

Community Perception of Dynamics and Drivers of Land Cover Change around Pendjari Biosphere Reserve in Northern Benin

Authors : Jesugnon E. A. Kpodo, Aurlus D. Ouindeyama, Jan H. Sommer, Fifanou G. Vodouhe, Kolo Yeo

Abstract : Local communities are recognized as key actors for sustainable land use and to some extent actors driving land use land cover (LULC) change around protected areas. Understanding drivers responsible for these changes are very crucial for better policy decisions making. This study analyzed perception of 425 local people in 28 villages towards land cover change around Pendjari Biosphere Reserve using semi-structured questionnaire. 72.9% of local communities perceive land cover as degrading while 24.5% as improving and only 2.6% as stable during the five last years. Women perceived more land cover degradation than men do (84.1 vs. 67.1%). Local communities identified cultivated land expansion, logging, firewood collection, charcoal production, population growth, and poverty as the key drivers of declined LULC in the study area. Education has emerged as a significant factor influencing respondents' perceptions of these drivers of LULC changes. Appropriate management measures and government policies should be implemented around Pendjari Biosphere Reserve to control drivers of LULC change.

Keywords : local perceptions, LULC drivers, LULC dynamics, Pendjari Biosphere Reserve, rural livelihoods, sustainable resource management

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