

Project *brief*

Thünen Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics

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Is participation in forest programs in Zambia's Miombo skewed towards poorer households?

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- **Given the limited success of past forest support programs and increased pressure on forests, it is crucial to understand household factors that affect participation in forest support programs.**
- **A recent Thünen Institute study shows that the location of households, size of landholdings, income from different activities, and education can impact participation in forest support programs.**
- **The findings indicate that poorer households with limited income activities are more likely to participate than financially better-off households.**

Background and aims

Dependence on forests for livelihoods remains high, especially in the tropics and subtropics, which results in high pressure on forest resources. Forest support (FS) programs are often designed to promote forest conservation or sustainable use of forest resources. However, given the limited success of previous FS programs in Zambia, a better understanding of the factors influencing participation can help improve the design of future FS programs and contribute to sustainable forest management. Using the data from a survey of 1123 households living in and around the Miombo woodlands in the North-Western, Copperbelt and Eastern Provinces of Zambia, the study aims to identify the determinants of participation in FS programs at the household level.

Key findings

Kazungu et al. (2021) show that the probability to participate in FS programs declines if households have better education, or if forest, crop and non-farm incomes increase. Moreover, location factors, such as increased distances from households' homesteads to forestlands and markets, reduce participation. Finally, the Eastern Province, a region at the late stage of forest transition, had a higher rate of participation (51%) compared to an early-transition region, the North-Western Province (10%), suggesting that higher participation in FS programs is more likely in regions with decreasing forest cover.

Advice for policymakers

According to the study results, households seem to choose to participate in FS programs when the opportunity costs of participation are low and their access to other income activities is limited. This can lead to the outcome that poorer households are overrepresented in FS programs, while the better-off households are participating less. At the same time, past studies showed that financially better-off households extract more natural resources compared to poorer households. Future policy needs to address this imbalance in order for FS programs to achieve their goals.

Clearing of forest for agriculture in the Zambian Miombo



Photo: Moses Kazungu, October 2017

Further Information

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Support

