



Gender roles in the harvesting, utilisation and sustainability of non-timber forest products in the Etinde Forest Area of South-West Cameroon

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Abstract

In most developing countries, forests resources and farming activities are a major source of livelihood for forest dwellers. Forest provides agricultural lands, forest foods, medicinal plants, honey, bush meat, fuel wood, and construction and craft material. This thesis focuses on gender, non-timber forest product (NTFP) and agricultural activities and the income they generate as well as sustainability in the harvesting of NTFPs in the Etinde forest area. One of the main aims and underlying objectives of this research is to show gender issues related to NTFP collection, processing and marketing. This objective is also meant to contribute to the literature on NTFPs in general and to gender roles in Cameroon particularly in the rural areas. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the gender division of labour at the household level, in NTFP and agricultural activities and the ways in which this division influences the importance that people attach to these products for household income and/or consumption.

The study at the same time portrays gender access to and control over forest resources and land where both men and women have access to forest resources but control and ownership over land is considered a man's domain whereas women have but usufruct rights. The household head that in most cases is a man often carries out decision making on the use of income gotten from NTFP and agricultural activities. A woman's ability to take decision over the household income depends on the income that she acquires. Women's decision-making power is noticed at the level of household chores. Most of the products collected by men and women were either gathered or harvested and it was noticed that harvesting was often done in an unsustainable way whereas gathering was done in a relatively sustainable way.

This study ends with recommendations for policy and institutional reforms on the plight of rural women who are the principal collectors of NTFP. This could be done by formulating policies that give rural women the chance to participate actively rather than passively in decisions that concern them. The last part of the study proposes recommendations for forest planners and suggestions for the sustainable management of NTFP to continue to meet the demands of the villagers.