**An Economic Impact Assessment of Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in the Nzoia River Basin, Kenya: Taking stock of ecosystem services and welfare trends.**

Some empirical research has been carried out in the last years to evaluate the impact of community forest management. The findings on outcomes are mixed and still a subject of intense debate in the forest economic literature in developing countries. Two recent studies report that land cover change shows a consistent trend: deforestation is lower under community forestry. Other studies found lower deforestation and greater afforestation in areas under community management than the surrounding landscape. Some case studies made negative conclusions towards community forestry on forest conditions and livelihoods. These studies uncover the persisting challenges of participation of communities in forest management. In Kenya, CFAs is based on government recognition of the critical role of forest adjacent communities in ensuring increase in the forest cover to 10% by 2020. A new forest policy and Act was passed that ensured local users and beneficiaries in forest management. The 2005 Forest Act explains that forest fringe communities form a legal entity referred to as CFAs and enters into an agreement with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to assist in the safeguarding of forest resources through protection and conservation activities. Despite the growing literature in community forestry, there is still lack of empirical local studies that can substantiate and quantify the impact on forest ecosystem services and welfare impact of CFAs on members’ livelihoods in the Nzoia Basin. In this research, we advance the empirical work in a number of important ways. First, review the state of the art literature on CFAs and participatory forest management assessments in Kenya and a typology to understand the dynamics and drivers to join in this instrument. Second, most impact assessments of CFAs focused on forest conditions indicators, we examine both forest ecosystem services and socioeconomic conditions by taking into account baseline data before CFAs implementation for the causal inference of the impact. Third, our impact analysis uses household data of CFAs from the Nzoia basin and thus provides an extension of the previous assessments of CFAs in Kenya. Finally, we try to address several methodological limitations in CFAs assessments by taking into account detailed review of CFAs literature, data before implementation, representative sampling and rigorous discussions with various stakeholders on outcome indicators to be assessed.

**Keywords: CFAs, Economic Impact Analysis, Socioeconomics, Ecosystem Services, Kenya**