



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

A Mixed-Method Systematic Review to Assess Household Characteristics and Livelihoods in Rural Zimbabwe

GRACE MUDOMBI-RUSINAMHODZI¹, ANDREAS THIEL¹, GEORGE OWUOR²

¹*University of Kassel, International Agricultural Policy and Environmental Governance, Germany*

²*Egerton University, Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management, Kenya*

Abstract

Livelihood activities that are dependent on natural resources form a continuum of people-forest interactions. They often constitute multifaceted livelihood strategies consisting of various intertwined components that strive to balance livelihood activities and forest resources conservation. Livelihood strategies are linked to social relations, habits, norms, customs and beliefs, and code of forest practice. Hence, households' decisions on forest resources use are influenced by a more complex set of factors with implications on rural livelihoods and the level of motivation for conservation of forest resources. Productive bricolage thus offers an approach to examine role of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in rural livelihoods, everyday decisions on natural resource use and forest resource changes in an integrated manner. Productive bricolage gives insight into the drivers of changes in forest resources and the constraints and opportunities that determine people's choices regarding forest resource use. This perspective would improve understanding of how NTFPs production interacts with other livelihood strategies of producers, how important NTFPs production is to their rural households and whether NTFPs production has the potential to incentivize forest resources conservation. This study uses a mixed-method systematic approach to provide a meta-synthesis of the socio-economic demographic characteristics of households, and the role of NTFPs in rural livelihoods through building insights from previous studies on various communities in Zimbabwe in order to understand how use of forest resources can effectively contribute to both livelihood enhancement and forest resources conservation. Findings from a review of 29 primary studies and 10 grey literature publications show that livelihood activities include dryland crop production, gardening, livestock production, formal employment, casual labor remittances, fishing, selling of crafts, selling of NTFPs, shoe repairing/tailoring, brick molding and beer brewing. Crop and livestock production are directly dependent on forest resources and incomes from selling crafts and NTFPs. Land cover is directly affected by agricultural expansion as well as agricultural management options. Households that are *de jure* female-headed, large in household size, have no remittances, have small land holdings and fewer livestock are more dependent on forest resources. The socio-economic contributions of forest resources to rural livelihoods range between direct use values (income, energy, shelter, food, medicine, crafts) to indirect use values (regulating services). Though aggregate contribution of NTFPs to rural households is significant, it varies amongst different social actors and groupings.

Keywords: Conservation, forest resources, livelihood activities, meta-synthesis, productive bricolage