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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Why Are Market-Based Conservation Mechanisms Gender-Blind? Perspectives from Three Schemes in Kenya

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Abstract

Ecosystem services are vital for human welfare and sustaining and enhancing their provision is central to the survival of humanity. Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) are increasingly being employed in resource-threatened environments. Such approaches compensate or reward resource-managers through financial and other means to promote resource conservation and restoration by adopting compatible land use practices. Evidence shows that such approaches can enable the enhanced and continued provision of ecosystem services and promote positive social outcomes as well as livelihood benefits. However, much of this evidence is not conceptualised from a gendered perspective despite increased knowledge of gendered roles and responsibilities which shape resource use in the rural landscapes where market-based schemes are implemented. This study starts to fill this knowledge gap by exploring the extent to which three schemes in Kenya integrate gendered concerns in design and implementation. We further consider the gendered differences in resource-use and decision-making regarding benefit-sharing. The research used a combination of in-depth intra household interviews coupled with gender disaggregated focus group discussions to gather information on scheme implementation and impacts. Results show that while costs and benefits associated with the reviewed schemes differed across gender, gender inclusion in the design and implementation occurred only under requirements from donors or international standards. The findings also show that the role of national policies creates a pathway for men and women to contest existing benefit-sharing mechanisms; however local institutions to systematically execute this are largely missing or weak. We draw from various gender environment theories to discuss the social factors influencing gender inclusion in the three schemes and propose a framework through which gendered concerns can be better integrated into PES and REDD+.

Keywords: Gender, institutions, Kenya, payments for ecosystem services