POLICY RELEVANCE SUMMARY

FOREST POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION IN ZAMBIA

A Policy Relevance Summary for the Project

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In Zambia, the standard development objectives and processes are clearly summarized in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The poverty reduction program emphasizes, although not exclusively, agricultural development as the engine of income expansion for the poor. The results and policy implications arising from this study are relevant to the overall poverty reduction objectives and especially to interventions which target income expansion among rural households. The findings of the study are also relevant to the theme of public governance and the decentralization policy which are also important elements in government's poverty reduction implementation strategy. Therefore, the poverty reduction program provides a framework within which the results and recommendations from of this project can be implemented.

There are several reasons why the results of this project are relevant for policy implementation. Firstly, the study estimates the actual and potential contribution of the forest sector to rural livelihoods and rural poverty alleviation. For instance, it is estimated that rural households derive an average of 30% of their household income from selling forest products. In addition, local communities rely on forests and woodlands for fuelwood, materials, wild foods and medicine. In short, the forest is both the "ice-box" and a "drug store" for many rural households.

The evidence from this study also indicates that a strong relationship between agricultural development (rural development) and forest dependency. Thus policies aimed at promoting agricultural expansion and poverty reduction will forest conservation and local incentives for sustainable local forest management. Furthermore, the findings from this study suggest that the Joint Forest Management (JFM) regime is optimal for a wide range of socio-economic and forest resource characteristics.

The overall policy conclusions and recommendations of this study are consistent with the objectives of poverty reduction and the objectives outlines in the National Forestry Policy and the overall decentralization policy of government. Below we list some of the opportunities for translating these research results into policy implementation:

a) The poverty reduction program offers an opportunity for translating study results into policy implementation. The key objective is to contribute towards rural poverty reduction through policy and program interventions in the forest sector.

b) The results of this study fall within the three program areas of development assistance, namely governance, poverty reduction and HIV, and environmental protection, which are actively supported by both multilateral and bilateral development agencies. This does not only improve the relevance of our findings but also the likelihood for their policy implementation.

c) Lastly, through JFM local communities have an opportunity to claim ownership rights over forestland and to derive benefits from sustainable forest management. Therefore, proposed policy changes which improve social welfare of forest dependent communities is unlikely to attract public resistance.

Some of the key constraints in policy implementation may include:

a) There is inadequate financial, human and technical capacity by government through the Forest Department to implement broad based policy changes and to sustain the implementation of the JFM with much donor support.

b) The current approach to forest management places too much emphasis on forest protection at the expense of management. As a result, policy recommendations which do not appeal to this traditional protection mandate of the Forestry Department receive little policy attention. This is generally due to lack of capacity in the Forestry Department to integrated economic and ecological analysis to inform policymaking.

Finally, our results from the survey indicate that local communities prefer to support forest conservation programs which have a **clear** development component. These development needs should be taken into account in the design and implementation of JFM.