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“Solidarity in a competing world —  
fair use of resources”

## Forest Resources and Rural Livelihoods: Evidence from Chobe Enclave, Botswana

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### Abstract

For centuries, developing countries have been immensely dependent on environmental resources, forests included. Forests have been considered essential to livelihoods of communities living adjacent to them. Despite the contribution of forests to livelihoods, the level of community's reliance on forest resources, their uses, and value in household economies has not been adequately explored in Botswana. This paper assessed the extent of household's reliance on non-timber forest products and their contribution towards livelihoods of Chobe enclave communities. Primary data were collected through administration of survey instrument to 183 households, randomly selected from three communities adjacent to Chobe Forest Reserve. Complementary in-depth interviews with selected key informants were conducted. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The results show that on average, households were generally dependent on forest resources for their sustenance, as evidenced by the mean forest dependency index of .50 (SD = .41). The results also indicate that several forest products contributed substantially to rural livelihoods. Among them, firewood (85.8%, n = 157) was predominate while fodder (2.7%, n = 5) was the least. Consequently, forest products provided both subsistence and cash income towards household economies. The annual direct-use value per household per year was USD347.25 (SD = 284), ranging from USD28.75 to USD1 677.24. Based on the foregoing, forest resources are particularly important in rural livelihoods diversification. Since households are reliant on forest resources, conservation programmes which tend to jeopardise the inextricable links between the local people and their environment may culminate into a series of people-park conflicts. That being the case, protection and improvement of local livelihoods and ecological conditions should be the cornerstone for sustainable conservation programmes. Therefore, integrative policy approaches which facilitate both equitable resource use and conservation of forests are necessary.

**Keywords:** Botswana, Chobe Forest Reserve, non-timber forest products, rural livelihoods, safety net