

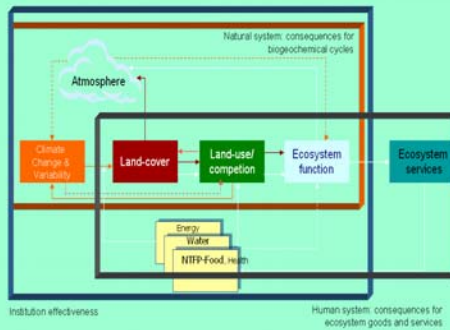
Global Environmental Change on Forest Ecosystems: Implications for West African Indigenous Health Sector

Sector

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Background

- Global environmental change constitutes a profound challenge to human health.
- Global Environmental change and Forest are essentially related.
- Changes in the climatic conditions are likely to affect the structure and function of ecosystems (IPCC, 2001b).
- Changes in global climate are already stressing forest ecosystems ability to supply useful medicinal plants.
- Competing land-use results in conversion of forest land for agriculture and increasing population exacerbate loss of species.
- Ecosystem functions and parameters are determined by the relationship between rainfall and temperature (Chapin et al. 2002).
- Increased temperature and decrease rainfall will affect forest ecosystem supply of medicinal plants.
- Forests plays major role in providing health services to about 80% people in West Africa.
- The traditional application of medicinal plants is of high socio-economic importance.



Objectives

- To highlight the importance of existing and anticipated global environmental changes on medicinal plants from the forest ecosystem.
- To review the possible impact of climate change on the availability of medicinal plant
- To highlight the cost implication on livelihood of West Africa rural poor.



What is of concern?

- Current debate on adaptation does not feature this relevant area to the poor.
- As a result no tools for vulnerability assessment.
- Lack of methodology for vulnerability assessment of the sector.
- Low capacity for adaptation in most sub-Saharan African countries.



Implication for Livelihood

- With global environmental changes, very important indigenous forest species used in the past for healing have disappeared from the forest and will continue to do so if action is not taken to preserve these forest species from adverse effects of global environmental changes.
- The primary health of the people in West Africa particularly in the Sahel, who are already more susceptible to natural hazards and too poor for alternatives is threatened
- Changes are also likely to result in negative impacts due to high cost of medication for the poor.
- The most predisposed groups to the negative impact of current climate related problems and accompanying socio-economic predicaments are the very poor.

Conclusion

- The need to understand the vulnerability of the sector.
- The call for adaptation measures.
- The need to adequately finance adaptation measures.
- High mortality rate in the face of erosion of medicinal species and high poverty rates.