

General condition of Livelihood and its changes in rural area in East Province, Cameroon.

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1. Background and Objectives

In recent years, deforestation in the Africa Congo Basin advances and becomes the problem which requires the urgent measures to be taken. Simultaneously, local inhabitants traditionally make their living largely based on the usage of rich natural resources. Therefore it is important to establish livelihood strategies which would balance people's life and forest preservation. As a response to that a concept called "The sustainable livelihoods approach" (SLA) appeared, which prompts development by improving understanding of general conditions, conventional circumstances and choices of the livelihoods in the rural area. Based on that the following objectives of this paper were set, determining the relevance of the study: to reveal general conditions and changes in local livelihoods, and to demonstrate how choices of livelihoods are made in a rural area located between forest and savanna in the East Region in Cameroon.

2. Study site

The study site is Andom village in the East Region, Cameroon, Central Africa. The altitude is about 680m, the annual average temperature is 22-23 degree, and the annual precipitation is around 1,450mm (Shibata, 2011). There are two dry seasons (from April to June, from September to November) and two rainy seasons (from December to March, from July to August). People have traditionally lived there using forest resources, however a pressure of vegetation manipulation increases due to the penetration of a market economy.

3. General condition livelihoods and its changes

This paper demonstrates that farm crops, particularly cassava, are the most important source of income for the majority of locals. Therefore, many of them wish to expand cassava fields or to begin cultivating cacao fields. Based on that, the above mentioned crops are expected to continue being an important source of income in future. Comparatively, in the past such crops as pineapples, coffee, etc., were widely cultivated. A survey analysis reveals the changes in attitudes and flexibility towards the choice of cultivated cash crops depending on market demands.

4. Relationships between villagers and livelihoods

Other types of livelihoods, such as bushmeat trade, local alcohol production, etc., are also maintained by locals. Two mechanisms are considered to contribute to the maintenance of these livelihoods. One of them is the flow of "resources" such as work force and income. Another one is the relationship between villagers which enables the flow of resources. This paper demonstrates that villagers with no resources are still able to make living through the relationship mechanism.

References: Makoto SHIBATA(2011), "A comparison of soil solution composition from forest and savanna vegetation in eastern Cameroon" Progress Report Forest-Savanna Sustainability Project, Cameroon, pp 188-193