



Ministry of Green Economy & Environment

Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project

Improving Lives through Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

Community members support the Forestry Department with enforcement of forest laws as Honorary Forest Officers

Context

Forest areas within Eastern Province are increasingly under threat of deforestation and forest degradation, contributing to the increased emissions of greenhouse gases. This is affecting our climate, specifically the rainfall patterns that we depend on as a country for our food security. An assessment of emissions has indicated that more than 13 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent is being released into the atmosphere annually from the Province. Illegal activities including cutting and burning of trees are contributing to this.

The Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project (ZIFLP) is a Government initiative in the Ministry of Green Economy & Environment, supported by the World Bank and partners. Its aim is to improve livelihoods of rural communities in Eastern Province while supporting them to sustainably manage land, forests and wildlife.

The Forestry Department with technical and financial assistance from ZIFLP is supporting the implementation of Community Forestry across the Province. This is being accomplished by engaging communities and their traditional leaders, identifying areas of forest of importance to the community, developing participatory land and resource use plans, forming Community Forest Management Groups (CFMG). With consent of their Chief, these are then recognised by the Director of Forestry to be responsible for protection and management including controlling access and use of their forest.

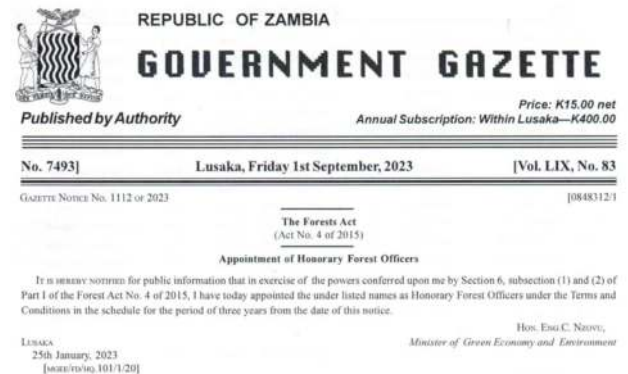


Recognised Community Forest Management Groups are required by the Forests (Community Forest Management) Regulations, SI no 11 of 2018, to assist the Director of Forestry with control of restricted activities within the identified community forest area.

In Zambia, the ownership of all trees and all forest produce is vested in the President on behalf of the Republic, until lawfully transferred or assigned under the Forests Act, 2015. In brief, Forest Laws restrict the felling, cutting, working or removal, sale, offer for sale, bartering or otherwise deal in any major forest produce without a valid licence or permit. This includes the manufacture of charcoal. However, only with presence and dedication can the Laws of Zambia relating to forests and forest produce be enforced adequately.

Legal empowerment

Government through the Forests Act, No.4 of 2015, empowers members of the community to apply and be appointed by the Minister of Green Economy and Environment as Honorary Forest Officers (HFOs) to help curb illegal harvest, destruction, transport and trade in forestry resources. Such persons appointed by the Minister, exercise the functions and may perform the duties of an *Authorized Officer* under the provisions of the Forests Act, 2015.



In early September 2023 a total of 691 HFOs were appointed by the Minister with names published in the Government Gazette. This adds to the 805 previously appointed in 2021 and 2022 countrywide. These are voluntary positions and attract no remuneration from Government. However, in this regard, Government has transferred economic rights to CFMGs, providing for revenue generation as well as the retention of fines for offences that take place within their community forest area. With the obligation to protect manage and control use of their forest area, the expectation is that local arrangements can be made to incentivise the individual HFOs in safeguarding their forest areas. Further conditions are included in the Gazette Notice, the primary one being the requirement for HFOs to report to and coordinate with the District Forest Officers.

Powers of an Honorary Forest Officer

As *authorised officers*, an HFO may request from any person evidence of a licence or permit for an act done or committed by that person in a forest area or in relation to any forest produce for which a licence is required under the Forests Act, 2015. Further, an HFO may seize any forest produce, major forest produce, protected flora, appliance, equipment, device or material in connection with an offence which appears to have been committed. Failure to comply may result in legal proceedings and possible conviction, confiscation of tools, machinery, equipment, vehicles or other property used in the commission of the offence.



Terms & conditions

The Honorary Forestry Officers will support the activities of the Forestry Department in the area of responsibility as stated in the Gazette Notice, usually the District in which they reside. They require to report on activities, provide details of permits issued, offences observed, revenue and fines collected where applicable. In return they should receive timely support where available from the District Forest Officer and District Administration in the course of fulfilling their functions.

The District Forest Officer is responsible to coordinate the HFOs in his/her area, conduct meetings for planning, strategising and reviewing operations in their area of jurisdiction. Further, the Honorary Forestry Officer will receive thorough instructions and awareness raising from the Forestry Department to enable them to perform their agreed functions as provided for in the Forests Act, 2015.

Strengthening capacity for law enforcement

During the first quarter of 2023, ZIFLP supported the Forestry Department in Eastern Province to train over 336 community HFOs through a 5 day Introduction to Forest Law Enforcement Course. Training was delivered by 2 teams of forest officers over 10 courses across the Province. In addition, opportunity was taken for the inclusion of technical officers from the Department to provide a refresher on the current forestry legislation,

bring practical experiences from law enforcement operations, but importantly to help build coordination and teamwork between the HFOs and local officers.



Making a difference

Appointing Honorary Forest Officers is part of the Government strategy to empower local communities and their traditional leaders in order to ensure adequate protection and management of forests.

The Forestry Department with support from the Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project in Eastern Province is also extending the involvement of community members living around the Protected Forest Areas of the Local and National Forests, also to apply and be appointed as Honorary Forest Officers.

Only through the commitment of concerned individuals and communities across the Province can the rates of forest loss and forest degradation be tackled and reversed. The hope is that local enforcement and presence can go some way to make a difference and safeguard the environment for future generations of Zambians.

The **Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project** is a GRZ initiative which provides support to rural communities in the Eastern Province to allow them to better manage the resources of their landscapes so as to reduce deforestation and unsustainable agricultural expansion; enhance benefits they receive from forestry, agriculture, and wildlife; and reduce their vulnerability to climate change.

ZIFLP is a product of cooperation between the Government of Zambia, the World Bank & partners.



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