

Socio-Economic Setting and Implications to Climate Change Impacts in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Authors : Kenneth Nhundu, Leocadia Zhou, Farhad Aghdasi and Voster Muchenje

Abstract : Climate change poses increased risks to rural communities that rely on natural resources, such as forests, cropland and rangeland, waterways, and open spaces. Because of their connection to the land and the potential for climate change to impact natural resources and disrupt ecosystems and seasons, rural livelihoods and well-being are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change. Climate change has the potential to affect the environment in a number of ways that place increased stress on everyone, but disproportionately on the most vulnerable populations, including the young, the old, those with chronic illness, and the poor. The communities in the study area are predominantly rural, resource-based and are generally surrounded by public or private lands that are dominated by natural resources, including forests, rangelands, and agriculture. The livelihoods of these communities are tied to natural resources. Therefore, targeted strategies to cope will be required. This paper assessed the household socio-economic characteristics and their implications to household vulnerability to climate change impacts in the rural Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The results indicate that the rural communities are climate-vulnerable populations as they have a large proportion of people who are less economically or physically capable of adapting to climate change. The study therefore recommends that at each level, the needs, knowledge, and voices of vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples and resource-based communities, deserve consideration and incorporation so that climate change policy (1) ensures that all people are supported and able to act, (2) provides as robust a strategy as possible to address a rapidly changing environment, and (3) enhances equity and justice.

Keywords : climate change, vulnerable, socio-economic, livelihoods

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