Foncha, Jicenta: Pan African Institute for Development-West Africa
jacinta_foncha@yahoo.com

Authors:

Title: Community Forest Management: A Strategy for Rehabilitation, Conservation and Livelihood Sustainability: The Case of Mount Oku, Cameroon.

Well-managed forests are major sources of livelihoods for the fringed communities. However, the remoteness, inaccessibility of most forested areas coupled with conflicts from adjacent forest communities, who often depend on it for livelihood is a daunting task in implementing conservation, viz-a-viz the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Mt Oku forest is a unique, remote but represent novelty in forest management in remote areas in Cameroon, with devolution of management rights. The forest is well noted for its high level of endemism. This study is focused on the legal, institutional, socio-economic and regulatory framework put in place, for appropriate conservation and livelihood sustenance as forest management rights was devolved to the local community. A multidimensional framework guiding the development of testable hypothesis that assesses the relationship between the forest users’ activities and forest degradation, which have a multiplier effect on the SDGs, was used. The alternate livelihood options/ strategies and benefits after the institution of the Forest Management Project (FMP) was examined in randomly selected frontline and secondary villages. Selected Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools and registers from FMIs aided relevant data collection. The results indicated a significant relationship ($r=0.455, P< 0.01$) between the activities of forest users and forest degradation. Adopted alternate livelihood strategies/ options include, direct employment, tourist guides, bee farming, agricultural intensification, agroforestry, capacity building for skill acquisition, selective exploitation and sales of Prunus spp. Forest regeneration strategies ranged from, forest guards, removal of exotic species, forest enrichment, raising nurseries, fire tracing etc. It is concluded that giving greater access and ownership of forest to the local community in the Mount Oku Region, has led to transparency, accountability and social stability, which contributes tremendously to the recovery and conservation of forest for improved livelihoods.