

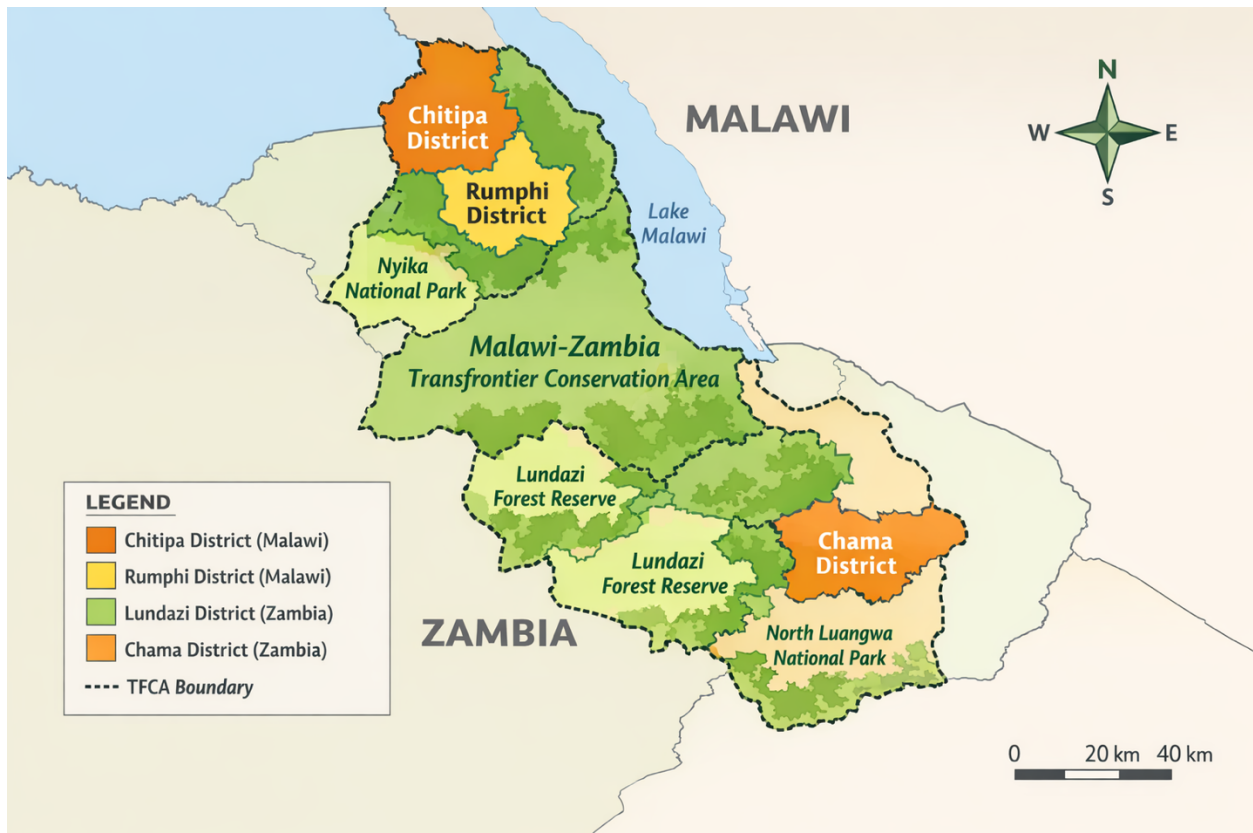
# Rapid Needs Assessment Report Green Livelihoods, Wildlife and Forest Protection in the Malawi–Zambia TFCA

Prepared by Consortium Partners:

- Centre for Environmental Education and Communication (CEEC) – Malawi
- Cross Border Trader Association – Zambia
- Cross Border Trader Association – Malawi
- Keeper Zambia Foundation – Zambia
- Cornerstone International e.V Zambia

**Date:** Dec 2025 - January 2026

## LOCATION AREA



## 1. Executive Summary

These rapid needs assessment identifies urgent livelihood, conservation, and sustainable development needs in communities surrounding the Malawi–Zambia Transfrontier Conservation

Area (TFCA), including Nyika National Park, Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve, and the Nyika North–Luangwa landscape.

Key findings indicate:

- Heavy dependence on subsistence agriculture and biomass fuels, contributing to deforestation and wildlife pressure.
- Limited formal employment for youth, driving unsustainable resource use and vulnerability to illegal activities such as poaching and illegal trade.
- Border dynamics offer both opportunities (cross-border trade) and risks (wildlife trafficking due to weak enforcement in rural areas).

The assessment concludes that integrated interventions focusing on sustainable livelihoods, forest protection, and wildlife conservation can simultaneously enhance community resilience and biodiversity protection. Recommendations target donor-supported actions that create green jobs, promote sustainable resource use, and strengthen cross-border conservation partnerships.

## **2. Background and Context**

### **2.1 Project Area Overview**

**Malawi:** Rumphi and Chitipa Districts

- **Population:** Rumphi ~128,360 (2018); Chitipa ~234,927 (2018).
- Predominantly rural households engaged in smallholder farming (maize, groundnuts, cassava, tobacco).
- Limited formal youth employment; seasonal agricultural labor dominates livelihoods.
- Border crossings exist but are often informal, increasing risks of illegal wildlife trade.
- Forest and wildlife pressures include poaching, fuelwood collection, and smallholder land expansion.

**Zambia:** Lundazi and Chama Districts

- **Population:** Lundazi ~154,908 (2022); Chama ~140,326 (2022).
- Rural communities depend on subsistence agriculture (maize, sorghum, groundnuts, livestock).
- Youth face limited off-farm employment; small trade and informal tourism/conservation jobs exist but are insufficient.

- Poaching, illegal hunting, and deforestation are ongoing threats. Biomass fuels dominate household energy use.

## 2.2 Transboundary Conservation Context

- TFCA areas connect protected landscapes across Malawi and Zambia, offering corridors for wildlife but also posing management challenges due to rural poverty, informal border crossings, and weak enforcement.
- Community livelihoods are tightly linked to natural resource use; without alternatives, pressure on forests and wildlife continues.

## 3. Socioeconomic and Livelihood Assessment

Indicator	Malawi	Zambia
Key livelihood	Agriculture (maize, groundnuts, cassava, tobacco)	Agriculture (maize, sorghum, groundnuts, livestock)
Household type	Rural smallholder farms	Rural smallholder farms
Youth employment	Seasonal farm labor, informal labor	Seasonal farm labor, informal trade
Off-farm opportunities	Limited	Limited
Energy source	Firewood, charcoal	Firewood, charcoal



### **Key Findings:**

1. Agriculture dominates the local economy, but yields are low due to limited access to inputs, markets, and extension services.
2. Youth unemployment is high, creating pressure for alternative income sources.
3. Dependence on wood fuel contributes to deforestation.
4. Informal border crossings facilitate limited trade but increase wildlife trafficking risks.

## **4. Environmental Threats Assessment**

### **4.1 Poaching and Wildlife Threats**

- No comprehensive poaching datasets exist at local TFCA level, but anecdotal and national records show high prevalence of snaring and illegal hunting.
- Enforcement is limited by understaffing and weak legal penalties.

### **4.2 Deforestation and Forest Degradation**

- Expansion of agriculture and fuelwood collection are primary drivers of forest loss.

- Most rural households rely on biomass fuels; electricity penetration is low.



#### 4.3 Cross-Border Risks and Opportunities

- Informal trade routes can facilitate wildlife trafficking.
- Cross-border markets could be leveraged to promote legal green livelihoods and sustainable trade.

#### 5. Analysis of Linkages Between Livelihoods and Conservation

- **Livelihood Dependence → Resource Pressure:** Poverty and low employment opportunities drive overuse of forests and wildlife.
- **Protected Areas → Potential Jobs:** National parks and reserves provide limited employment (ranger positions, eco-tourism facilitation). Scaling community conservation initiatives could expand green jobs.
- **Borders → Risk and Opportunity:** Weak enforcement at rural crossings risks illegal wildlife trade but also presents potential for sustainable cross-border green markets.

#### 6. Stakeholder Perspectives

Stakeholder	Role / Concern
CEEC Malawi	Environmental education, community engagement, advocacy for sustainable practices

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Role / Concern</b>
Cross Border Trader Association – Zambia & Malawi	Promote legal cross-border trade, reduce illegal wildlife commerce
Keeper Zambia Foundation	Environmental and climate justice -led livelihood initiatives, community mobilization, forest management

Stakeholders emphasize:

- Need for alternative livelihoods to reduce poaching and deforestation.
- Community sensitization on sustainable natural resource use.
- Training and youth engagement for green employment opportunities.

## **7. Recommendations**

Based on the rapid needs assessment, the consortium recommends:

### **7.1 Livelihood Diversification**

- Introduce **green livelihood programs**: sustainable agriculture (climate-smart crops), bee-keeping, aquaculture, and eco-tourism services.
- Provide **youth-targeted skills training** in conservation, wildlife monitoring, and cross-border trade management.
- Facilitate **women-led income-generating initiatives** to reduce dependency on unsustainable resource use.

### **7.2 Forest and Wildlife Protection**

- Implement **community-based forest management** and reforestation programs.
- Expand **patrols and community ranger initiatives** in TFCA buffer zones.
- Develop **awareness campaigns** to reduce poaching, illegal hunting, and wildlife trafficking.

### **7.3 Cross-Border Cooperation**

- Establish **joint Malawi–Zambia TFCA taskforces** to strengthen border enforcement against illegal wildlife trade.

- Promote **legal cross-border markets** for sustainable products (handicrafts, crops, eco-tourism).

#### **7.4 Energy Alternatives**

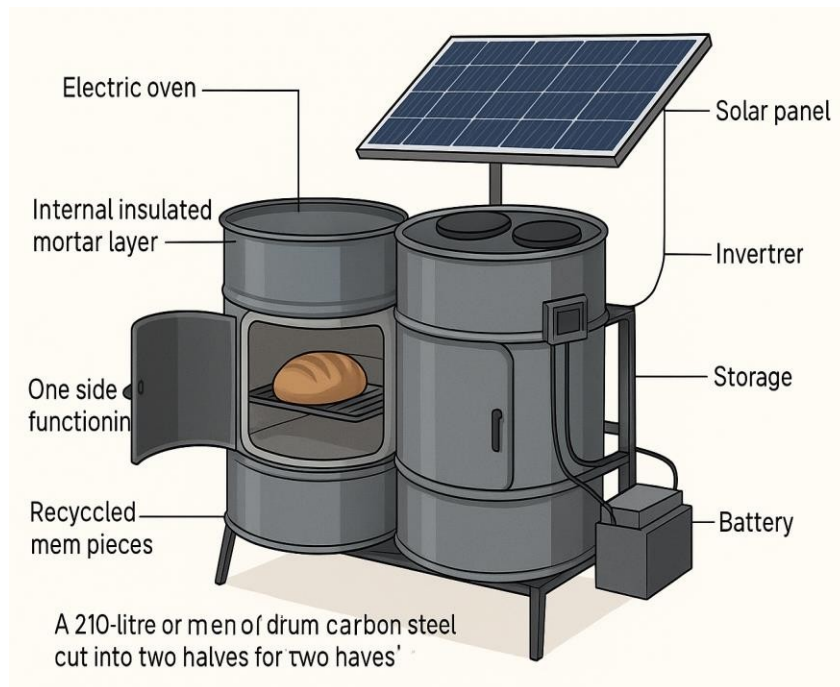
- Promote **clean cooking solutions** (efficient cookstoves, biogas) to reduce biomass dependence.
- Introduce **solar home systems** in selected villages to improve energy access and reduce deforestation pressure.

#### **7.5 . Conclusion and recommendation**

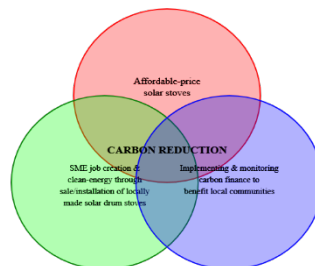
- Solar stoves are currently too expensive for women earning \$1/day or nothing in SADC region a.
- Many current eCooking solar stove on market does are not align with the traditional culinary practices of Malawi ,Zambian, women and other African countries
- PAYG schemes slightly improve feasibility, but most poor women still cannot afford them without significant subsidy.
- Realistic adoption among extremely poor women: 10–20% at best, assuming modest income.
- Carbon emission reduction is limited if only a small fraction of the target group can afford the stoves which suite their budget and cooking methods.
- Support the rural house hold with small business grants such as give them goats, chicken, pigs or vegetable garden to support them in paying loans

The consortium through their technical partner Cornerstone international e.V Germany has design low price 100% off grid solar stove to be made out of waste recycling 210 ltr drum which will be affordable and meet to most poor rural women /house hold who are current depend on firewood see below design.

#### **Annex 1 Sundrum Stove**



## 7.6 SUSTAINABILITY



Promoting affordable-price off grid solar stoves will offers a powerful entry point for advancing clean energy access rural areas of Malawi and Zambia to support underserved communities while simultaneously strengthening local economies. When off grid solar cooking technologies—particularly locally manufactured solar drum stoves—are designed to be cost-effective, durable, and easy to use,

## 7.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Develop **community-based monitoring frameworks** for forest cover, wildlife sightings, and livelihood outcomes.

- Use baseline data for **impact assessment** and adaptive project management.

## **8. Conclusion**

These rapid needs assessment confirms the urgent need for a **comprehensive, cross-border project integrating livelihoods, conservation, and community empowerment** in the Malawi–Zambia TFCA.

Investments in green livelihoods, sustainable natural resource management, and cross-border collaboration will address rural poverty, reduce environmental degradation, and protect biodiversity in one of Southern Africa’s most important conservation landscapes.

### **Funding this initiative provides:**

- Direct benefits to over 300,000 people in four rural districts.
- Scalable community-based conservation models.
- Strengthened regional collaboration for sustainable development and biodiversity protection.

**The consortium strongly recommends donor support** for implementing the Cross-Border Green Livelihoods, Wildlife, and Forest Protection Project.

### **Prepared by:**

#### **Cornerstone International e.V Germany**

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