



Malawi preliminary report

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REDD in Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country of 11.8m ha, 20% of which is Lake Malawi. The Northern half of the country is bordered by Zambia to the West and by Tanzania to the East. The Southern half of the country borders Mozambique to both the East and West. Malawi is especially vulnerable to climate change, primarily due to its reliance on rain-fed agriculture. Indeed, climate change and variability are already affecting the country: Larger-than-usual floods in 2015 raised the profile of deforestation while increased soil erosion has impacted agricultural productivity and waterways siltation (Johnson et al 2012; Nyasa Times 2015; MNREE 2010).

The dominant class of vegetation in Malawi is Miombo (*Brachystegia*) Woodlands, but the lack of reliable data on land use/land cover mean that estimates of the country's forest resources and deforestation rates vary dramatically. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in 2010, Malawi had 3.237m ha of forest and an annual deforestation rate of 1%. According to the Government of Malawi (GoM) in 2008, Malawi had 2.643m ha of forest and an annual deforestation rate of 2.8% (MNREE 2013; MNREE 2010; FAO 2010; MNREE 2011). Furthermore, GoM estimates that the coverage of Miombo woodlands declined from 45% in 1973 to 25.3% in 1990/1991, a decrease of 44% in less than 20 years (MREE 2010).

Malawi is a low-income country with a GDP in 2014 of USD4.258bn or USD253 per capita (WB 2015). Agriculture accounts for roughly 1/3 of GDP and 90% of exports. The formal forest sector is small and the unlicensed selling of charcoal, though ubiquitous, is illegal. The forest sector, therefore, only counts for approximately 1% of GDP in published accounts; however, other studies estimate that it accounts for between 3% and 8% of GDP (GOM 2009, Maqueen et al 2011, Hecht and Kasulo 2013).

In 2000, Malawi's GHG emissions totalled 25.9m tCO₂e, 96% of which are from Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU). Though it is not a major emitter, Malawi - and the 80% of the country's smallholders who depend on rain-fed subsistence agriculture - is highly vulnerable to climate related events. The GoM has acknowledged that mitigation and adaptation activities focused on reducing deforestation and sustainable landscape management may reduce climate change related vulnerabilities (MNREE 2011; EAD 2012).

As of August 2015, the GoM is in the process of finalising a National Climate Policy, the country's first. Until now, climate change related programs did not have a guiding policy framework. The largest of these programs focus on sustainable landscape management of catchment areas and riverine systems, particularly the Shire River Basin. The 2012 draft of the National Climate Change Policy would prioritise both adaptation and mitigation and identifies various mitigation measures, including reducing deforestation, sustainable crop and livestock production, controlling vehicle emissions, and promoting low carbon technology (EAD 2012).

Malawi is a signatory to the three major Rio Conventions (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)). It has been an active participant in the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COPs), where it has advocated inter-alia for a REDD+ window within the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and for increased commitments to adaptation, with a focus on agriculture and food security. Overall, Malawi's national positions have aligned with those of member states of the South African Development Community (SADC), the African Group of Negotiators in the UNFCCC, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and other developing countries (GOM 2014a).

Malawi has been working in earnest on a national REDD+ programme - the Malawi REDD+ Program (MRP) - since 2012. Currently, the key planning document for the MRP is the Government of Malawi REDD+ Action Plan 2014 -2019. It sets out targets over a five-year period - including finalising Malawi's National REDD+ Strategy by the end of 2018 - and states that the GoM takes a "no-regrets" approach to REDD+. This approach holds that REDD+ is an opportunity to effect positive transformational changes in the forest and natural resources management sectors that enhance and improve the quality of life of Malawi's people, irrespective of the availability of carbon financing (GoM 2015a).

The MRP has received support from a number of development partners, notably the Malawi mission of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Programme for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD). The MRP arose with support from the Malawi REDD+ Readiness Program (MRRP), a joint effort of USAID/Malawi, the GoM, and the US Forest Service, which ran from August 2012 to August 2015. USAID Malawi continues to support the MRP through Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi (PERFORM), an effort that launched in September 2014 and is implemented by TetraTech. PERFORM runs from 2015-2019.

In March 2014, Malawi became a UN-REDD partner country; in November the same year it successfully applied for a Country Needs Assessment and a Targeted Support, a mechanism that will support a number of standard UN-REDD initiatives, including a roadmap for developing a National Forest Monitoring System, analysis of the country's resource tenure regimes, an Institutional Context Analysis, a National Strategy Roadmap, a Corruption Risk Assessment, and general support for knowledge management.

USAID Malawi also supported the development of Malawi's only active REDD+ demonstration project, the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB)

certified Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program for Co-Managed Protected Areas, which is focused on three co-managed protected areas in the North of the Country: Nyika National Park, Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve; and Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve.

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Institutional arrangements

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining (MNREM) is responsible for environmental matters in Malawi. Within it, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) has the primary responsibility for forests within National Parks and Wildlife Reserves, while the Department of Forestry (DoF) has the primary responsibility for all other forests (be they Forest Reserves, private, or customary). The DoF is also the designated REDD+ Focal Point under the UNFCCC and UN-REDD+.

The REDD+ Expert Group (RExG) is the key inter-sectorial forum that steers the Malawi REDD+ Program (MRP). The RExG has full terms of reference including quorum parameters and includes representation from civil society, private sector, media, development partners, academia, and the GoM. It supervises the work of three technical working groups: (i) the Science and Technical Working Group (STWG); (ii) the Governance and Policy Technical Working Group (GPTWG); and (iii) the Communications and Awareness-Raising Technical Working Group (CARTWG). The RExG also has the authority to allocate responsibilities to, and make requests of, the REDD+ Secretariat, which sits within the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Division of the Department of Forestry and is led by the REDD+ Focal Point (GoM 2015a).

The National Steering Committee on Climate Change (NSCCC) is comprised of the Permanent Secretaries of relevant Ministries (civil society representation is being considered as of August 2015). The NSCCC meets quarterly. It advises the Minister and supervises Malawi's National Climate Change Programme (NCCP). It is in turn advised by the National Technical Committee on Climate Change (NTCCC), which is comprised of the technical leads of relevant Ministries and Departments from the GoM, designated experts from civil society organisations, and development partner representatives. The NTCCC also meets quarterly (though, as of August 2015, it was considering increasing the frequency). The RExG reports to the NTCCC, thereby linking the MRP into the national climate change governance framework. The NCCP and the National Climate Change Secretariat both sit within the Environmental Affairs Department (EAD) and support the work of the NTCCC.

The Cabinet Committee on the Environment is the foremost GoM body that focuses on environmental issues. As of August 2015, this committee was considering the draft National Climate Change Policy and Draft National Climate Change Investment Plan for approval. Within the

legislature, the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment provides scrutiny of GoM actions on environmental issues. The draft National Climate Change Policy recommends that both the Cabinet Committee and Parliamentary Committee explicitly expand their remit and become the Cabinet and Parliamentary Committees on the Environment and Climate Change (EAD 2012).

The GoM Donor Working Group meets periodically and helps steer international cooperation in the sector. It is co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and by the Permanent Secretary of Finance and Economic Planning.

A number of institutions in Malawi include some capacity in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing, including the Department of Surveys (DoS), the Land Resources Conservation Department (LRCD), DoF and its research arm, the Forest Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM). The DoS is the national clearinghouse for spatial data and is the institution responsible for developing national spatial data standards. The Government of Malawi REDD+ Action Plan 2014-2019 includes actions through which these institutions will together delineate responsibilities for spatial data management (GoM 2015a; Alegria and Matthews 2014). FRIM will likely be involved in Malawi's nascent National Forest Monitoring System, particularly in activities related to forest inventories.

Stakeholder engagement and participation

The GoM created the REDD+ Expert Group (RExG) as a multi-stakeholder forum to lead the Malawi REDD+ Programme (MRP). As noted, the RExG is comprised of representatives from a range of sectors, including but not limited to: GoM agencies, civil society, academia, the development community, and the private sector.

The three technical working groups that report to the RExG include a level of diversity similar to the RExG. They are: (i) the Science and Technical Working Group (STWG); (ii) the Governance and Policy Technical Working Group (GPTWG); and (iii) the Communications and Awareness-Raising Technical Working Group (CARTWG).

Neither the MRP nor any other program has implemented a national programme of communications or community engagement on REDD+, but the GoM Action Plan 2014-2019 includes two activities leading in that direction: The first is an Institutional Context Analysis (ICA), funded by UN-REDD Targeted Support, that aims to identify all relevant REDD+ stakeholders, their relative interest within the REDD+ context, the potential for overlap and conflicts between them, and recommendations on how to address these conflicts. The final product of the ICA will be a stakeholder engagement and participation strategy for the MRP. The second is to finalise and implement the MRP Communications and Information Management Strategy that is being developed by the CARTWG and a consultant. The Action Plan advises that this strategy be gender sensitive, targeting women and youth for their importance in affecting behaviour change (GoM 2015a).

The draft National Climate Change Policy also envisages establishing a National Partnership Forum for Climate Change to engage with the full spectrum of Malawian society on climate change. The National Forum would be chaired by the Vice President and include representation from: the parliamentary committee, civil society, disadvantaged groups, youth, the private sector, academia, media, and development partners. District Forums would mirror the National Forum at the District level, with similar multi-sectorial representation. The forums would be supported by secretariats, hosted within the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy, and Mining for the National Forum and within the District Council for the District Forum (EAD 2012).

Given that national-level community engagement on REDD+ has not yet begun, the main platform for community-level participation on carbon financing so far has been the only active REDD+ demonstration project in Malawi, the Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program for Co-Managed Protected Areas. The Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program engages with Natural Resource Committees (NRCs), the co-management entities for national parks and wildlife reserves that are set up at the Group Village level. The NRCs are grouped into zones, each with a ten-person executive committee chaired by the Traditional Authority. The zonal representatives participate not only in their respective community association (i.e., NVA or NAWIRA), but also in their respective District Executive Committee, thereby linking the project into the decentralized Government architecture. Consent for the project was obtained at the zonal level in meetings with representation from all the NRCs in each zone. The fact that the Group Village Headman or Traditional Authority chairs each NRC and Zonal Executive Committee respectively means that they have a strong voice in the process but not a veto.

Land tenure arrangements and carbon rights

Protected areas - forest reserves, national parks, and wildlife reserves - comprise 1.7m ha (18%) of Malawi's land mass (9.4m ha of land excluding surface water), leaving 7.7m ha (82.2%) of land available for other land uses. Agriculture is unequally distributed in Malawi: large agricultural "estates," of which there are roughly 30,000 in Malawi, use approximately 1.2m ha (13%) of the most fertile lands to grow export crops, leaving 6.5m ha (65%), not all of it appropriate for agriculture, for smallholders, each of whom cultivates less than one ha on average. This land use pattern is a legacy of the dualistic colonial model under which large estates had the sole right to grow export crops, while smallholders were required to sell their produce for local consumption through marketing boards (Chirwa 2008; GOM 2002).

The 1965 Land Act, which remains in force, was passed soon after independence and retains the three colonial land tenure classes: (i) private (including freehold and leasehold); (ii) public; and (iii) customary (see the entry for the 1965 Land Act for full definitions). All public and customary land, mineral rights to customary land, and the reversionary interest in leases granted over customary land, were ultimately vested in the President (and, with the new Constitution, to the Government), effectively making customary land a category of public land.

Customary land (65%-75% of total land area) is the predominant tenure category and may be allocated to a specific individual or held for the common good, for example common grazing areas or forests. Public land (15%-20%) includes National Parks and Wildlife Reserves. Private land (10%-15%) is made up mainly of large export estates, colonial-era freehold tea and tobacco estates and post-independence leasehold tobacco estates (USAID 2010; GoM 2002).

Despite the fact that customary land is the most common form of land tenure in Malawi, it is largely absent from Malawi's current legal framework. The 1967 Customary Land Development Act is the one piece of current legislation that focuses on Customary Land. It was designed to facilitate the conversion of customary land to private leasehold land; President Banda's government used it to convert a further 700,000ha of customary land to estate agriculture during his period in power (Cross 2002).

At present, a mixture of customary law and informal markets govern customary land while inheritance and marriage are the predominant means of customary land acquisition. Five of the 12 tribes in Malawi, representing 81% of the population in 2008, use matrilineal inheritance system. The ultimate result of this system (e.g., vesting power over land in women, or their husbands, or

their maternal uncles) varies from region to region (Matchaya 2009; Berge et al 2013).

Forests are found in each of the three tenure systems, with customary land, public land, and private land accounting for 51%-65%, 21%-22%, and 13%-28%, of the national total respectively (DoF 2001; Mwase et al. 2006, cited in USAID 2010). Public forests are vested in the government and include: (i) forest reserves, (ii) government-owned plantations, and (iii) forested areas of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves. Customary forests on unallocated areas of customary land or in Village Forest Areas (VFAs) are vested in the community. Private forests are found predominantly on leasehold and freehold estates but also on allocated customary land (which is treated as private by the 2002 National Land Policy).

The 2002 National Land Policy and the suite of draft legislation based on it - chiefly the 2013 Land Bill and the 2013 Customary Land Bill - would replace the three 1965 land tenure categories (private, public, and customary) with two categories: public and private. Public land would include both government land and unallocated customary land used for the benefit of the community as a whole. Private land would be comprised of: (i) freehold land; (ii) leasehold land; and (iii) customary estates. See the section on Legal Frameworks for more detail.

Malawi has not yet passed legislation on carbon rights or benefit sharing; however, the 1997 Forestry Act does address tree ownership, declaring that they are owned by the holder of the usufruct right to the land on which the trees grow. Though this reference appears in the section of the Forestry Act on customary land, there is a general consensus among stakeholders in Malawi that it also applies to the other tenure categories and not just to trees but also to the carbon fixed by them. The Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program for Co-Managed Protected Areas - Malawi's only active REDD+ demonstration activity - recognizes emissions from public forests as owned by Government of Malawi and negotiable by the department that administers them (Department of National Parks - DNPW in the case of the Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program) (TGC 2014).

The Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program and existing collaborative management agreements between communities and the DNPW provide concrete examples of benefit sharing in relation to National Parks and Wildlife Reserves. The 2004 Parks and Wildlife Act (Amended) allows for the sharing of gate receipts with communities that enter into collaborative management agreements with DNPW. Within the Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program, agreements were signed between the community associations, the DNPW, and Terra Global Capital that detail the benefit sharing mechanism and outline the responsibilities of each party (TGC 2013). The handling of non-timber forest product (NTFP) extraction licencing income by Village Natural Resource Management Committees (VNRMCs) also provides a precedent for benefit sharing in relation to Village Forest Areas, though, in practice, anecdotal evidence suggests that amounts involved are not viewed as being significant to the communities engaged.

As noted, one of the deliverables under Malawi's UN-REDD Targeted Support is a resource tenure assessment that is being implemented by the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and the Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA). It will include recommendations related to clarifying tenure and recommendations on consequent benefit sharing mechanisms under the REDD+ context and is due to be completed by the end of 2015.

Forest management

Forest is found in each of Malawi's three categories of land tenure: public, customary and private (using the classification in the 1965 Land Act rather than the 2002 Land Policy that has not yet gone

into effect). These land tenure regimes may be subdivided in turn: (i) Public into Forest Reserves, National Parks and Wildlife Reserves; (ii) Customary into communal forests including Village Forest Areas (VFAs), and forests on allocated land; and (iii) Private into Leasehold and Freehold. The Department of Forestry (DoF) has the primary responsibility for the management of all forests outside of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves, but the blend of private sector, local government, and community involvement varies between subcategory.

Public

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) manages public forests within Malawi's five National Parks and four Wildlife Reserves, which cover a total of 1.1m ha (MNREE 2010). These forests are managed in accordance with the 1992 Wildlife and Parks Act with an emphasis on conservation, though sustainable harvesting of resources is allowed with a permit (Art. 39). DNPW has four regional divisions: North, Central, East (Upper Shire), and South (Lower Shire).

The Wildlife and Parks Act was amended in 2004 to give communities and the private sector a greater role in protected area management and the 2000 Wildlife Policy is also under review for the same reason. DNPW entered into a 25-year management concession agreement with African Parks in 2003 to manage Majete

Wildlife Reserve including all lodges, infrastructure, and enforcement; this agreement was extended to Liwonde National Park and Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve in July 2015 for a 20-year period (Face of Malawi 2015). Communities within the 8km-wide support zone surrounding each protected area can participate in collaborative management with DNPW by forming Natural Resource Committees at the Group Village level. Each NRC has ten members and is chaired by the Group Village Headman. Collaborative management includes both: (i) revenue sharing of gate receipts; and (ii) resource utilisation programmes under which DNPW delegates the right to approve harvesting of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) to NRCs. Since gate receipts can only be transferred to a legally incorporated entity, DNPW enters into collaborative management agreements with community associations that group a number of NRCs together. Where a Community Association is in place, the divisional DNPW staff participate in its meetings and collaborate with the community NRCs that compose it (ECODIT 2013).

Under the 1997 Forestry Act, the DoF is responsible for the management of Malawi's 88 Forest Reserves, which total 0.9m ha and are comprised of 90% indigenous forests and 10% plantations (MNREE 2010). The DoF has three Regional Forestry Offices (North, Central, South) as well as District Forest Officers (DFOs) in each of Malawi's 28 Districts. Many of the forest plantations were established post-independence under the regime of President Banda and were heavily deforested with the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994; Ndirande Plantation in Blantyre, for example, disappeared entirely within two years (Mauambeta et al 2010). In theory, all charcoal making or commercial wood harvesting requires a licence from the DoF (Forestry Act Art. 40).

The approval of successive policies - notably the 2005 Standards and Guidelines for Participatory Forestry and the new draft Forestry Policy - show that community co-management has climbed the agenda within the DoF. The DoF divides co-managed Forest Reserves into management "blocks" and enters into co-management agreements with a "Block Committee" at the Group Village Level in respect of each block (DoF 2005). The draft Forestry Policy also suggests continuing the role of the private sector in public plantation management, while noting that management has not always met expectations in terms of harvesting cycles and replanting (GoM 2015b).

Customary

Since the colonial period, the Village Forest Area (VFA) has served as the state-sanctioned framework for managing common-access forests on communal land. This association with the colonial past meant that large areas of the VFAs were cleared post-independence in the spirit of reclaiming the land; their number plummeted from 5,000 in 1964 to 1,200 in 1985, subsequently rebounding to 2,565 in 2010 after the introduction of multiparty democracy (Mauambeta et al 2010; MNREE 2010).

At the district level, the 1998 National Decentralization Policy and Local Government Act, devolved certain forestry functions and licensing responsibilities from central government to District Assemblies, as represented by District Forest Officers (DFOs).

The thrust of the existing 1996 Forest Policy, and even more so of the new draft Forestry Policy, is that communities should manage forests through Local Forestry Organisations, which include both: (i) Village Natural Management Committees (VNMRCs) that administer VFAs; and (ii) “clubs” in respect of forests that have already been allocated to a defined group of individuals, families, or a clan. The relevant Village or Group Village Headman can declare a VFA, which should be registered in the name of the VNRMC with the DFO and managed in accordance with a Forest Management Plan agreed with the DFO. Unless and until those structures are in place, the DFO retains authority for regulating and licensing use of forest lands (DoF 2005, DoF 2007a, DoF 2003).

VNRMCs are technically subcommittees of the Village Development Committees and are therefore linked into the architecture of decentralized local government. VNRMCs work with agriculture and forestry staff stationed at an Extension Planning Area (EPA) and who work under the District Agricultural Development Office (DADO) or DFO respectively. A given community can have a VNRMC, tasked with general local natural resource management under the Local Government Act, an NRC with co-management responsibilities in a National Park, and/or a Block Committee with co-management responsibilities over a Forest Reserve (ECODIT 2013).

Private

Agricultural estates are required to maintain 10% forest cover in order to be self-sufficient for wood, particularly an issue for flue-cured tobacco (DoF 2001). However, as Nanthwambwe (2013) observes, no mechanism exists to enforce compliance with this requirement.

Enforcement

Charcoal production and wood harvesting require a license from the DoF; however, as shown by the widespread practice of both by unlicensed parties this requirement is rarely enforced (GoM 2009). A series of influential studies, including the 2009 Biomass Energy Strategy, suggested legalising and regulating the charcoal industry, on the basis that current practices are unsustainable and that the potential Value Added Tax (VAT) on charcoal could more than double DoF revenue (Kambewa et al 2007). A Charcoal Forum took place in September 2015, the outputs of which will inform a future white paper on charcoal production.

In general, deforestation rates in National Parks and Wildlife Reserves are lower than in Forest Reserves, a result commonly attributed to two explanations: (1) DNPW rangers are armed (due to poachers) and, therefore, offer greater deterrence than unarmed DoF rangers; and (2) collaborative management agreements over National Parks and Wildlife Reserves offer a share of gate receipts, a potentially significant source of revenue compared to co-management agreements over Forest Reserves that offer a share of much-smaller licence fees from harvesting permits.

The DoF recently partnered with the Ministry of Defence to send troops “on exercise” into Dzalanyama Forest Reserve to reduce the reserve’s rate of deforestation and forest degradation; Dzalanyama was gazetted in the 1920s to protect Lilongwe’s catchment. The ability to collaborate with the armed forces on forest protection is included in the DoF’s new draft Forestry Policy (GoM 2015b).

Reference levels

Establishing a scientifically sound forest reference emission level (FREL) is one of the key objectives of the GoM REDD+ Action Plan 2014-2019.

The Malawi REDD+ Program (MRP) has already launched a comprehensive effort to identify and analyse the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Malawi. The first phase (Phase 1) of this effort, a meta-analysis of existing data and research, was carried out by LTS International and overseen by the REDD+ Science and Technical Working Group (STWG) and the REDD+ Secretariat. The next phase (Phase 2), is designed as a spatially-explicit and quantitative analysis that aims to determine the contribution of the different drivers to deforestation and forest degradation (and, hence, forest carbon emissions) in given areas of the country (GoM 2015a). Phase 2 is not yet funded.

Another focus of the MRP, with support from the Malawi REDD+ Readiness Program (MRRP), has been to support the formalization of a common set of national land use land cover (LULC) standards. In the last few years, different development partners have partnered with the GoM to develop four different LULC initiatives: (i) FAO; (ii) USAID through Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD); (iii) Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) through Asia Air Services; and (iv) World Bank through a consortium led by LTS International. Each of these four used different methodologies and produced different data (please see the section on Statistics for more detail) (Haack et al. 2014). The MRP hopes to clarify the LULC mapping arena by (i) delineating responsibilities between the different institutions that have some degree of responsibility for LULC mapping (including the Land Resources Conservation Department, Department of Surveys, Department of Forestry, and the Environmental Affairs Department) and (ii) formalizing a common set of LULC categories and definitions, not least of all a definition for “Forest Lands” (GoM 2015a).

Upon the completion of these aforementioned steps, the MRP will then work with partners to determine the best course of action for (1) clarifying existing maps (i.e., the existing four LULC maps) and (2) developing new LULC maps that adhere to the newly formalized LULC standard.

Compared to the dense, closed-canopy forests that define much of the tropics (e.g., the Congo and Amazon Basins), the forests in Malawi are relatively open and are sometimes classified as woodland-savannah mosaics. Further, Malawi’s forests are frequently degraded by fuelwood extraction, introducing difficulties in discerning healthy, intact forests from degraded forests via imagery. The GoM REDD+ Action Plan recommends that Malawi’s LULC data need to be complemented with biomass mapping at the same interval to help evaluate carbon stocks and the changes to stocks over time. The need for such biomass mapping is identified in the GoM REDD+ Action Plan, although it is detailed as a low priority given the cost associated with such an investment (GoM 2015a). The Forestry Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM), which is a division of the Department of Forestry (DoF), has experience with using plots to measure carbon stocks, but this has been on a per-project basis; FRIM does not have a national network of permanent forest plots.

Safeguards

Work on REDD+ safeguards in Malawi is at an early stage. The Government of Malawi REDD+ Action Plan 2014-2019 includes calls for the development of a comprehensive roster of environmental and social safeguards and a Safeguard Information System (SIS) as a priority action with a targeted completion date of end 2016. The safeguards and SIS will be informed by the outputs of other readiness workstreams, including the Corruption Risk Assessment (CRA) that is being prepared as part of the UN-REDD Targeted Support.

The REDD+ Governance and Policy Technical Working Group and the REDD+ Secretariat will be responsible for drafting the safeguards, with support from the USAID Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi (PERFORM) Programme, from UN-REDD, and/or other external experts. In doing so, contributing parties should consider the full range of available frameworks (UN-REDD, FCPF, CCBA and Care International) and consider creating a combined SIS/National Forest Management System (NFMS) (GoM 2015a).

The 1996 Environmental Management Act includes provisions on the requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), under the supervision of the Director of the Economic Affairs Department (EAD). These are public documents (Art. 25) that are mandatory for projects of the size and type that may be determined by the Minister and published in the Gazette (Art. 24). Detail on the implementation of EIAs is provided by the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines. Developers implementing a project that requires an EIA are expected to hold public consultations.

Malawi ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of 1957. It offers a lower level of protection than ILO 169 which replaced it; signatories do not have to seek the consent of indigenous peoples to relocation if doing so is in the interests of national security or development (Arts. 11-12). Malawi has not yet denounced Convention 107 or ratified Convention 169; it therefore remains bound only by Convention 107.

Malawi voted in favour of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, which reinforced the need for Free Prior and Informed Consent of indigenous peoples to projects that will affect them (Inter alia, Arts. 10, 11, 29, 32).

MRV

With UN-REDD Targeted Support, the Malawi REDD+ Program (MRP) is currently developing a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) roadmap, which is due to be completed by end Q3 2015. The roadmap and subsequent planning will include steps and milestones for the development of a: Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) regime; GHG inventory program; National Forest Inventory (NFI); and Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL), as well as a way to integrate governance-related data into the NFMS in order to create an integrated NFMS/Safeguard Information System (GoM 2015a).

At the same time, the Government of Malawi (GoM) and partners will implement a monitoring system to evaluate the outcomes of REDD+ demonstration activities and test different MRV methodologies. The Kulera Landscape REDD+ Program for Co-Managed Protected Areas, which as of August 2015 is Malawi's only active REDD+ demonstration activity, used a mix of Landsat, Rapideye, and Google Earth images to construct its baseline and will monitor emissions reductions

using a mixture of data from remotely sensed imagery and field activities (TGC 2014a). The Miombo woodlands of Malawi and Zambia are also a pilot area for the South African Development Community (SADC) and German International Development Agency (GIZ) project - Development of Integrated Monitoring Systems for REDD+ in the SADC region.

In line with its no-regrets approach to REDD+, the GoM REDD+ Action Plan 2014-2019 advocates carrying out a National Resource Inventory (NRI) or at least a multipurpose NFI that can not only assess various forest metrics, but also meet the data needs of a range of sectors. With support of the Malawi REDD+ Readiness Program (MRRP), the MRP has conducted two evaluations of forest inventory capacities and needs, (Alegria (2014) and Alegria and Rhoades (2015)). With support from PERFORM, the MRP aims to design and test a forest inventory strategy on PERFORM demonstration sites across the country. The MRP will then use the results of those experiences to inform the design of the NFI/NRI and scale up from the sub-national to the national scale (GoM 2015a).

The GoM REDD+ Action Plan and the MRP Work Plan (2014-2015) also recognize the need to improve spatial data management and spatial data accuracy for key data sets (e.g., protected areas) across the natural resource management sector. At present, Malawi does not have formal spatial data management standards, including an official coordinate system and projection, metadata requirements, and naming conventions, among others. The Shire River Basin Management Programme (a World Bank-funded effort) partnered with the Department of Surveys (DoS) to develop spatial data standards, yet, as of August 2015, those standards have not yet been formalized. Further, neither the DoS nor the DoF has high-resolution boundaries for the country's protected areas (including its 88 forest reserves); many of which have never been mapped (GoM 2015a). One of the aims of the GoM REDD+ Action Plan is that work on the NFMS will help integrate the natural resource management sector by involving all relevant state and non-state actors and bringing coherency to their activities through coordination.

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