

PDF - INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA - researchcub.info ABSTRACT

Forest, which is a major source of resources in Nigeria, is currently facing accelerated degradation and depletion. The growing demand for ecosystem services from forests has led to over-exploitation of the resources, resulting in the extinction of some valuable species. This has continued to impact negatively on the capacity of the forests to mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, safeguard wildlife, and protect land and watershed.

Approaches to forest management in Nigeria have not involved women in their desired perspective, irrespective of their dominant role in collection of forest produce. The influence of gender relationships on access to forests and forest resource management and sustainability has remained a concern to scholars and practitioners. This concern informed the need for this study. The broad objective of this study was to examine the effects of gender on sustainable management of forest resources in Abia State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to: identify and examine the participation of male and female farmers in the ownership and conservation of forest resources; identify and describe the various forest management practices and to examine the factors influencing the decision of men and women in the adoption of improved forest resource conservation measures. Others include; examine, the level of adoption of forest resource conservation strategies between the male and female farmers; analyze gender distribution of benefits from forest resource exploitation, analyze perceived importance of forest conservation factors among male and female farmers and examine the major constraints militating against forest resource conservation and management.

Relevant data for the study were generated mainly through the administration of structured questionnaire to farmers, randomly selected from 6 LGAs. A total of 240 respondents comprising 120 male and 120 female farmers was drawn from the 410,435 farm families in the state. Information collected includes socio-economic characteristics of the farmers, environmental and institutional factors, gender access to forest resource benefits and forest resource conservation factors. Data generated were analyzed using percentages, frequencies, likert rating scale and Tobit regression model. The major findings were that: use of improved forest management practices was almost non-existent as against the traditional management practices that were common; female farmers in the study area adopted more improved forest conservation measures than their male counterparts. Tobit regression analysis showed that the coefficient of gender, land ownership, and dependence on forest for income were negative and significantly ($p < 0.05$) affected the adoption of improved forest resource conservation practices of the farmers, while credit access and gender discrimination in forest resource exploitation were positive and significant ($p < 0.05$). The analysis also indicated that forest resource management and conservation is driven by household size, land ownership, credit access, gender discrimination and dependence on forest for income and energy.

The study, among others, recommended the pursuit of forestry management plan with emphasis on gender mainstreaming in forest conservation and management; improved extension outreach to forest dependent communities; pursuance of community based training programmes on forest management and conservation, with emphasis on those resources that

are facing the risk of depletion/extinction; and the orientation of village heads on their role as custodians of natural resources in their communities.

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