

DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING RURAL WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF DEFORESTATION THE CASE OF SEKA DISTRICT SOUTH WEST ETHIOPIA

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Background and Aims: Globally and in developing countries in particular, women experience a major role as farmers, animal tenders, and water and fuel collectors. Studies on the knowledge, attitude and perception of women towards deforestation are scarce in the study area. Therefore, the aim of this study is to assess the demographic and socio-economic factors influencing rural women's perception towards deforestation, in Seka district Southwest Ethiopia.

Methods: Cross sectional population based study was conducted from September to November 2009, to identify the demographic and socio-economic factors influencing rural women's perception of deforestation. A sample of 426 female households selected applying a multi-stage sampling were included. The information collected includes variables on socio-demographic and economic, questionnaire on the knowledge and attitude towards deforestation, was collected through, multiple methods: house to house surveys, secondary data focus group discussions, key informants and observations to gather the required information. Data was analyzed using SPSS/PC version 12.8. Statistical techniques like frequency, percentages, cross-tabulation, bivariate and multivariate analysis were used.

Results: Four hundred twenty six women were interviewed making a response rate of 100%. Out of the total studied subjects 294 (69.0%) showed low perception towards deforestation. Among the demographic factors: age and household size; and the socio-economic factors: literacy status, farmland size and contact with conservation agents have an association with the dependent variable. The results of the multivariate analysis have shown that literacy status and farmland size significantly influence women's perception of deforestation.

Conclusions: From the study it can be concluded that women living in in the study area have good perception about deforestation, which is an important input for development plans, strategies and actions; as well as conservation movements to be carried out. Empowering women, participating them in forest conservation improves the overall ecosystem and lives of people.

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