

Women fight against poverty in Cameroon

What a wonderful contribution in achieving MDGs !!!

Introduction

In Cameroon, economic factors have driven more and more people into the NTFP sector. Prices of cocoa and coffee dropped in the nineties, followed by an economic crisis and the devaluation of the local currency, the CFA. As a result of this, rural people were looking for new sources of income. Today NTFPs constitute an important component in the livelihood strategies of many forest dwellers. Under the auspices of the "Forests and livelihoods" program, NTFP research in the humid forest zone of Cameroon shows that women play a strong role in NTFP production and trade. This poster aims to enhance the great contribution of to natural resources management (NRM), their ability to organize the market place, their role in the development of informal financing mechanisms. This poster also aims to reveal the significant contribution of women to SFM despite their low implication in decision making processes.

Methodology

This work is :

- Firstly based on the rich experience gained by CIFOR on NTFP markets studies, completed in in the humid forest zone of Cameroon.
- Secondly based on the diverse literature produced by CIFOR scientists especially in the *Forests and livelihoods* program.
- And finally on the specific actions initiated by CIFOR for poor rural communities in the humid forest zone of Cameroon

Women producing and marketing NTFPs in Cameroon

- Women master well sustainable harvesting methods, processing and conditioning rules.
- Women constitute the majority of traders in the NTFP markets. Ndoye et al. (1997) found that about 89 % of the estimated 1100 NTFP traders in 25 markets in the dense humid forest zone are women.
- Through specific commercialization strategies women can increase their ability to meet consumer preferences.
- Through their contribution to livelihoods, generating incomes, contributing to food security, health and wellbeing, women use NTFPs as important tools in poverty alleviation strategies
- Women play a key role in assembling and distributing forests products. In the market place, while they are engaged in the retail trade of NTFP, men tend to dominate the wholesale market, and particularly the export sector (Awono et al. 1998)
- Women play a key role in managing the market place. According to Manuel et al (2001), the markets, formally ruled through local government regulations, are in fact organized and managed by women, through traditional and group-accepted institutions. Women are also instrumental in organizing the informal financial saving groups called "Njangui" or "tontines" in Cameroon.

NTFP significantly contributes to change and value women status

- NTFPs improve the economic status of women within the household and within the community.
- Based on the fact that perennial products' season covers less than half of the year, NTFPs are playing a decisive role in households as they are available along the year
- The money gained from NTFPs sales enable them to refinance the activity, develop other income generating activities, resolve family problems, or contribute to children education.

Couldn't women do better than now in valuing NTFPs so as to increase their contribution to the MDGs?

- Women still have no significant role in decision making process within households
- Traditionally, women do not inherit land in Cameroon. They do not have the same rights to land as their immediate brothers.
- Access to market information, formal credit and exchange of commercialization experiences remain low.

Conclusion and recommendations

Women are indispensable partners in development strategies. Cameroonian women contribute a lot to the fight against poverty by the production and selling of non-timber forest products such as fruits, nuts, leaves and medicinal plants. To reach MDGs efforts are needed to train more women in forestry and natural resource activities in order to enhance their participation at all levels - from grassroots to international policy.

- CIFOR has to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and across priorities and objectives, to ensure that men and women fully participate in and benefit from forest research outcomes.
- CIFOR has to invest in specific interventions that empower women, reduce their vulnerability, build their leadership, provide them with access to resources, and protect their human rights.
- The national policy should encourage women to be more productive by giving them a chance to reach strategic positions that could influence the NRM as they are more involved in the exploitation of NR

A case action of empowering rural women by CIFOR Livelihoods scientists in Lekie Division

CIFOR believe that women can efficiently contribute to SFM and poverty reduction particularly in rural communities.

In the region of Lekie, CIFOR is working with ADIE, a local NGO to help women groups cultivating and trading NTFP.

More attention is focused on *Gnetum africanum*, which is intensively consumed and traded nationally and internationally.

This joint action lead to help rural women to increase the supply of *Gnetum* spp. while also helping them to better understand how the *Gnetum* market works, what the local prices are and how to sell orders in advance.

Références :

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3. Manuel, Ruiz-Pérez ; Ndoye Ousseynou; Eyebe Antoine and Lema Ngono Danielle (2001). *A gender Analysis of forest product markets in Cameroon.* Africa today, pp 96-147.

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