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Applying intersectional perspective to analyse climate change adaptation strategies of rural people in dryland Cameroon

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Abstract

Climate change has negative impacts on agro-sylvo-pastoral activities which represent the main livelihoods of the rural population in Dryland Cameroon. These impacts are experienced differently among distinct social groups (men, women, migrant and non-migrant, Christian, Muslim, etc...) present in the area. By applying an intersectional lens, this paper identifies the adaptation strategies of farmers and pastoralists in the Dryland Cameroon and analyses how the interaction between sociocultural norms/rules and identities shapes these adaptation strategies. The study is drawn on 61 in-depth interviews conducted with farmers and pastoralists in 5 villages in the North Region of Cameroon. The main results show that farmers and pastoralists of the North Region use both coping/short-term strategies (lower production cost, sale of livestock to solve an immediate problem, traditional astrology to get meteorological information, etc...) and long-term strategies (use of improved varieties, agroforestry techniques such as planting cashew nut and neem in the farm, as well as agroecological techniques such as the construction of dikes, stone barriers to prevent flooding and erosion, etc..). While long-term adaptation strategies are more used by men and non-migrants, women and migrants rely more on short-term adaptation strategies. Indeed, the access to the resources (land, credit, information, etc...) they need to put in place sustainable and off-farm measures (such as migration to seek employment), are highly constrained by socio-cultural norms/local rules related to their gender, marital status, religion and residential status that define their roles and responsibilities in their households and their communities. The paper recommends that climate change adaptation interventions, aimed at strengthening the adaptation capacity of the rural population in the North Region of Cameroon, should highlight the intra-gender and intra-residential status differences that shape adaptation options.

Keywords: Adaptive capacity, climate variability and change, dryland, gender, intersectional perspective