

## Social Assessment

**Implementer:** Action for Environmental Sustainability

**Project:** Misuku Hills Improved Livelihood and Biodiversity Conservation

### 1. Indigenous Peoples in the Project Area

The project will work in the Misuku Hills Forest Reserves, including in and around the reserve areas of Mughese, Wilindi, and Matipa. This involves people from the following villages, which together have an official population of 6,867 people:

- 1) Mwandisi 1,2&3
- 2) Mwangulukulu 1,2&3
- 3) Mwenitulo a & b
- 4) Mughona
- 5) Mwakomo1&2
- 6) Msango 1&2
- 7) Kaleghania
- 8) Mwamalange 1,2&3
- 9) Kaboneka 1,2&3
- 10) Mwenechibula
- 11) Mwalupanga
- 12) Mwamwamunyira
- 13) Kabilangwa
- 14) Chilalika
- 15) Walasa
- 16) Mwandima 1&2
- 17) Yapoma 1&2
- 18) Kabotola,
- 19) Mwakayera 1,2
- 20) ,Mponda 1,2
- 21) Mwenechipwela,
- 22) Sam Chipwela
- 23) Kaleghania
- 24) Kasamba 1 &2
- 25) Samson 1&2
- 26) Mwalukwa
- 27) Peter Mwaipopo
- 28) Kapoka 1,2,3
- 29) Lameki Mugheneghe
- 30) Tom 1&2
- 31) Amos 1,2,3
- 32) Samson Mudulasi

- 33) Yafet 1&2
- 34) Amon
- 35) Mwenitete
- 36) Chibighi
- 37) Mwakalukwa
- 38) Mwambatata
- 39) Mughona
- 40) Donald
- 41) Adam
- 42) Kayanda
- 43) Mbowe
- 44) Yolam
- 45) Msimba
- 46) Yenyeni
- 47) Edward

All of the beneficiaries and people implicated in the project are “local” to the area, predominantly being of the Ndali and Sukwa ethno-linguistic groups. All of the land in the forest reserves falls under the Mwenemisuku Traditional Authority, which itself is made up people from the **Ndali and Sukwa** group. The land is “unallocated customary” land; meaning, the Traditional Authority has dominant control over the land, and that the Traditional Authority has not deeded control to any one single user or type of user. Customary land ownership is acknowledged in common law.

Systems of customary governance and law remain strong in the region. The Mwenemisuku chief has close relations and is supported by the formal government authority of the Chitipa District. Individuals within communities often have “secondary rights” to do things on their land, including building a house, farming, and collecting non-timber forest products. The Traditional Authority maintains control over processes like those described in this proposal, like creation of Village Land Forest Agreements and Participatory Forest Management Plans.

The Ndali and Sukwa people in the area have rural livelihoods and rely on small-scale and subsistence agriculture, forestry, and livestock. They have low levels of education and lack access to infrastructure from being in a relatively remote area.

The Ndali people speak **Chindali** and the Sukwa people speak **Chisukwa**. However, the Ndali, Sukwa, and almost everyone else in the region can speak **Chitumbuka** language which is spoken in the Northern Region of Malawi.

## **2. Social Assessment (Expected Positive and Negative Impacts)**

The project is expected to have positive impacts on the indigenous people living in the project sites, and these are embedded in the project design. Expected results include promotion of

improved livelihoods, access to credit for the same and improved awareness of the benefits of conservation.

There are no anticipated negative impacts from the project. The only ones imagined might be due to unrealistic expectations of the participants regarding the level of increased income from livelihood activities, leading to disappointment and disengagement from future conservation and development efforts. When delivering the project, AFES will make every effort to ensure stakeholders have no misconceptions about the project or its scope.

### **3. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent**

The project will build the capacity of local people and groups to participate in informed decisions regarding the use of communal forest areas. Thus, this project is built around an empowerment process that enables FPIC to take place.

AFES is both the implementer of the project and a stakeholder in the region. Its members will participate in processes like other stakeholders, but as the implementer, the group will not control the outcome of community-based decisions or decisions by the tribal authority.

As part of the proposal process and as part of the project design, AFES has engaged community members, traditional leaders, and government representatives. Stakeholders include the Chitipa District Department of Forestry Office, district environmental, development, and agriculture personnel, the local forest management board, the Sustainable Rural Growth and Development Initiative, Mwenemisuku Traditional Authority, leaders in each of the villages, and community members.

AFES has received explicit endorsement from Forestry Office to do this work, and ensured it is welcome to work in the area through numerous and ongoing conversations with the other stakeholders.

### **4. Measures to Avoid Adverse Impacts and Provide Culturally Appropriate Benefits**

AFES will explain the scope of the project to all stakeholders and ensure that community expectations are realistic. Participant expectations will be regularly checked and the project scope reiterated where necessary.

AFES will work within this social context by acknowledging and involving customary leaders. AFES also recognizes the role of local environmental knowledge and custom in understand conservation threats and finding solutions. Furthermore, AFES's named project personnel include Sukwa tribe members who understand the importance of land to people's livelihoods.

AFES's approach to the promotion of the project activities is participatory, makes use of local knowledge, and responds to local needs and concerns. For example, selection of particular beneficiaries and identification of sites will be done in a transparent and equitable manner that ensures equity and conscious design with respect to ethnicity and gender.

All proposed personnel speak Chitumbuka the common language of the area, at a minimum. Proposed personnel also speak **Chindali** and **Chisukwa** so will be able to communicate with community members throughout the work area.

## **5. Monitoring**

Social impact monitoring is built into the project design. Activities include community mobilization meetings, awareness meetings, joint planning meetings, and participatory monitoring meetings. The project will report on and address any unexpected positive or negative changes that occur in the communities as a result of the project.

Selection of community representatives will ensure an equitable balance of men and women. Findings will be compiled into brief annual reports for CEPF per the logical framework. AFES will adapt the project if any negative impacts occur.

## **6. Grievance Mechanism**

Indigenous peoples and other local communities and stakeholders may raise a grievance at any time to AFES or CEPF about any issues relating to the project. During workshops and meetings, the stakeholders will be informed about this possibility and be provided with contact information for AFES, the RIT, and CEPF Secretariat.

AFES will respond to grievances in writing within 15 working days of receipt. Claims will be filed, included in project monitoring, and provided to the RIT and CEPF Secretariat.