

Abstract

Moiben is one of the six divisions of Uasin Gishu District in Rift Valley Province, Kenya. Like many other areas of the country, it is faced with many environmental and social problems such as soil erosion, declining land productivity, reduced tree-based products, and rising poverty levels. In spite of the involvement of various development agencies like government ministries, non-governmental and church organizations in promoting tree planting in the area over the years, woody Vegetation cover has been diminishing and environmental degradation increasing. Contrastingly, social forestry has been practiced elsewhere with great success in lowering poverty levels and environmental degradation. In all the cases of success, both inside and outside Kenya, public participation generally and the participation of women specifically is cited as a critical factor. The study investigated the current level of social forestry practices among the local communities in Moiben Division, the level of women participation and examined the effects of socio-economic and socio-cultural factors on adoption of social forestry practices. Research instruments applied included a structured questionnaire administered on a randomly selected sample of 200 households, key informant interviews and direct observations. Descriptive and analytical procedures, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, were utilized to analyze the data. Correlation and regression techniques were used. The results indicated that 47.5 percent of the households were practicing some form of social forestry. Although 65.0 percent of the respondents were women, only 17.0 percent and 10.0 percent of them could decide to plant and harvest trees, respectively. Women participation was constrained by lack of capital, inputs, time, technical know-how and cultural discouragement. Socio-economic factors found to influence adoption were occupation, education level and health status. Sociocultural factors influencing adoption were public awareness, extension services and land tenure. It is recommended that these factors be addressed sufficiently in order to improve adoption of social forestry in the study area. Reasons advanced for not adopting social forestry were: trees interfere with mechanized farming, land is not big enough, trees attract pests, and lack of seeds/seedlings. Income, farm size and traditional beliefs had no significant influence on adoption.