest management strategies;
- Reviewing and analyzing Zambia's National Joint Program document;
- Conducting household surveys and testing community-based forest monitoring;
- Developing models linking forest resources and forest use with high-resolution satellite image data;
- Working closely with policy makers and other key stakeholders at all levels, including capacity-building of local people.

Zambia's forestry challenge

Despite these achievements, neither CIFOR nor USAID — nor their many governmental and community partners in Zambia — are slowing down. Ongoing action and continuing support are required to address challenges including:

- Tackling one of the world's highest deforestation rates, at around 300,000 hectares per year (about 30 soccer fields every 60 minutes);
- Finding sustainable energy solutions for the 75 percent of the population that rely on forest-supplied charcoal and firewood in the absence of electricity;
- Providing alternatives for the thousands of rural small-holders encroaching daily on forest lands to fill the country's food and fuel needs.

Stakeholders' stories

Involving community members in the project was essential for CIFOR to align the NRS with local needs. CIFOR achieved this in innovative ways, training 24 representatives from eight chiefdoms in the skills and knowledge needed to carry out village-based forestry research. In addition to theoretical training, participants gained a thorough practical understanding of how to use a range of forestry research tools, including questionnaires for data collection, a GPS unit, and digital cameras. A total of 124 village-based researchers were trained by CIFOR.

- Nyalugwe Chiefdom Secretary and CIFOR-trained village researcher, Smart Lungu, believes the knowledge he has acquired "has really changed the way I look at our forest resources." This knowledge will help save Zambia's forests, he says, as well as caution "future generations to avoid the damage that we have done."
- Another important component in the Nyimba project was ensuring that local and district agencies gained the skills needed to measure, monitor and inventory forests for their conservation value and sustainable management.

Andrew Nkoma, a community liaison officer with Zambia's Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), says: "The knowledge and skills I have acquired from working with CIFOR are immeasurable. I am able to plan forest inventories, something we hardly learnt from ZAWA. After my fieldwork, I am now able to sit and document my work. This is basically putting information on the computer using the correct software for easy interpretation to a layman."

- The Nyimba Forest Project has provided the Nyimba District Women's Association (DWA) with computers and other items to enhance its role in facilitating development projects. Through CIFOR, it now has the knowledge needed to inform local communities about sustainable forestry. Working with DWA also means CIFOR hears what the community thinks, which is critical to its project aim of developing community forest plans.

Says DWA coordinator Christine Zulu, "Before the (Nyimba Forest Project), life was not the same. Personally, I had very little knowledge on how to manage our forests. Now I know that resources coming from these forests are beneficial to our livelihood, and this gives us every reason to conserve them properly. The forests don't belong to anyone but us."

- Also critical to the project's success was working closely with key stakeholders, particularly in regards to policy development and the outreach needed to avert the risks that uncontrolled charcoal production and small scale farming pose to the future of Zambia's forests. One such stakeholder is George Phiri, the Nyimba District Commissioner.

According to Mr. Phiri, charcoal production is a major cause of deforestation and forest degradation. It "is something that government cannot manage alone," he says, adding that the Nyimba Forest Project is "a welcome addition to government's efforts in educating people on global climate change issues. People in the district are slowly realizing that massive cutting down of trees ... is having an adverse impact on economic growth and food security."

Partners in Nyimba

CIFOR established the USAID-funded project in close cooperation with two villages in each of the Nyimba chiefdoms of Mwape, Ndake, Luembe and Nyalugwe. Several criteria guided CIFOR's selection of the villages, including their proximity to forest resources, willingness to gather forest data, and participation in the monitoring, reporting and verification research program.

CIFOR further enhanced the project's success by working with representatives from the private and public sector as well as with key civil society organizations (CSOs) including the Community Market for Conservation (COMACO), a non-profit organization overseen by the Wildlife Conservation Society that tackles conservation and rural poverty, and Community Youth Concern Nyimba, a CSO that trains and encourages community participation among rural youth. CIFOR also worked with Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), a scientific and wildlife management agency; the Forest Department (FD), which manages forest resources in forest reserve areas and in customary lands; and the Nyimba District Council, which provides social services to the community.

CIFOR's efforts in the region

CIFOR's work in the Eastern and Southern African region fosters an appreciation of the importance of forest and woodland resources to livelihoods, national economies, and the wider development agenda. Their importance includes contributions to environmental services as well as physical products, and at each of local, national, regional and international scales.

In addition to Zambia, CIFOR has projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Its multidisciplinary approach considers underlying drivers of deforestation and degradation, which often lie outside the forestry sector, as well as factors within the forestry sector.

Zambia is one of 16 countries in the world that is engaged in the UN-REDD Program. The program aims to prepare countries for future REDD+ implementation through the UN REDD Quick Start Initiative. The output of this initiative will be a National REDD+ Strategy (NRS) for Zambia. For more information about REDD+, including REDD+ financial incentives, visit un-redd.org

Partnerships

CIFOR is committed to fostering strategic partnerships with other organizations working towards similar goals, and to jointly building research capacity for impact. We are proud to be working in close partnership with governments, funders, multilateral organizations, regional and national research organizations, NGOs, and community partners in Eastern and Southern Africa. Together, we inform and stimulate evidence-based change.

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Produced by CIFOR as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (CRP-FTA). This collaborative program aims to enhance the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape from forests to farms. CIFOR leads CRP-FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CIRAD, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

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