Role of Rural Women in Natural Resources Management in South Kordofan State

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ABSTRACT

The issue of gender mainstreaming has become a major concern over the past years in Sudan, where the country is weak in strategies, policies and legal frameworks that support the women's rights. Despite that, woman plays a key role in rural areas that depend on non-wood forest products (NWFPs) through responsibilities in decision making, meetings, extension, motivation and outlook within the milieu of natural resources. The objective of this study was to examine the role of women in rural areas in forest management. Data were collected, using semi-structured interviews of household heads, in twenty-two villages. The sample size was three hundred households, distributed among the administrative units of Rashad Locality, South Kordofan State, according to the principle of population proportional to size. Data were summarized using descriptive statistics and cross tabulation. The results are presented in form of percentages, frequencies, tables and pie charts. They revealed a highly significant influence of women's on forest harvesting and processing. More than 58% of the women were involved in both activities compared with 29% and 12.5% of men in the two activities, respectively. Meanwhile, the majority of them are subsistence poor farmers who suffer scarcity of food supplies and health care. Therefore, they count on NWFPs which provide them with critical subsistence in addition to job opportunity, especially during the dry season when other alternatives are not available. The study recommended more emphasis be laid on the potential role of NWFPs and on the ability of women to participate in public forum and contribute to both rural development and objectives of biodiversity conservation.

Key words: Gender; rural women; NWFPs; South Kordofan State

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