

Project *brief*

Thünen Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics

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Deforestation in Zambia's Miombo: Does governance play a notable role?

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- **Direct drivers have stronger effects on deforestation than governance and need to be specifically targeted in forest policy.**
- **There is need for improvement of weak governance above thresholds which allow to influence direct drivers.**
- **Tenure security alone does not necessarily reduce deforestation.**

Background and aims

Weak forest governance is posited as a key underlying driver of deforestation and forest degradation, but empirical evidence of this linkage is scarce. Many related studies capture the de jure (legal) conditions and miss out the de facto (implementation practices on the ground), particularly when considering the proximate drivers and other factors of deforestation. However, this is central for identifying the specifics of governance for curbing deforestation and forest degradation.

We analyze the influence of de facto governance quality on deforestation, accounting for the direct drivers and other factors. We also compare deforestation rates across different governance arrangements with differing institutions, tenure and forest access restrictions (Figure 1). We generate empirical evidence from 24 communities spanning three provinces, Copperbelt, North-Western and Eastern, in the Zambian Miombo.

Key findings

The direct drivers, charcoal production, crop agriculture and road extension, have stronger effects on deforestation than governance. Those drivers seem hardly affected by the in general very weak governance processes.

Nonetheless, local government institutions seem to reduce deforestation where they are more effective and with better capacities.

The individualized (private and customary) forests, with higher tenure security, show higher deforestation rates than communal and state arrangements, suggesting that owners are

more oriented towards maximizing agricultural benefits on deforested lands (Figure 1).

Policy implications

Global initiatives to address deforestation e.g. REDD+ need to complement long term governance improvement with measures that are able to specifically target direct drivers faster e.g. sustainable production systems and alternative livelihoods opportunities. Such measures can be supported by measures like education, training and incentives. Focusing on governance and enabling conditions alone might not be effective for sectoral policy goals.

Tenure security alone will not guarantee successful forest conservation. It needs to be complemented by rules and structures like land use plans and controls by effective institutions. Economic incentives could also make conservation more profitable than agriculture.

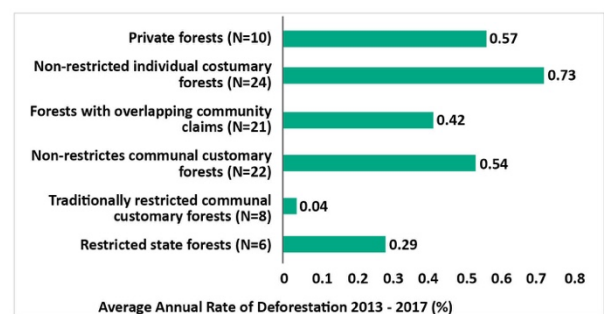


Figure 1: Average annual deforestation rate between 2013 and 2017 across governance arrangements. Illustrated by author.

Further Information

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Support

