ABSTRACTS FOR ST. PAUL'S UNIVESITY RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON 23rd & 24th NOVEMBER 2017

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

Degradation of Indigenous Forests and Households' Vulnerability to the effects of Climate Change

Paul Maina[1], Irene Kituku[2] & Moses Muchene[3]
1,2 & 3, PhD Students, Development Studies
St. Paul's University, P.O. Private Bag, Limuru, 00217, Kenya
Corresponding Email: mainapaul72@gmail.com

Abstract

Kenya's indigenous forests cover is approximately 1.64 Million Ha of the total gazette forest area. According to FAO 2011 report, Kenya has been losing an average of 12,600 ha of indigenous per year which amounts to annual deforestation rate of 0.34% per annum. Between 1990 and 2005, Kenya lost 5.0 % of indigenous forest cover. In central Kenya, the geographical distribution of fairly protected indigenous forests, are found in Aberdare and Mt. Kenya ecosystems. The forest Act 2005 and forest management and conservation bill 2014 has strongly outlined guidelines on the maintenance and conservation of indigenous forests in Kenya. SGD 15 aims to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. The objectives of the study were to i) assess the linkages between conservation of indigenous forests, ii) examine the effects of degradation of indigenous forests on rural well-being, especially households' vulnerability to the effects of droughts. The study the potential benefits of protecting indigenous forest from a holistic ecosystems services perspective which includes provisioning, regulating, supporting and the cultural ecosystem services. There are diverse drivers to the degradation of indigenous forests, many of which exacerabate overexploitation of these resources. To achieve restoration of indigenous forests and to get sustained benefits, issues of policies and empowerment of grass root institutions must be addressed. Future research should address issues on policy, governance and sustainable commercialization of NTFPs obtained from indigenous forests. It should also identify and develop the best indigenous forest benefit sharing mechanisms and models aimed at reducing degradation, end poverty and household vulnerability as enshrined in the sustainable development goals and vision 2030.

Key words: Household vulnerability, indigenous forest, ecosystem services, degradation, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)