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PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS AND RESTORING FORESTS IN MALAWI (PERFORM)

GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPATORY
FOREST MANAGEMENT IN MALAWI

JULY 2015

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BMC	Block Management Committee
CEPA	Center for Environmental Policy and Advocacy
CBFM	Community Based Forest Management
DFO	District Forest Office
DoF	Department of Forestry
FMB	Forest Management Board
GFI	Governance of Forests Initiative
GVH	Group Village Head
IFMSLP	Improved Forest Management for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme
PERFORM	Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
TA	Traditional Authority
TLC	Total Land Care
VFA	Village Forest Area
VH	Village Head
VNRMC	Village Natural Resource Management Committee
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WRI	World Resources Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi (PERFORM) is a five-year project funded by USAID/Malawi and implemented by Tetra Tech ARD. PERFORM was designed to align with Malawi's mid-term Growth and Development Strategy and to promote forest conservation and green growth. In order to support PERFORM's goals, the Governance of Forests Initiative (GFI) of the World Resources Institute (WRI) executed a forest governance assessment of Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in Malawi. The objectives of the assessment were to: 1) Give practical guidance on how to apply the GFI forest governance assessment methodology in Malawi; 2) Through application of the forest governance assessment methodology in two sites (the Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves and their buffer zones) provide recommendations on how the GFI assessment framework can best be tailored for subsequent application in Malawi; 3) On the basis of the site-based assessments, generate recommendations for PERFORM and the government on project activities in these sites.

The assessment was conducted using the GFI Indicator Framework, a research tool for assessing forest governance strengths and weaknesses. The indicators evaluate the quality of laws and decision-making processes governing forests and land use, the capacity of institutional actors, and how these laws and policies are implemented. For the purpose of this assessment, relevant GFI Indicators on forest tenure, forest management, and benefit-sharing were identified and prioritized based on their relevance to the goals of the assessment. The terminology and language of the diagnostic questions was contextualized for PFM in Malawi. The GFI team convened meetings to carry out semi-structured focus group discussions near the Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves. In each field site, results of these discussions were presented and discussed during a multi-stakeholder workshop in order to identify recommendations for the improvement of PFM.

Malawi has a strong policy and legal framework for Participatory Forest Management, as evidenced in its Forestry Policy (1996), Forestry Act (1997), and National Forestry Programme (2001) and important progress has been made with its implementation, mainly through support from the European Union-funded project "Improved Forest Management for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme" (IFMSLP). However, this assessment identified specific challenges for PFM:

- The appropriate technical parameters for sustainable forest management are not always reflected in co-management plans. The complexity of the plans limits their understanding, uptake and implementation by all stakeholders.
- Limited access to information contributes, and low capacity of community members hinders the effectiveness of efforts to develop plans jointly with communities.
- Institutional design of PFM has introduced increased complexity in terms of the relationship between Block Management Committees and traditional leadership.
- Roles and responsibilities for implementation and monitoring are not always clear or complied with.
- There is a lack of clear and functioning mechanisms to resolve conflicts between stakeholders involved in co-management activities.
- Benefit sharing mechanisms present difficulties in their implementation and face challenges concerning transparency and contribution to livelihood improvement.

This report summarizes results of the forest governance assessment carried out in Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves and presents recommendations for how the PERFORM team could develop strategies to strengthen PFM in Malawi.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE OF WORK

Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi (PERFORM) is a five-year project funded by USAID/Malawi and implemented by Tetra Tech ARD. PERFORM is a core component of environment programming under USAID's Development Objective Assistance Agreement with the Government of Malawi (GoM), and is the flagship implementation vehicle for the low-emissions partnership between the U.S. and the GoM. PERFORM was designed to align with Malawi's mid-term Growth and Development Strategy and to promote forest conservation and green growth. The objectives of the PERFORM project are:

1. Advance REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) readiness
2. Increase low-emissions land use opportunities in targeted geographies
3. Improve low-emissions development capacities
4. Institute pathways for sustainability
5. Advance CDCS (Country Development and Cooperation Strategy) priorities of integration and institutional strengthening.

As sub-contractor for PERFORM, the World Resources Institute (WRI) is implementing tasks under Objectives 1-3. This report presents the results of a forest governance field assessment carried out over a 2 week period in March 2015 by WRI's Governance of Forest Initiative (GFI)¹. The main objectives for the governance assessment were:

1. Through field assessments in Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves, develop an adapted set of questions and practical guidance on how to apply the GFI forest governance assessment methodology in Malawi
2. Generate recommendations for PERFORM and the Department of Forestry (DoF) on the design and implementation of project activities in these sites.

1.2 PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT IN MALAWI

Malawi's 1965 Land Act² and 2002 Land Policy³ recognize three types of land: customary, public, and private land⁴. Forested public lands are managed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Forestry (DoF). Customary land is all land held, occupied, or used by communities under customary law and is under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities.

Malawi's legal and policy framework for forests (e.g., 1996 Forest Policy⁵, 1997 Forestry Act⁶, and 2001 National Forest Programme⁷) strongly emphasizes Participatory Forest Management (PFM) with local communities in an attempt to devolve land and resource rights to local communities, reduce deforestation rates, and address lack of government capacities and resources to manage forests. The 2003

¹ <http://www.wri.org/our-work/project/governance-forests-initiative>

² Government of Malawi, 1965. Land Act.

³ Government of Malawi, Ministry of Lands and Housing, 2002. Malawi National Land Policy.

⁴ USAID country profile, property rights and resource governance Malawi.

⁵ Government of Malawi, Ministry of Natural Resources, 1996. National Forest Policy of Malawi.

⁶ Government of Malawi, Ministry of Mines, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, 1997. Forestry Act.

⁷ Government of Malawi, Department of Forestry, 2001. Malawi's National Forest Programme.

Community Based Forest Management Supplement to the National Forest Policy⁸ states that the policy goal for community based forest management is to empower rural communities to conserve and develop Malawi's forest resources for the economic and environmental benefit of the present and future generations. Success in transferring certain management responsibilities to the district level has been mixed, since resource constraints for district offices have created challenges for the effective protection and control of public forests⁹. PFM can take place on customary land through the management by communities of Village Forest Areas (VFA), or in state Forest Reserves and plantations through co-management of communities with the Department of Forestry (Box 1). The Standards and Guidelines for Participatory Forestry in Malawi¹⁰ (2005) outline the basic framework for implementation of these activities as well as guidelines to support best practices.

Box 1: Overview of Participatory Forest Management in Malawi

Participatory Forest Management activities in Malawi are carried out primarily through establishment of Village Forest Areas (VFAs) or co-management agreements in Forest Reserves. These programs are summarized below.

Village Forest Areas: Village Forest Areas enable forest communities to establish formalized rights to manage customary forest lands. In order to establish a VFA, a Forest Management Agreement is developed and signed with the District Forest Office. Plans are developed by communities in conjunction with local extension agents on the basis of a Participatory Forest Resource Assessment. At the community level, VFAs are managed by Village Natural Resource Management Committees (VNRMCs).

Forest Reserve co-management: co-management of Forest Reserves aims to distribute the costs and benefits of managing forest reserves between District Forest Offices (DFO) and village communities living within the buffer zone of the reserves. Co-management plans are developed by the DFO and communities, in line with the strategic plan for the forest reserve. These plans define roles and responsibilities as well as set out objectives and rules for resource management within the reserve. Forest Reserves are divided into blocks, which are managed by a Block Management Committee (BMC) composed of representatives from member villages. In addition to BMCs, Local Forest Management Boards (LFMB) are also established around Forest Reserves to serve as a multi-stakeholder entity for convening community representatives, TAs, civil society groups, and government officials. Benefits derived from income-generating activities in the blocks are divided between the communities (60%), DFO (30%), and LFMB (10%).

The European Union-funded project “Improved Forest Management for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (IFMSLP)” project has been a major supporter of PFM in Malawi. During the first phase (2005 – 2010) the goals of the project included organizational strengthening of rural communities, development of participatory forest management plans and forest management agreements, and improvement of capacities of rural communities to sustainably harvest and sell forest products from customary land and forest reserves. In the second phase (2012-2014) the overall objective was to improve the livelihoods of forest dependent communities through the participatory management of forests both in forest reserves and on customary land.

⁸ Government of Malawi, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, 2003. Community-based Forest Management: A Supplement to the National Forest Policy of Malawi.

⁹ Stanturf, J., Karia, R., Evans, D., Chisale, M., 2011. Sustainable Landscapes Assessment: Malawi. USAID.

¹⁰ Government of Malawi, Department of Forestry, 2005. Standards & Guidelines for Participatory Forestry in Malawi.

A recent review of IFMSLP-supported PFM¹¹ comes to the general conclusion that “Most of the areas visited show satisfactory levels of forest management and reasonably performing BMCs and VNRMCs even though they usually do not follow their Forest Management Plans to the letter.” A number of challenges are identified in the review, such as the complexity of the PFM model, inadequate training, inadequate partnership arrangement between state and non-state actors, doubtful sustainability given available resources, need for capacity development and for a greater role of women in decision making structures. Concerning governance issues, the report mentions challenges related to patrolling, lack of accountability of BMCs, the voluntary character of working in a BMC, and inactive LFMBs in some cases. PERFORM aims to continue the process of evaluating, improving and supporting PFM in Forests Reserves and VFAs. This governance assessment is meant to inform and orient these efforts. For this assessment, two priority sites were selected by the PERFORM team: Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves.

¹¹ Remme, H., Muyambi, F., Kamoto, J., Dengu, E., 2015. A technical review of community based forest management on both customary land and forest reserves (Participatory Forest Management) Transtec/EU.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 THE GOVERNANCE OF FORESTS INITIATIVE INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

The basis for WRI's site-based assessments conducted is the Governance of Forests Initiative (GFI) Indicator Framework.¹² The indicators are designed to be applicable for a wide range of users interested in evaluating forest governance strengths and weaknesses as well as monitoring changes in forest governance over time. Examples could include government agencies wishing to assess the effectiveness of policy implementation, legislators seeking to identify priorities for legal reforms, or civil society organizations seeking to monitor government performance. The indicators are organized into six thematic areas, and further divided into subthemes in order for users to easily identify and prioritize indicators based on their assessment objectives (Table 1). Each GFI Indicator is designed to evaluate a particular law, process, activity, or institution in detail. For each indicator, a diagnostic question is defined and the research is guided by three to six elements of quality that are the focus for the data collection and help the user answer the diagnostic question in a structured manner (see Figure 1). As a companion to the Indicator Framework, The GFI Guidance Manual¹³ helps the user navigate decisions about how to design and implement a governance assessment using the GFI indicators. The manual also includes detailed indicator-by-indicator guidance and worksheets to support the data collection process.

Table 1. Organization of the indicators by thematic area and subtheme

Forest tenure	Land use	Forest management	Forest revenues	Cross-cutting: institutions	Cross-cutting: issues
Forest ownership and use rights	Land use planning	Forest legal and policy framework	Forest charge administration	Legislature	Public participation in decision-making
Tenure dispute resolution	Land use plan implementation	Forest strategies and plans	Forest revenue distribution	Judiciary	Public access to information
State forest ownership	Sectoral land use	Forest monitoring	Benefit-sharing	Executive agencies	Financial transparency and accountability
Concession allocation	Forest classification	Forest management practices	Budgeting	Private sector	Anticorruption measures
		Forest law enforcement		Civil society	

¹² C. Davis, L. Williams, S. Lupberger, F. Daviet, 2013. Assessing forest governance: The Governance of Forests Initiative Indicator Framework. World Resources Institute. <http://www.wri.org/publication/assessing-forest-governance>

¹³ http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/gfi_guidance_manual.pdf

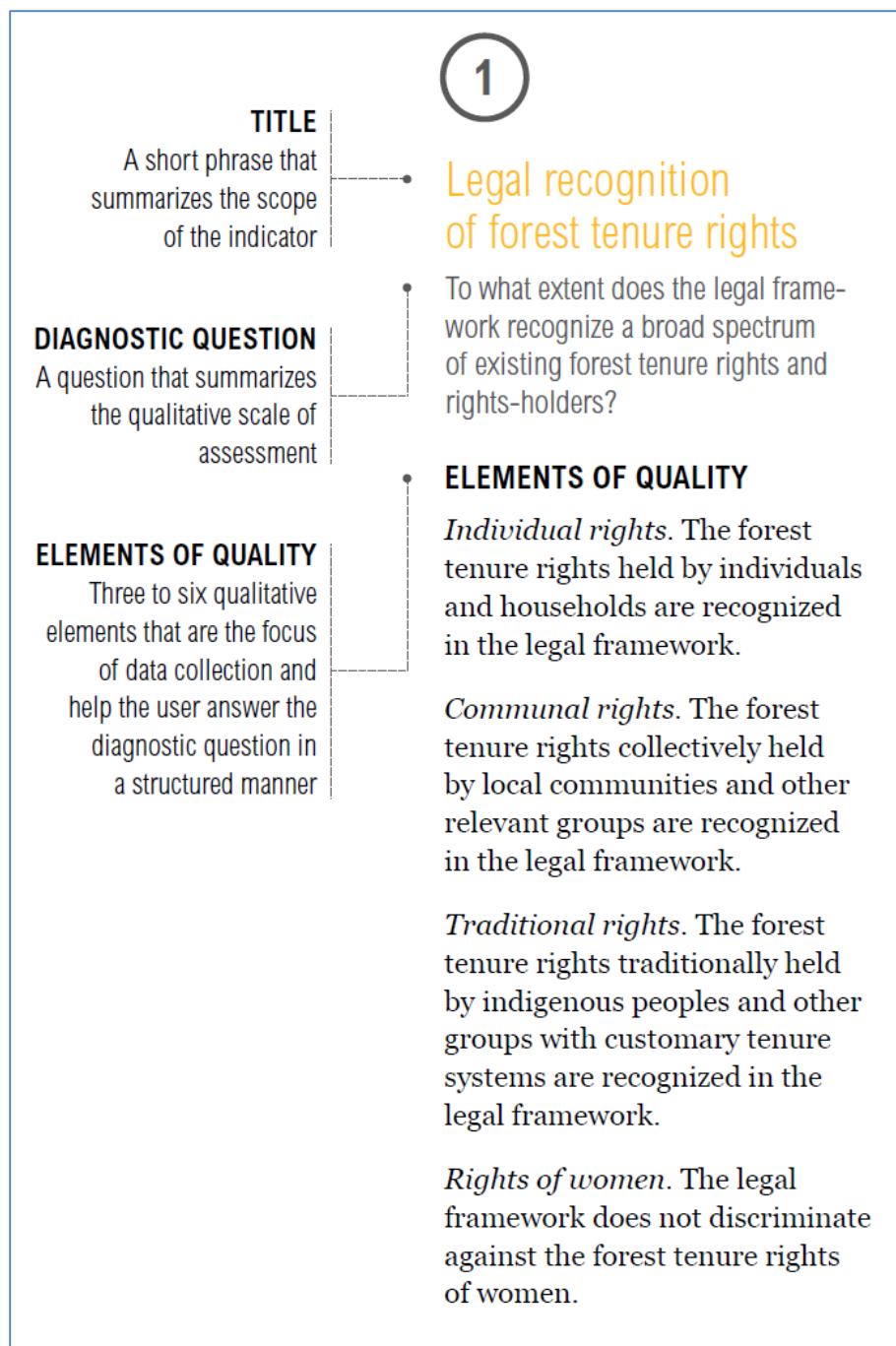


Figure 1. Example of an indicator from the GFI Indicator Framework with a diagnostic question and elements of quality. (Source: C. Davis, L. Williams, S. Lupberger, F. Daviet, 2013. Assessing forest governance: The Governance of Forests Initiative Indicator Framework. World Resources Institute)

2.2 APPLICATION OF THE GOVERNANCE OF FORESTS INITIATIVE INDICATOR FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS PFM IN MALAWI

To support the objectives of PERFORM, the GFI Indicator Framework was used to conduct a participatory forest governance assessment to analyze strengths and weaknesses of PFM implementation in Malawi. Assessments were carried out in the Perekezi Forest Reserve in Northern Malawi and the Liwonde Forest Reserve in Southern Malawi (Table 2, Figure 1), and their 5 km buffer zones. The analysis included co-management of blocks within the reserves, as well as management of VFAs by communities in the buffer zones.

Table 2: Summary information of field sites^{14,15}

	District	Area (ha)	# of Villages	Population
Perekezi Forest Reserve	Mzimba	15,370	43	5,800
Liwonde Forest Reserve	Machinga	26,266	135	188,000

WRI's Global Forest Watch team provided a brief analysis of total tree cover in 2010 and gross tree cover loss from 2001 to 2013 within the reserves and in their 5 km buffer zones. The results of this analysis are presented in Annex 1. Total tree cover in 2000 in the Forest Reserves (more than 30% canopy density), expressed as percentage of the total area, was 61% and 65% for Perekezi and Liwonde, respectively. In the buffer zones, total tree cover in 2000 was 24% and 4.5% of the total area for Perekezi and Liwonde, respectively. Total gross tree cover loss over the period 2001 to 2013 was 2.2% of the 2000 total tree cover in the Perekezi Forest Reserve and 1.7% of the 2000 total tree cover in the Liwonde Forest Reserve. In the buffer zones, the total gross tree cover loss was 26% and 8.7% of the 2000 total tree cover for Perekezi and Liwonde, respectively.

2.2.1 DEFINING ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND SCALE

The assessment objectives cited above were defined in consultation with the PERFORM team. These discussions also informed the decision to carry out the assessment in two Forest Reserves and to narrow the scope of the assessment to the implementation of Participatory Forest Management in Malawi.

¹⁴ Machinga Planning Task Force, 2007. Liwonde Forest Reserve Strategic Area Plan.

¹⁵ M'mbelwa District Assembly, 2013. Strategic Plan for Perekezi Forest Reserve.

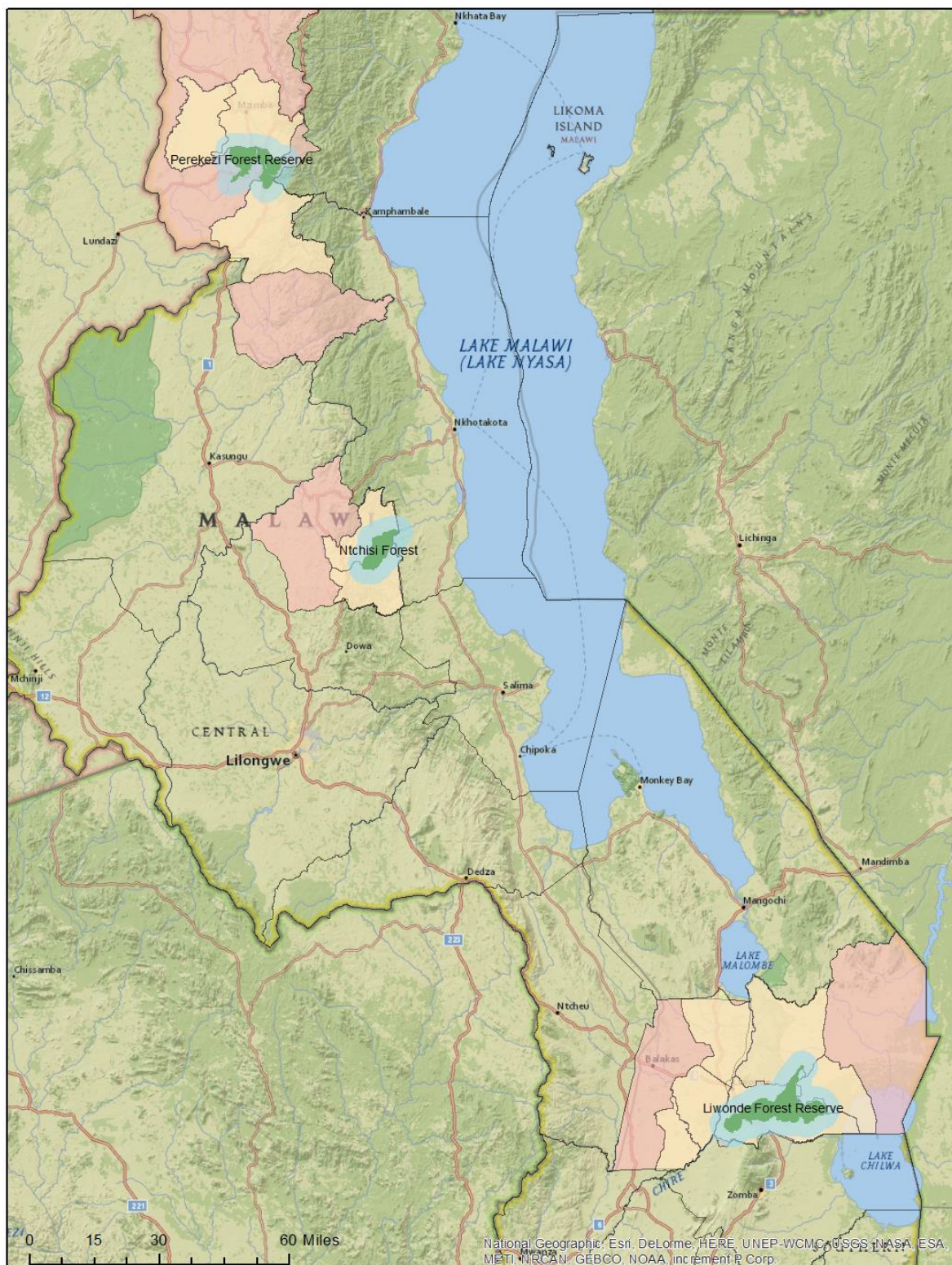


Figure 2. Map with the Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves. (Source: PERFORM project)

2.2.2 IDENTIFICATION AND TAILORING OF INDICATORS

To define the methodology, a literature review was conducted of the documents on PFM in Malawi that are cited throughout this report. On the basis of this review we selected the most relevant indicators from the total set of indicators in the GFI Indicators Framework. The indicators that were selected fall within the thematic areas Forest Tenure, Forest Management, and Benefit-Sharing. The diagnostic questions and elements of quality of each of each of the selected indicators were converted into a series of specific research questions for the purpose of this assessment. The terminology of the questions was also simplified and adapted to reference specific local processes and concepts.

Separate sets of questions were defined for specific focus groups discussions in order to address the specific roles and responsibilities of communities and DFO staff and to distinguish between Forest Reserve co-management and the management of VFAs:

- Community Focus Group Discussions on Forest Reserve co-management
- Community Focus Group Discussions on benefit sharing from Forest Reserve co-management
- Community Focus Group Discussions on management of Village Forest Areas
- District Forestry Office Focus Group Discussions on Forest Reserve co-management
- District Forestry Office Focus Group Discussions on Forest Law Enforcement and Monitoring¹⁶

The questions for each type of focus group discussions are listed in Annex 2. For each question reference is made to the corresponding indicator in the GFI Indicator Framework, to support transparency and replicability of the methodology. Although the questions in Annex 2 were considered the most relevant for this assessment, researchers can adjust them to their specific research goals.

2.2.3 DATA COLLECTION THROUGH SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Prior to traveling to the field sites, a half-day workshop was conducted in Lilongwe with staff of the Department of Forestry. During the workshop the scope of the forest governance assessment by GFI was presented for feedback. Participants were asked to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of PFM in Malawi. Subsequently, the WRI team convened meetings to carry out semi-structured focus group discussions with district forestry officials and in 2 community-managed block areas each in Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves. In each site, one full day was dedicated to these separate discussions with government and communities, using the questions in Annex 1 to identify challenges for PFM.

2.2.4 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

A second day was used in each site to convene a multi-stakeholder workshop including DFO staff, representatives from the Regional Forest office, BMC members from the Reserves, members of the LFMBs, and TAs. The workshops presented main findings from the previous focus group discussions and facilitated a dialogue to discuss recommendations for how to improve co-management of Forest Reserves. At the start of both workshops key challenges for PFM that were identified during the focus group discussions were shared for feedback from participants. This resulted in the participatory definition of four key challenges in Perekezi, and six key challenges in Liwonde. The participants then broke up into separate multi-stakeholder groups to discuss one key challenge in each group and define recommendations to address them. The recommendations were shared in plenary sessions and documented.

¹⁶ Note that these questions were not implemented as part of the GFI assessment in Perekezi and Liwonde, but were proposed as a recommendation to include in future assessments of PFM in Malawi based on the challenges identified for monitoring and enforcement.

3.0 RESULTS

This section presents the results of observations from the focus group discussions and recommendations developed through multi-stakeholder workshops. We have aimed to accurately report the inputs of the different stakeholders present in the discussions, thus the results should be read as the opinions and perceptions of respondents. Section 4 presents further analysis of these results, as well as a discussion of the limitations of the results and suggestions for strengthening the data collection process.

3.1 LILONGWE WORKSHOP, DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

The objectives of the workshop with staff from the Department of Forestry were:

- Present the scope of the GFI forest governance assessment
- Identify governance challenges around PFM in Malawi
- Discuss ideas on how to strengthen PFM in Malawi

During the workshop with the DoF in Lilongwe, participants were each asked to individually identify 5 strengths and 5 weaknesses of forest management in Malawi. Participants were then organized into two groups to discuss their ideas and group them into categories. The results are summarized in the Table 3.

Table 3. Strengths and weaknesses of PFM, identified by DoF staff

Issue	Strengths	Weaknesses
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity development and training is available for communities ▪ Government extension staff is well trained ▪ Indigenous knowledge exists on how to manage forest resources ▪ Communities and DoF have been trained by IFMSLP ▪ Staff is available in DoF and DFO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor understanding of communities and service providers of PFM ▪ Gaps exists in district level extension skills
Forest management policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling policies and legislation exist (Forestry Policy, Forestry Act, Decentralization Policy, CBFM supplement policy) ▪ Tenure arrangements for customary forests are supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor coordination and harmonization of policies ▪ Policy level participation is weak ▪ Weak implementation of policies ▪ Communities see PFM as a top down approach ▪ Land tenure issues not always clear ▪ In some forest areas there is common access ▪ Tree ownership is sometimes unclear
Forest management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procedures for PFM are in place ▪ Forests on public and customary land are still available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PFM is time consuming ▪ Labor demand on communities is high ▪ PFM is costly

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of energy alternatives for charcoal and firewood ▪ High rates of deforestation and poverty still exist ▪ Over dependency on forest resources
Institutions and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing local traditional governance structures and institutions ▪ Local leader are involved in PFM ▪ Cohesions at community level ▪ Presence of functional local forest organizations ▪ A long history of PFM exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corruption and bribery exist ▪ Political interference in PFM ▪ Forest resources are used for other purposes than intended ▪ Weak prosecution
Participation and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transparency and accountability are promoted ▪ Active participation of communities is promoted ▪ Grassroots organizations are involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Men dominate forest management ▪ Youth is excluded
Financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funds are available through international cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access and benefit sharing not clear ▪ Dependency on forests for income ▪ State control of forest reserves may limit co-management incentives
Information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No adequate research and science available ▪ Not enough knowledge on indigenous forests ▪ Inadequate knowledge and management of forest resources

As can be observed in Table 3, for most issues strengths as well as weaknesses were identified which in some cases are contradictory. In a plenary discussion it was highlighted that PFM is resource intensive (capacity building, logistics) and has depended heavily on support from international funding such as the IFMSLP project. Districts that have not received international project support have clearly made less progress. Resource limitations result in difficulties to address gaps in capacities and result in weak monitoring and enforcement. The government receives 30% of the revenues that are generated by co-management of blocks in Forest Reserves, but it was stated that more transparency is needed concerning the amount and use of those financial resources. Participants indicated that the budget of the DoF is spread very thin over the central, regional, and district offices. The functioning of the Forest Development Fund and the level of resources in that fund are not clear to them. Within the DoF, not all staff is in favor of PFM, as they feel that the management of Forest Reserves is an exclusive responsibility of the State.

According to DoF staff, communities commonly feel that they do not have the long term resource rights under co-management in Forest Reserves. Ownership is considered stronger on VFAs, where stricter community rules are put in place and enforced by traditional leaders. DoF staff is therefore under the impression that communities prefer to deplete forest resources in blocks rather than on VFAs. It is mentioned that communities that are well organized and have strong social capital and traditional leadership are more successfully implementing PFM. DoF staff also identified challenges in relation to distribution of benefits in blocks and VFAs; for example, they noted that BMC members working in the

blocks frequently do not get sufficient compensation for the invested time and labor, and that this can create a disincentive for community members to take on the responsibility of managing the block.

3.2 PEREKEZI FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

District Forest Office, Mzimba

The District Forest Officer in Mzimba provided a summary of the state of co-management of Perekezi Forest Reserve, which is composed of 10 blocks of which 8 have management plans. According to DFO staff, strengths of Forest Reserve co-management include coordination across sectors and levels of government and participatory processes to develop plans. Awareness of plan contents was perceived to be good across stakeholder groups; however, respondents were unsure about whether the plan was based on quality information. In addition, roles and responsibilities for co-management were considered to be clear, but challenging to carry out in practice due to lack of capacity, financial resources, and equipment for communities and DFO staff. As a result, DFO staff indicated that monitoring of the blocks was infrequent. DFO staff identified ensuring plans are revised regularly and capacity-building on forest and financial management as priority issues. Based on current management practices, the DFO's office was considering terminating some of the co-management agreements.

Table 4. Strengths and weaknesses of PFM in Perekezi, identified by DoF staff

Strengths identified by respondents	Challenges identified by respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination between national and local forestry offices through policy guidance and reporting back ▪ District level coordination across sectors (e.g., forestry, agriculture, water, education) ▪ General awareness of co-management plan contents by district level staff ▪ Processes to develop plans were participatory and communities are aware of plan contents ▪ Plans perceived as defining clear roles and responsibilities for communities and the District Forest Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unsustainable harvest levels in some co-management blocks ▪ Lack of sufficient financial resources to implement forest management activities or provide technical support to communities ▪ Infrequent monitoring and patrolling in reserve blocks ▪ Communities lack expertise and resources to adequately manage blocks ▪ Activities are not being implemented according to management plans

Perekezi Community 1

Forest Reserve Co-management

Of the community members present, approximately 20% indicated they had knowledge of the co-management plan. Most respondents reported that the plan did not reflect all of the community members' ideas, although several community women indicated that the plan addressed their interest by enabling collection of mushrooms and fruits from the reserve. Examples of major challenges identified by the respondents included the lack of monitoring and enforcement of illegal activities in the blocks and exclusion of local traditional leadership from co-management activities and decision-making. Community members suggested that monitoring and enforcement of the implementation of the co-management activities should be executed jointly by the community and the DFO, but that this requires more training and collaboration among all stakeholder groups including VH and GVH.

Another key issue raised by the discussion was the low accountability of BMC members to the broader community. BMC members were perceived as not reporting back to their communities regularly on revenues or decisions. For example, some community members did not seem to be aware that the block management had generated approximately 100,000 kwacha, nor were participants aware of how those funds had been spent. Some participants stated that exclusion of traditional authorities from block management limited the legitimacy of BMC members to call meetings for reporting of information. Communities suggested that additional training of BMC members and local leaders was necessary to improving co-management. Participants also noted that they perceive the distribution of benefits to be unfair, specifically the 30% for the DFO.

Table 5. Strengths and weaknesses of co-management in Perekezi, identified by community I

Strengths of co-management identified by respondents	Challenges of co-management identified by respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approximately 20% of those present reported having some knowledge of the co-management plan ▪ Plan reflects women's interests in relation to collecting mushrooms and fruits from the reserve ▪ Clear obligation for reporting of illegal activities in the block ▪ Management plan defines clear sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community input perceived as not incorporated into final plan ▪ Unclear role of government institutions ▪ Limited support and assistance from DFO staff ▪ Poor enforcement of penalties for illegal woodcutting and charcoal production ▪ Poor coordination between DFO staff and communities ▪ BMC members do not report back to communities on activities or benefits ▪ BMC members less able to carry out other income-generating activities ▪ Exclusion of VH and GVH from co-management institutional structures ▪ Unclear rationale for 60/30/10% distribution of benefits ▪ Limited community awareness of revenues generated from Block management

Village Forest Areas

Community members indicate they are aware of the VFA plan and that it was easy to obtain. They state that their VFA is better managed than the block because the VFA is close to their village which facilitates control of illegal activities. No harvesting has taken place in the VFA yet because the paramount chief has not allowed it. Some other VFAs in the area generate income.

Perekezi Community 2

Forest Reserve Co-management

Most community members present stated that they have participated in the development of the block co-management plan that was signed in 2013, but that a copy of the plan did not exist within the community. Several participants provided examples of information in the plan; for example, information on the boundaries and size of the block (about 900 hectares). Several members feel that their input was not reflected in the final document; for example, they proposed inclusion of additional villages located within the 5km buffer zone of the reserve in co-management activities. Women mentioned that some of the activities they made sure were included in the plan are the possibility to pick wild fruit and mushrooms

for sale as well as home consumption. The community perceived that roles and responsibilities for implementation of co-management were clear on paper but not in practice. Other main challenges cited by community participants included a lack of coordination between BMC and DFO staff, lack of training, and limited empowerment of BMC members. Participants noted that the block was not actively generating revenue, and that BMC members were carrying out patrols but had been unable to issue sanctions or stop illegal extraction.

Table 6. Strengths and weaknesses of co-management in Perekezi, identified by community 2

Strengths of co-management identified by respondents	Challenges of co-management identified by respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most community members indicated they participated in the process of developing the co-management plan ▪ Plan reflects women's interests in relation to collecting mushrooms and fruits from the reserve ▪ Management plan defines clear roles and responsibility for implementation and oversight of co-management ▪ BMC members consisting of 7 women and 5 men were selected by community members based on their reputations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No copy of co-management plan available at the village level or in the local language ▪ A limited number of participated indicated familiarity with the plan's content ▪ Community input perceived as not incorporated into final plan ▪ Poor coordination between BMC and DFO staff ▪ BMC carries out patrols but does not feel empowered to stop illegal activities ▪ Lack of training on issues such as financial management, harvesting firewood, and beekeeping

Village Forest Areas

Participants noted that the process for recognizing the Village Forest Areas and signing the management plan was slow and lasted from 2006 to 2009. The establishment of the VFA did not generate conflicts with neighboring villages. The DFO gave some training on how to harvest forest products and did a forest inventory of the VFA that has a size of about 59 hectares. The community has a copy of the management plan in the local language. The community members mention that it was strong leadership that encouraged them to create the VFA and protect its natural resources. The VNRMC and the traditional leader are working together and inform the community and members about the activities in weekly VFA meetings. If people violate the rules, penalties are applied.

3.3 PEREKEZI WORKSHOP

At the workshop, the WRI team grouped the challenges that were identified during the focus group discussions into four main issues for further discussion. After an overview, participants divided into break-out groups and were tasked with defining recommendations for these issues:

1. Process, content and implementation of co-management Plans
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Management of revenue and benefits
4. Participation of all relevant stakeholders/coordination with traditional leaders

The recommendations for each issue are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Working group recommendations for the improvement of PFM in blocks and VFAs in and around the Perekezi Forest Reserve

Issue	Recommendations
Process, content and implementation of co-management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans need to be developed in a participatory way, involving traditional leaders, communities, and government Each block should be clearly demarcated and have a map The management plan should be available in the local language Whenever a person violates the rules, a punishment should be given to both that person and his VH by the GVH. The VH should be accountable. Products from the forests should be marketed on specific days, not just every day of the week Frequent patrolling should take place The receipts, issued by the DFO, should be issued in the blocks Only deadwood should be sold; no cutting of green wood should be allowed Every block should have a date stamp for receipts Every block should have a tree nursery and equipment (hoe, watering can, wheelbarrow, etc.) Management plans should be reviewed after 1 year to determine whether they need revision
Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government should recruit more staff, provide training on sustainable forest management, provide equipment, respond swiftly when there are problems in blocks, and assure compliance with plans BMCs should protect the block, call meetings at village level, lead activities in the blocks, report back to the community, and monitor and supervise blocks as well as VFAs. LFMBs should resolve conflicts, ensure that finances are well-managed at block level, report to both communities and governments, encourage community members to plant trees, ensure that block meetings are held, and function as a bridge between the government and the communities Traditional Leaders should be informed how block management is performing, encourage people to participate in committee activities, and encourage the planting and managing of trees both inside and outside of the blocks. The GVH should hold the VH accountable. The local community should follow the rules set for the blocks, participate in block level activities, and attend block meetings All of the relevant groups should monitor together as a team
Management of revenues and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All finance books should be available at each block (receipt book, ledger, records, petty cash) (this requires training on financial management) Every block should have a bank account Financial reports should be given on a monthly basis to the community members and the LFMB Board members should assure auditing of the block books (training required) Of the 60% of revenues that goes to the community, one third should be spent on community development (e.g. assisting vulnerable members of community and other social programs) and two-thirds should be deposited in a bank account)

Participation of all relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More coordination is needed between district department heads (police, agriculture, water, forests) Police should arrest those who violate the rules and should assist communities in patrolling Some state that the judiciary should be more involved to penalize, others argue that punishments are an internal village issue The DOF should train communities on the sanctions and penalties that are written in the law The agricultural institutions should support soil protection, agroforestry and irrigation Water institutions should provide water for forest nurseries Education institutions should support environmental education Better coordination is required between traditional leaders (e.g., VH, GVH) and block members for more transparency in all activities Traditional leaders should function as a bridge between the government and the community and need to be involved and cooperative
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3.4 LIWONDE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Liwonde Community 1

Forest Reserve Co-management

Community members reported that most of the preparation of the co-management plan was done by the community and facilitated through regular meetings with the DFO's office. Most community members present indicated they participated in the plan's development. A copy of the plan was kept in the community, although it was only available in English. Community women felt that their needs in terms of collecting wild fruits, mushrooms, and firewood for domestic use were taken into account. The block is managed by several villages. Through a rotation system, each village can enter the block one day a week. Community members noted that their block area was largely deforested at the time that the plan was developed, thus they felt the information in the plan was not accurate.

The community identified significant obstacles with respect to implementation of the plan. The community states that their expertise and resources are not adequate. For example, protective gear, slashers, hoes, and other tools for clearing firebreaks are missing, and yearly fires interrupt regeneration. The community mentions that income from the block so far has totaled approximately 10,000 kwacha. The community also described numerous conflicts or challenges with the DFO. For example, the community reported that they planted eucalyptus trees and the DFO authorized those trees to be sold without the knowledge of the community. They also identified a lack of clarity in revenues generated from harvesting in the block area and selling of confiscated charcoal. Finally, BMC members indicated they felt threatened by illegal actors and preferred to carry out monitoring jointly with the DFO. They noted that a third party to resolve conflicts would be beneficial.

Table 8. Strengths and weaknesses of co-management in Liwonde, identified by community I

Strengths identified by respondents	Challenges identified by respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-management plan was developed through twice monthly meetings with the DFO office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No version of the management plan was available in the local language

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many members of the community participated in the plan development, not just BMC members ▪ The community had a copy of the management plan available in English ▪ Roles and responsibilities for co-management are understood by the community ▪ Block committee members report back to the community ▪ BMC members were elected by the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information in the plan was not based on up to date information ▪ Lack of community empowerment to implement activities ▪ Lack of clarity over receipt books and selling of block resources by DFO and communities ▪ BMC members feel threatened by groups carrying out illegal charcoal production or firewood cutting ▪ DFO patrols focus on roads but are not covering interior of the reserve ▪ Lack of equipment to clear firebreaks (e.g., hoes, protective gear, slashers) ▪ Block has generated very little revenue (approximately 10,000 kwacha) ▪ Block committee does not meet regularly in practice
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Village Forest Areas

Community members indicated they are aware of the VFA plan and that it was easy to obtain. They stated that their VFA is better managed than the block because the VFA is close to their village which facilitates control of illegal activities. No harvesting has taken place in the VFA yet because the paramount chief has not allowed it. They use the block to obtain firewood.

Liwonde Community 2

About half of the community members present in the meeting (about 22 total) have participated in the process to develop the co-management plan. An English version of the plan is available in community. The plan was developed with the DFO over the course of one year, with two meetings per month. The community feels their input was taken into account in the final version of the plan. For women, some of the key issues in the plan are the possibility to collect of firewood for domestic use and the collection of mushrooms, wild fruits, and stones for construction.

The community reported that institutional roles and responsibilities of the DFO, BMC, leaders, and community members for implementation and oversight are clearly stipulated in the plan. Activities being carried out include patrolling the block, issuing receipts for dry firewood, raising tree nurseries, and planting seedlings along riverbanks. The community flagged lack of equipment as an obstacle, as well as a need for additional training that targets the entire community rather than a subset of members. The community also identified challenges associated with carrying out patrols, noting that BMC members typically patrol alone and do not feel empowered or comfortable dealing with individuals that are illegally cutting trees or burning charcoal.

BMC members were elected in a meeting called for by the VH. In the block, 8 communities are presented. The BMC informs the wider community in twice-monthly meetings. The block has generated some revenues which were used to assist a child from a poor family to attend secondary school in compliance with spending rules set out in the management plan. The community currently has 11,000 kwacha that they plan to deposit in a recently obtained bank account. The community perceives the benefit sharing arrangement as unfair; they noted that the LFMB has not visited the block or responded to requests to resolve the community's complaints.

Table 9. Strengths and weaknesses of co-management in Liwonde, identified by community 2

Strengths identified by respondents	Challenges identified by respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approximately half of those present participated in development of the co-management plan ▪ The community had a copy of the management plan available in English ▪ The co-management plan was developed through twice monthly meetings with the DFO office ▪ Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined by the plan ▪ Management activities are ongoing including monitoring, dry wood collection, raising tree nurseries, and planting along riverbanks ▪ DFO office carries out monitoring when they have resources available or can patrol with police or National Park staff ▪ Forest extension services such as construction of fire breaks and fire suppression techniques provided ▪ BMC members elected by the community ▪ BMC calls for meetings twice a month to share information ▪ Management plan includes specific provisions on how community block revenues should be spent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No version of the management plan is available in the local language ▪ Trainings provided targeted a small number of community members who did not report back ▪ Additional equipment (e.g., hoes, wheelbarrows, protective gear) is needed ▪ Community patrols are typically carried out separately from DFO patrols, which presents risks ▪ Local Forest Management Board does not visit the block and has not been active in helping resolve problems ▪ Community only has 1 receipt book for firewood selling, the others are with the forestry personnel ▪ Lack of clear mechanism to resolve disputes with DFO

Village Forest Areas

The size of the VFA is 9.2 hectares and it has 18 beehives. The VH designated the area and it did not take long to get it formally recognized by the DFO. It is not allowed to cut trees in the VFA but it is mentioned that some perpetrators have illegally cut trees and stolen beehives. The community states that the forest in the VFA is in better condition than in the block. As the block is large and further away it is harder to enforce protection there and the police and the army patrol only twice a year in the block. In the case of the VFA, the VNRMC performs control and patrolling. They also constructed a fire break and perform weeding and slashing.

3.5 LIWONDE WORKSHOP

At the workshop, the WRI team grouped the challenges that were identified during the focus group discussions into six main issues for further discussion. After an overview, participants divided into break-out groups and were tasked with defining recommendations for these issues:

1. Process and content of co-management plans
2. Forest management: capacities, roles and responsibilities
3. Management of revenues and benefits
4. Monitoring and enforcement
5. Training and capacity-building
6. Transparency and communication

The recommendations for each issue are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Working group recommendations for the improvement of PFM in blocks and VFAs in and around the Liwonde Forest Reserve

Theme	Recommendations
Process and content of co-management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The plan should indicate the role of the police and judiciary ▪ There should be a mechanism to evaluate the plan and its implementation ▪ Activities beyond forest management should be included e.g. irrigation and fish ponds ▪ Plans should be written in the local language to increase understanding
Forest management capacities, roles, and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All stakeholders should be trained, including BMCs, community members, frontline staff and TAs for example and how to handle receipts, distribute benefits, effectively communicate and patrol ▪ Equipment and tools could be bought from the 60% of revenues communities receive ▪ There is a need to re-demarcate the blocks following GVH areas to avoid jurisdictional conflicts and/or for better management of the blocks ▪ There is a need for community nurseries for enrichment planting in the reserve ▪ There should be a way to enhance ownership of the reserve ▪ BMCs should improve communication with the other community members, especially on collected revenue ▪ Boundaries of blocks need to be clearly demarcated
Management of revenues and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benefits include sales of firewood, thatch grass, bamboo, stones, rocks, soil (for construction of houses), wildlife, fish, medicine, timber, fruits, and honey ▪ Part of the benefits should be used for community bridges, road construction, assisting the elderly, uniforms and school fees for orphans, and soft loans to community members ▪ Part of the benefits should be used for the management of the forest block ▪ The community should receive 70%, and the government share should be reduced to 20% ▪ According to some, the BMC members should receive an allowance. Others think this could create a disincentive
Monitoring, penalties, and law enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Penalties for government staff and communities should be the same ▪ Some participants mentioned that the law breakers should not pay any fines; they should be put in jail. Fines are not punitive enough to deter the would-be offenders or even stop the offenders from doing it again ▪ When charcoal is confiscated, the police should stop keeping some of the bags ▪ Cameras are needed to capture illegal activities for use in court and to document how much has been confiscated ▪ Mobility of DFO and communities needs to be improved for effective patrolling ▪ Chiefs should discipline members from their own community when they do something illegal ▪ It is important that the police, judiciary, BMC and community members know about the penalties in the Supplementary Act to the Forest Act that are not in the original Forest Act

Training and capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training should focus on enhancing ownership of the forest by explaining what each stakeholder is supposed to do ▪ Training is required on: financial management and on how to implement management plans, writing quarterly or annual monitoring reports, forest based enterprise development, patrolling and monitoring, family planning, and energy saving techniques. ▪ Exchange visits should be arranged between communities or BMC members to learn from successful site management ▪ Training should address gender issues ▪ The whole community should be trained, not just a few people ▪ Training of DFO staff should not only focus on those working around the reserves, as staff get transferred and those who replace them are not well informed about co-management
Transparency and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The BMCs should connect with water committees, health committees and agricultural committees ▪ The work of the BMC should be transparent and community members should be informed ▪ Women and youth should be encouraged to participate in activities in the blocks and decision making processes ▪ DFO should regularly visit communities and blocks, so that communities can appreciate the co-management aspect ▪ BMCs have to know how to report illegal activities so that the court cases can be done properly. E.g. how to present compelling evidence of the offence committed that can lead to conviction and penalties

4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the assessment indicate that there is substantial agreement amongst stakeholder groups in both Forest Reserves on the major challenges for implementing participatory forest management in Malawi, even if communities and government officials differ on the root causes and potential solutions to these problems. Although many stakeholders observed that co-management had not yet generated the expected benefits or improved forest health, there was nonetheless broad support for continuing to improve PFM initiatives. Given this support, the PERFORM project has an important opportunity to continue building trust among stakeholder groups in order to strengthen forest management practices of both government and community actors. In the section below, we summarize key issues and conclusions from the assessment and make recommendations for how PERFORM can advance its objectives by supporting improved PFM in Malawi.

4.1 GOVERNANCE ISSUES FOR PFM IN MALAWI

Information base of management plans

One key issue emerging from the assessment was an unclear linkage between the technical content of the co-management plans and the state of the forest resources. Assessment participants generally did not provide significant detail or display a deep understanding of the technical information included in forest co-management plans or where it had originated from. One community in the Liwonde Forest Reserve noted that the harvest levels in the plan did not accurately reflect the degraded state of the forest. Although the Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife has generated a significant amount of information on forest management in Malawi and has trained DoF staff, the assessment results suggest that appropriate technical parameters are not always reflected in the co-management plans. Furthermore, few community respondents provided specific details when asked about plan contents beyond demonstrating general knowledge of roles or permitted activities. Given the detailed technical nature of the plans with respect to resource extraction, there is a critical need to simplify plans in order to improve understanding of all stakeholder groups concerning sustainable extraction levels. A key question raised by the assessment is whether lessons can be derived from development of Forest Management Plans for Village Forest Areas, since the latter are widely regarded as better managed than co-management blocks. This requires further verification. The analysis presented in Annex 1 demonstrates similar deforestation rates inside the reserve and in the buffer zone in the case of Liwonde, and significantly higher deforestation rates in the buffer zone than inside the reserve in the case of Perekezi. However, not sufficient data were available to estimate what part of the deforestation in the buffer zones is taking place in VFAs.

Recommendations:

- Technical forest management parameters in existing plans should be revised to ensure that they provide an up to date and accurate picture of forest conditions
- Technical language in management plans should be simplified in order to improve community uptake of plan contents

- A comparative analysis of co-management plans for Forest Reserves and Forest Management Plans for VFAs should be conducted in order to understand how to improve community understanding of plan content

Community level governance arrangements, participation, and access to information

Both communities and government officials generally stated that they perceived the processes to develop co-management plans and VFA plans to be participatory. In general, responses emphasized whether meetings occurred or the number of community members participating rather than discussing the quality of these processes in terms of ensuring that community participants had adequate information in order to contribute and that their inputs were reflected in decisions made over resource management. Although both blocks in Liwonde had English versions, none of the co-management plans were developed or available in the local languages. The lack of accessible plans presents a potential barrier for at least some community members to participate effectively in plan development as well as be informed about the contents of the plans. For the most part, community women did indicate that their specific needs in terms of collecting non-timber forest products have been addressed through co-management arrangements.

Transparency, role of traditional authorities, and communication within and among communities also emerged as a challenge in some of the assessment blocks. The BMC structure was developed to empower community members, but has had mixed results in the blocks visited in the assessment. While in both blocks visited in Liwonde it was noted that BMCs had meetings and reported back to community members about co-management activities and revenues obtained, this was not reported to be the case in Perekezi. Furthermore, BMC members question the lack of compensation for carrying out block management responsibilities. The question of traditional leadership also differed slightly in the two Forest Reserves. In Perekezi, the exclusion of traditional authorities from BMCs and other co-management structures was noted as a significant challenge. In the south, this issue was less apparent in relation to the BMCs, but respondents highlighted the need to redo the demarcation of blocks to conform to GVH areas in order to prevent conflicts. In Perekezi, which is significantly less densely populated, communities specifically reported that there were minimal conflicts between villages.

Recommendations:

- Develop and pilot best practice guidelines for community consultation tailored to the Malawi context
- Carry out trainings on effective stakeholder engagement with DFO and DoF staff
- Translate management plans into local languages and provide copies to communities in relevant PERFORM field sites
- Support DFOs to revise boundaries of Forest Reserve blocks according to GVH structures as provided for in the Guidelines and Standards for Participatory Forestry in Malawi.
- Support engagement of TAs in co-management in Forest Reserves by strengthening their involvement in the preparation and implementation of co-management plans and a clearer definition of their roles and responsibilities
- Facilitate community level discussions to define options to create incentives or minimize disincentives (e.g., loss of income) for community members to serve as BMC members

Roles and responsibilities for implementation and monitoring

Despite most respondents indicating that plans define clear roles and responsibilities for implementation and monitoring of co-management, this emerged as one of the most problematic areas in practice. Both government and community actors noted that roles are not complied with and that illegal activities therefore continue within the reserves. Each side tended to place blame on the other, in some cases due to lack of capacity but more often in order to support economic gains. While this situation was difficult to

corroborate during the assessment, it identifies a critical need for improved monitoring and documentation of illegal activities in order to support enforcement efforts and improve understanding of what is happening in reserve blocks.

There is also a need to build trust between state and non-state actors with respect to co-management activities. In each Forest Reserve, communities and DFOs were perceived as acting in isolation rather than supporting common objectives of co-management. In addition, in several blocks community members indicated that they felt threatened by illegal actors and therefore were not able to carry out monitoring responsibilities. Numerous participants suggested that joint missions for monitoring could be used to improve compliance with plans as well as address resource constraints and safety concerns. Although not noted in all sites, the lack of an independent third party to support independent monitoring or to address conflicts between actors was raised in one of the Liwonde sites. Participants indicated that the LFMBs were intended to play this role but were not very active. The LFMBs were not referenced in most of the other focus group discussions. These findings suggest that there is a need to revisit the institutional arrangements for co-management with an emphasis on defining clear lines of accountability between relevant institutions and stakeholder groups, as well as ensure that roles are aligned with the power and capacity of actors to implement them.

Recommendations:

- Convene a process to develop a regular forum for dialogue, identification of issues, and follow-up actions
- Support DFO and communities to develop evidence-based approaches to monitoring, reporting of infractions, and enforcement activities
- Build capacity of the DFO and DoF to use tools such as Global Forest Watch to monitor tree cover loss in Forest Reserves
- Evaluate the functioning of the LFMBs and other local conflict resolution entities in order to develop proposals for strengthening conflict resolution for co-management

Financial resources and benefit distribution

During the assessment, the current benefit sharing mechanism generated significant debate. Many community members consider the current distribution as unfair and proposed increasing the community share of revenues, arguing that they implement the majority of activities and should therefore receive additional benefits. In the two sites, the reported community revenues from block management were very low. Although one block in Liwonde reported a positive example of community rules regarding spending of revenues, in several other blocks community respondents reported a lack of transparency from BMC members about revenues. Communities also identified significant confusion and challenges associated with the system of receipt books being used to manage collection and sale of dry wood from the Forest Reserves. The results of the assessment suggest that Forest Reserve co-management has been insufficient to generate intended benefits for communities in order to support poverty alleviation, or to support DFOs to carry out their roles. Additional support for income-generating activities such as beekeeping or development of woodlots is needed in the short-term.

Recommendations:

- Develop alternatives to the receipt system in order to improve efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and increase transparency
- Provide technical assistance to communities to increase income from sustainable management of forest resources, such as agro-forestry, beekeeping, tourism, and preservation and marketing of non-timber forest products

- Conduct a feasibility study for PFM that evaluates resource availability, deforestation pressures, and market scenarios in order to develop realistic estimates of costs and benefits
- Revise current benefit sharing mechanism on the basis of the real incurred costs and generated revenues as well as their contribution to community livelihoods

4.2 ASSESSMENT PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

The short character of the assessment presents a number of limitations. For example, any broad focus group structure can make it challenging for all participants to make their voices heard, or even to speak freely if they hold a minority opinion. Furthermore, WRI assessors did not speak the local language (Tumbuka in Perekezi and Chewa in Liwonde) and had to rely on translation; as a result, some nuance in the responses was likely lost. Finally, in this case the assessment methods focused on perception-based inputs in order to draw conclusions. This type of information is often useful for identifying areas of common interest or disagreement across stakeholder groups, as evidenced by the multistakeholder workshops, but has limitations for drawing generalizable conclusions about PFM broadly. In particular, contradictory statements between stakeholder groups are difficult to verify using this method and should be triangulated with additional sources when possible. Furthermore, we only visited two Forest Reserves and their buffer zones. Given the diversity in landscapes, forests, socio-economic conditions, and cultural characteristics in Malawi, the results cannot simply be extrapolated although we captured some of the diversity by including well-managed and less well-managed blocks.

Considering these challenges, we make the following recommendations to improve future assessments conducted in Malawi by the PERFORM team or other interested stakeholders:

- Where possible, researchers should further sub-divide community focus groups. Potential stakeholder groups could include focus groups with community women, groups of community members who are not affiliated with BMCs (e.g., to evaluate the level of ownership and perception of co-management in the village overall), and groups involving just BMC members.
- Where copies of Forest Reserve Co-Management plans and/or Village Forest Area Management Plans are accessible, researchers should review these documents prior to conducting the governance assessment. Where possible this information should be used to assess the level of knowledge of the focus group participants by triangulating their responses with the plan's content.
- Statements of stakeholders are sometimes contradictory and should be verified and triangulated. This may require direct observations in blocks and VFAs and interviews with additional actors.

Law enforcement and judicial issues were raised by main stakeholders in the Perekezi and Liwonde assessments. In future assessments, we suggest carrying out additional focus groups specifically with forest guards and patrolmen to assess the implementation of monitoring and enforcement in Forest Reserve areas.

ANNEX 1

TREE COVER LOSS IN THE PEREKEZI AND LIWONDE FOREST RESERVES AND BUFFER ZONES

In order to provide insight into the changes in tree cover in the two sites, WRI's Global Forest Watch¹⁷ team calculated gross tree cover loss from 2001 to 2013 within the reserves and in their 5 km buffer zones. Gross tree cover loss shows all areas where trees are lost but does not consider regeneration of tree cover. Tree cover loss is defined as “stand replacement disturbance,” or the complete removal of tree cover canopy at the Landsat pixel scale. The total tree cover for 2000 was calculated as the total of all pixels with more than 30% canopy density.

Tree cover loss may be the result of human activities, including forestry practices such as timber harvesting or deforestation (the conversion of natural forest to other land uses), as well as natural causes such as disease or storm damage. Fire is another widespread cause of tree cover loss, and can be either natural or human-induced. Calculations were produced using the Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA high-resolution forest change data.¹⁸ ArcGIS Software was used to analyze the data.

The total areas calculated for the Forest Reserves on the basis of the available shapefiles (Table 11 and 12) deviate from the total areas listed in the strategic plans (Table 2). In the case of Perekezi, the total area in the strategic plan is 2,438 ha smaller; in the case of Liwonde the total area in the strategic plan is 1,437 ha smaller.

Total tree cover in the Forest Reserves (more than 30% canopy density) in 2000, expressed as percentage of the total area was 61% and 65% for Perekezi and Liwonde, respectively (Table 11 and 12). In the buffer zones, total tree cover in 2000 was 24% and 4.5% of the total area for Perekezi and Liwonde, respectively.

Total gross tree cover loss over the period 2001 to 2013 was 235 ha in the Perekezi Forest Reserve and 300 ha in the Liwonde Forest Reserve (Tables 11 and 12), which represents a loss of the 2000 tree cover area of 2.2% and 1.7%, respectively. However, large differences were found in the tree cover loss in the buffer zones. While in the Perekezi buffer 26% of the 2000 tree cover was lost, in Liwonde this amounted to 8.7%. It should be noted that the total tree cover in 2000 in the buffer zones was much higher in Perekezi than in Liwonde (12,218 ha versus 2,960 ha, respectively).

The spatial detail of tree cover loss can be observed in Figures 3 and 4. Green color shading indicates canopy density in 2000, while red color shading indicates in what year deforestation took place. For Perekezi, most tree cover loss has taken place in the eastern part of the buffer zone, with substantial areas being lost over recent years. Tree cover loss per block from 2011 to 2013 is shown in Figures 5 and 6 for the Perekezi and Liwonde Forest Reserves, respectively.

¹⁷ <http://www.globalforestwatch.org/>

¹⁸ Hansen, M. C., P. V. Potapov, R. Moore, M. Hancher, S. A. Turubanova, A. Tyukavina, D. Thau, S. V. Stehman, S. J. Goetz, T. R. Loveland, A. Kommareddy, A. Egorov, L. Chini, C. O. Justice, and J. R. G. Townshend. 2013. “High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change.” *Science* 342 (15 November): 850–53.

Table 11. Tree cover loss from 2001-2013 within the Perekezi Forest Reserve and its buffer zone

Forest Reserve total area	17,808 ha
Forest Reserve total tree cover in 2000 with > 30% canopy density	10,808 ha
Forest Reserve tree cover loss 2001-2013	235 ha
Forest Reserve tree cover loss 2001-2013 (% of 2000 tree cover)	2.2%
Buffer zone total area (ha)	50,289 ha
Buffer zone total tree cover in 2000 (ha) with > 30% canopy density	12,218 ha
Buffer zone tree cover loss 2001-2013 (ha)	3,235 ha
Buffer zone tree cover loss 2001-2013 (% of 2000 cover)	26%

Table 12. Tree cover loss from 2001-2013 within the Liwonde Forest Reserve and its buffer zone

Forest Reserve total area	27,703 ha
Forest Reserve total tree cover in 2000 with > 30% canopy density	17,947 ha
Forest Reserve tree cover loss 2001-2013	300 ha
Forest Reserve tree cover loss 2001-2013 (% of 2000 tree cover)	1.7%
Buffer zone total area (ha)	65,587 ha
Buffer zone total tree cover in 2000 with > 30% canopy density	2,960 ha
Buffer zone tree cover loss 2001-2013	258 ha
Buffer zone tree cover loss 2001-2013 (% of 2000 cover)	8.7%

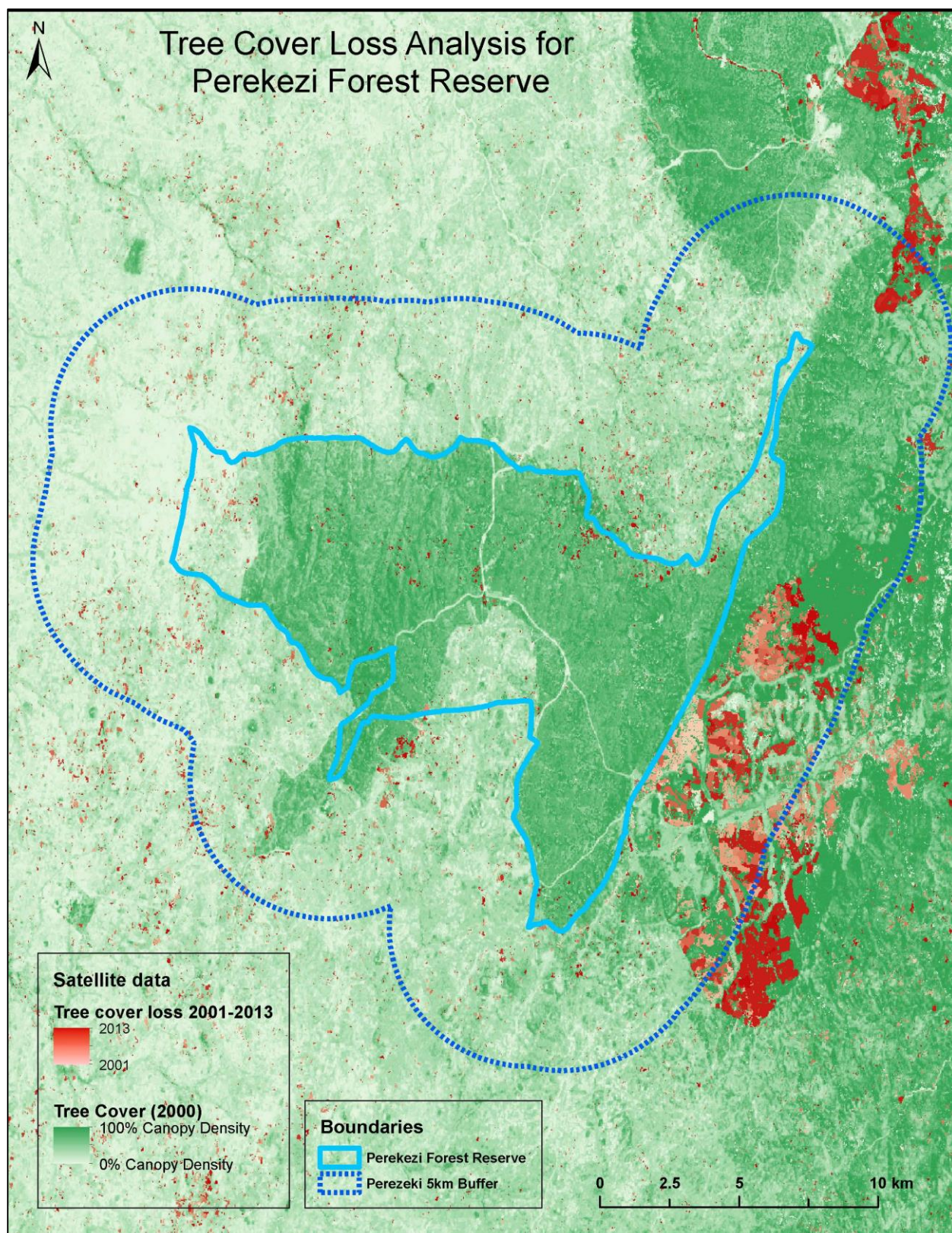


Figure 3. Tree cover in 2000 and tree cover loss from 2001-2013 within the Perekezi Forest Reserve and its buffer zone

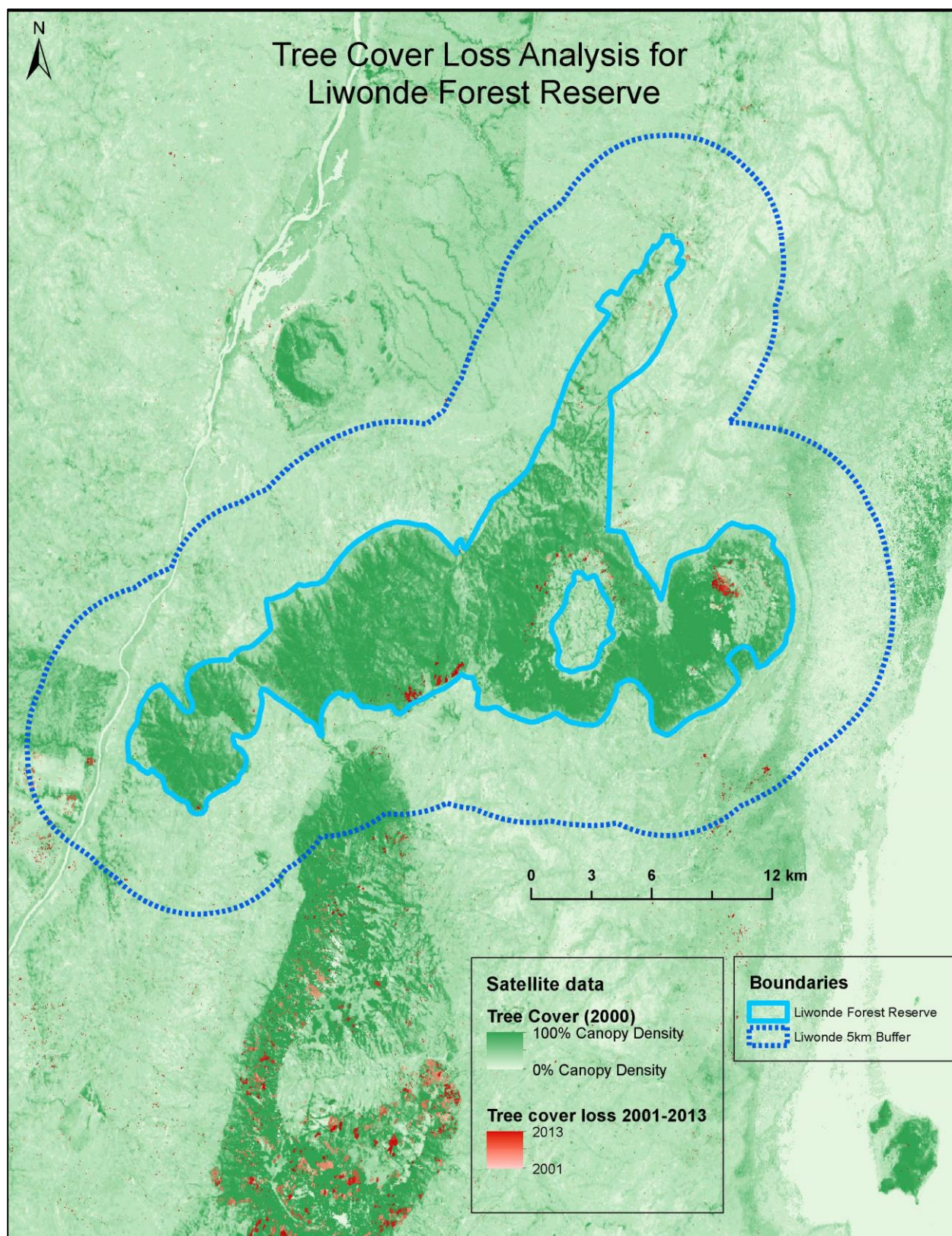


Figure 4. Tree cover in 2000 and tree cover loss from 2001-2013 within the Liwonde Forest Reserve and its buffer zone

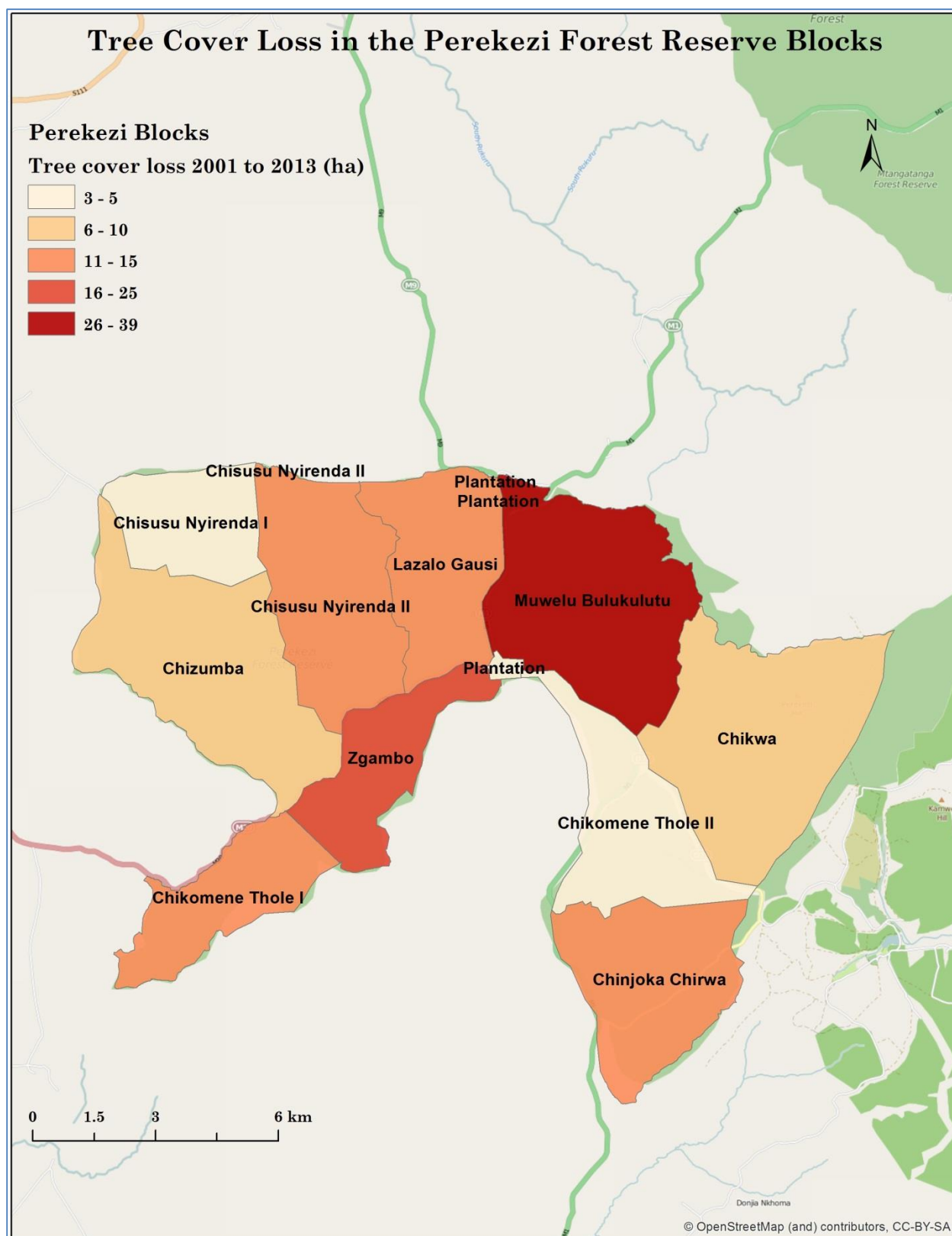


Figure 5. Tree cover loss from 2001-2013 in the Perekezi Forest Reserve blocks

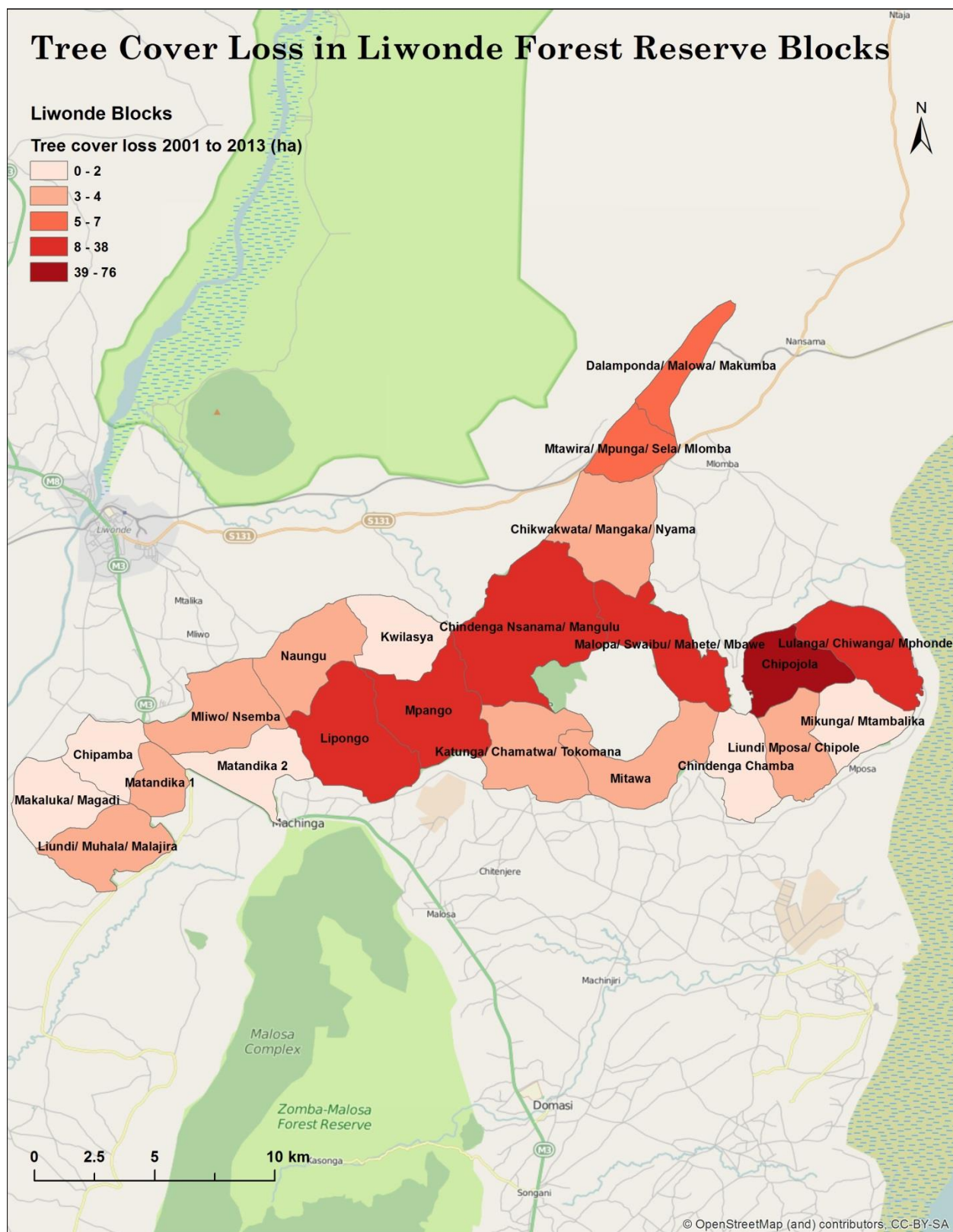


Figure 6. Tree cover loss from 2001-2013 in the Liwonde Forest Reserve blocks

ANNEX 2

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND REFERENCE TO INDICATORS IN THE GFI INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

A) Community Focus Group Discussions on Forest Reserve co-management.

Question	Indicator Reference
Have you ever participated in a process to develop a co-management plan for a Forest Reserve?	Land Use 28, Forest Management 61
If yes, was your input incorporated into the final version of the co-management plan?	Land Use 28, Forest Management 61
How were community women involved in the process of developing and making decisions about the co-management plan?	Forest Management 62
Is a copy of the plan available to the community? Are you familiar with the content? What language is it written in?	Forest Management 62
What information was used to develop the co-management plan? Was it accurate?	Forest Management 50
Does the plan identify clear institutional roles and responsibilities for implementation and oversight?	Forest Management 50
Who are the main implementers of co-management activities for the community?	
What resources do you most frequently collect from the forest reserves?	
To what extent do communities and the District Forest Office effectively coordinate to carry out roles and responsibilities?	Forest Management 52
Does the community have adequate finances, knowledge, and equipment to carry out co-management responsibilities? If not, what are the main challenges or needs?	Forest Management 62
Is there monitoring and enforcement of the implementation of co-management activities?	Forest Management 52
Are there extension services or other technical support options available to assist communities with co-management tasks?	Forest Management 62
How are community representatives to the Block Management Committee chosen?	Cross-Cutting Issues 109
Does the Block Management Committee provide information to the broader community on co-management activities, benefits, or decisions?	Forest Management 61
How frequent are conflicts between communities residing in the same Forest Reserve blocks?	
Are there procedures or institutions that can help resolve conflicts between different communities? If yes, are they effective?	Forest Tenure 13

B) Community Focus Group Discussions on benefit sharing from Forest Reserve co-management

Question	Indicator Reference
Do you perceive the benefit-sharing distribution from co-management as fair?	Forest Revenue 80
Has the community received its 60% share from co-management activities? If not, why not?	Forest Revenue 81
If benefits have accrued, are wider community members aware of the amounts? Have benefits been documented?	Forest Revenue 81
How are decisions made within the community about how benefits from co-management are spent? Are there specific rules?	Forest Revenue 80
Do you agree with the way benefits received from co-management are spent?	Forest Revenue 80

C) Community Focus Group Discussions on management of Village Forest Areas

Question	Indicator Reference
Is the process for establishing Village Forest Areas clear to community members?	Forest Tenure 3
Are the procedures for establishing Village Forest Areas complex?	Forest Tenure 5
How long was the process to establish the Village Forest Area?	Forest Tenure 6
Did you participate in the process to develop the Management Plan for the Village Forest Area?	Land Use 28, Forest Management 61
Are you familiar with the content of the Management Plan for the VFA?	Forest Management 52
Is there a copy of the VFA Management Plan available to community members? Is it in the local language?	Forest Management 50, 58
Which community members are the main implementers of forest management activities in VFAs?	
What resources do you collect or use from the VFAs?	
Is there monitoring and enforcement of the implementation of the VFA Management plan? If yes, is it effective?	Forest Management 52

D) District Forestry Office Focus Group Discussions on Forest Reserve co-management

Question	Indicator Reference
What is the level of coordination between the national, regional, and district level forest administrations?	Land use 27
Do communities participate in the process of developing Co-Management Plans for Forest Reserves?	
What information is used to develop co-management plans for Forest Reserve Blocks? Is it accurate?	Forest management 50
Do co-management plans identify clear institutional roles and responsibilities for implementation and oversight?	

Is there effective coordination between government and communities in co-management of Forest Reserves? If no, what are the main challenges?	Forest management 52
Do communities comply with their roles and obligations as stated in the management plan?	Forest management 52
Does the government comply with its roles and obligations as stated in the management plan?	Forest management 52
Do the groups involved in co-management activities have adequate expertise (e.g., knowledge, technical equipment) to fulfill their responsibilities? If not, what are the major capacity challenges?	Forest management 59
What is the level of financial resources available to the District Forestry Office to implement forest management activities?	Forest management 59
Is there monitoring and enforcement of the co-management plans?	
Are there extension services or other technical support options provided to assist communities with co-management?	

E) District Forestry Office Focus Group Discussions on Forest Law Enforcement and Monitoring

Question	Indicator Reference
What are your specific powers in relation to enforcing forest laws?	Forest Management 65
Does the law clearly define what is legal and illegal in forests?	Forest Management 64
Does the law clearly define penalties for illegal actions?	Forest Management 64
Do you have adequate resources to carry out your responsibilities?	Forest Management 66
Do you have access to the different types of co-management and management plans that exist in your patrol area?	Forest Management 67
How often do you go out on patrol in the forested area? What is the area or distance that you are assigned to cover?	Forest Management 67
Are forest infractions typically handled by the administration or the judiciary?	Forest Management 65
Are forest infractions effectively prosecuted in courts of law?	Forest Management 69
Are fines or penalties awarded sufficient to discourage illegal activity?	Forest Management 70

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