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THEME: Strengthening Research and Innovations for Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development

Women, Improved Cooking Stoves and Climate Change Adaptation: An Exploratory Study in Laikipia and Machakos Counties, Kenya

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Abstract

It is estimated that over 1.6 million children die annually throughout in the developing countries from the consequences of exposure to biomass fuel smoke. The use of improved cooking stoves has been promoted as a more efficient and clean source of energy in Africa's rural areas. Recently efforts to market improved cooking stoves have leveraged on the potential of the technology to slow down deforestation, mitigate climate change and also enhance adaptation. The objectives of this paper were to: i) explore households awareness of the negative socio-environmental consequences associated with the use firewood, ii) analyze attitudes and perceptions towards improved cooking charcoal stoves, and iii) examine a broad spectrum of hinder adoption of improved cooking stoves by rural households. We used purposive sampling to collect data from 26 women from Machakos County and 28 from Laikipia County. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. Results showed that firewood was still a predominant source of energy for cooking. Participants were aware of the negative socio-environmental impacts associated with the use of firewood for cooking. Participants attributed the prevalence of droughts to deforestation exacerbated by the rising demand for firewood. Majority of the respondents were aware of the negative health and environmental impacts associated with the use firewood. Despite these perceptions, participants still felt the demand for firewood was going to remain on the upward trends in the next 10 years. Barriers to adoption of improved cooking stoves are discussed in detail in the paper. There is urgent need for the Kenyan government to explore ways of leveraging on the opportunities provided by Sustainable development goal number 7 to accelerate access to clean and affordable energy. This will not only improve health of rural communities, but will enhance efforts to mitigate climate change, and enhance adaptation particularly by rural communities who have become vulnerable to the increasing consequences of extreme climate change events.

Key words: Firewood, socio-environmental problems, women, improved cooking stoves, climate change adaptation