

Assessment of Payment for Ecosystem Services in Zomba Mountain Forest Catchment Area, Malawi

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The emergence of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) concept has raised expectations that ecosystem conservation can be achieved through popular payments rather than through unpopular measures of command and control. A study on PES was conducted in Zomba Mountain Forest (ZMF) catchment area in southern Malawi between August and December 2009. The aim was to assess stakeholders' role that would promote payment for ecosystem services as a management tool. A purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents who were randomly sampled for interviews. The findings show that PES can be used as a management tool in ZMF as there are key stakeholders who benefit from the catchment area in terms of services. While there is moderate level of PES awareness among the community and other stakeholders, the current forest policy does not address PES which may derail implementation of a fully-fledged PES arrangement. The study revealed that existing management challenges originate from inadequate funding that ZMF Reserve gets from government. However, this challenge offers opportunities to stakeholders through PES to contribute and participate in conserving ZMF for sustained flow of benefits.