

A Gender-Based Assessment of Rural Livelihood Vulnerability: The Case of Ehiamenkyene in the Fanteakwa District of Eastern Ghana

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Abstract : Rural livelihood systems are known to be inherently vulnerable. Attempt to reduce vulnerability is linked to developing resilience to both internal and external shocks, thereby increasing the overall sustainability of livelihood systems. The shocks and stresses could be induced by natural processes such as the climate and/or by social dynamics such as institutional failure. In this wise, livelihood vulnerability is understood as a combined effect of biophysical, economic, and social processes. However, previous empirical studies on livelihood vulnerability in the context of rural areas across the globe have tended to focus more on climate-induced vulnerability assessment with few studies empirically partially considering the multiple dimensions of livelihood vulnerability. This has left a gap in our understanding of the subject. Using the Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI), this study aims to comprehensively assess the livelihood vulnerability level of rural households using Ehiamenkyene, a community in the forest zone of Eastern Ghana as a case study. Though the present study adopts the LVI approach, it differs from the original framework in two respects; (1) it introduces institutional influence into the framework and (2) it appreciates the gender differences in livelihood vulnerability. The study utilized empirical data collected from 110 households' in the community. The overall study results show a high livelihood vulnerability situation in the community with male-headed households likely to be more vulnerable than their female counterparts. Out of the seven subcomponents assessed, only two (socio-demographic profile and livelihood strategies) recorded low vulnerability scores of less than 0.5 with the remaining five (health status, food security, water accessibility, institutional influence and natural disasters and climate variability) recording scores above 0.5, with institutional influence being the component with the highest impact score. The results suggest that to improve the livelihood conditions of the people; there is the need to prioritize issues related to the operations of both internal and external institutions, health status, food security, water and climate variability in the community.

Keywords : assessment, gender, livelihood, rural, vulnerability

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