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Analysing the charcoal value chain in the changing landscape of Turkana, north west Kenya

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Abstract

The charcoal value chain in Kenya is a vital aspect of rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability. However, it operates illegally within a dynamic landscape. This thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of the charcoal value chain in the evolving landscapes of Turkana, located in the northwestern part of Kenya. The objective of this study is to examine the effects of the charcoal value chain on sustainable rural livelihoods. It aims to identify threats to sustainability by pinpointing sustainability hotspots in terms of social, economic, and environmental dimensions for targeted interventions. This research employs a mixed-method approach that integrates value chain analysis, sustainable rural livelihood assessment, and sustainability hotspot analysis. The aim is to investigate the complex interactions between charcoal production, distribution, marketing, and end-use within the context of evolving socio-economic and environmental aspects. This study examines the preconditions for transforming the charcoal value chain into a more sustainable and just one in Turkana. It considers the roles of charcoal and the different livelihood strategies of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in Loima Sub-County in Turkana. The study uses key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, stakeholder meetings, participatory workshops, photovoice, and field observation techniques. The key finding reveals that the charcoal ban has not enabled households to shift to clean energy. Instead, it has increased the number of households falling back to cheap, unclean sources of energy such as firewood. This has led to more tree-cutting as the prices for charcoal and other sources of fuel have surged up in Turkana. The analysis of sustainability hotspots has identified the wood harvesting and charcoal processing stages as areas of heightened vulnerability and unsustainability within the charcoal value chain. The thesis provides insights into the spatial distribution of challenges and opportunities for interventions to enhance the sustainability of the charcoal value chain in Turkana. By addressing the governance gap, promoting alternative livelihood strategies, and fostering stakeholder collaboration, while balancing economic viability with environmental stewardship and social equity in Turkana.

Keywords: Charcoal value chains, livelihood strategies, Loima sub-county, participatory approach, photovoice, Turkana