

Peasant Livelihoods and Land Degradation: Evidence from a Participatory Assessment in the Gia-Kajelo Community in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

The relationships between peasant livelihoods and land degradation in the Gia-Kajelo community were examined in a wider context of the man-environment relations in the African savanna. The relationship has to be looked at in a wider dimension involving conceptual frameworks that incorporate contemporary understanding of rural livelihoods, institutional dynamics, resource diversity, environmental variability and macro level influences on local socio-politico-economic landscapes. Investigating these relationship should move from the biased technocratic objective assessment of virgin lands and so-called mapping of human impacts to studies identifying the environment as an arena for synergistic interaction between 'man' and 'nature'. Based on the later approach results showed that all wealth groups experienced land degradation on their fields, reflecting the type of land investments made and mediated by levels of access to resources and opportunities. Being poor reduced the ability of most people to invest in land improvement, but being rich did not automatically lead to good environmental health.