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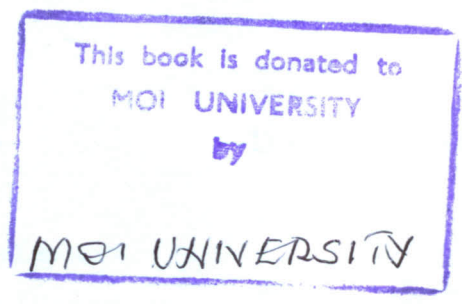
**FACTORS AFFECTING UTILIZATION OF WATER RESOURCES FOR
SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN TSEIKURU DIVISION, MWINGI
DISTRICT, KENYA**



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ABSTRACT

Natural resources are essential to economic development if they are effectively utilized by converting into tangible goods and services within an economy. However, the utilization of resources varies from one resource to another and in different areas. In arid and semi-arid lands, water resources play an important role in sustaining rural livelihoods as well as wildlife and plants. In Mwingi district and particularly in Tseikuru division, rural communities are assumed to be highly dependent on water resources for their rural livelihoods but its utilization is in dilemma. The district is endowed with abundant water resources despite the persistent food crisis in the district over the years. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that affect utilization of the available water resources as a mean of improving of rural livelihoods for the rural communities in Tseikuru division of Mwingi district in Kenya. Specifically, the study was to assess the types of existing water resources available in Tseikuru division of Mwingi district; to examine the contribution of water resources on sustainable rural livelihoods in Tseikuru division of Mwingi district; to investigate the challenges faced in tapping available water resources for sustainable rural livelihoods in Tseikuru division of Mwingi district and to establish appropriate strategies that can be used for effective water resource utilization for sustainable rural livelihoods in Mwingi district. This study was based on Sustainable Livelihood Framework by Scoones in conceptualizing livelihoods and rural poverty. In this study descriptive research design was used. The study used a target population of 3,980 households and a sample of 150 respondents was selected using simple random sampling in the three locations of Tseisuru division of Mwingi district. The data was collected by administering questionnaires to randomly selected community. The primary data was collected by use of questionnaires while secondary data was collected from documented materials and other research work done by other researchers. The data was processed and analysed using tables, frequencies and percentages. The results of this study revealed that there is no relationship between water resources and sustainable rural livelihoods in Tseikuru division of Mwingi district. Arising from the study, it can be concluded that, water resources in Tseikuru division are adequate to support sustainable rural livelihoods and that water resources contribute very little to the improvements of the people's livelihoods in Tseikuru division. This study also concluded that local people face numerous challenges in attempt to exploit available water resources to enhance their livelihoods such as poor government policies, lack of funds, inappropriate technology, human and animal effluents, siltation and lack of ownership, while there are many strategies that can be adopted for utilization of water resources to enhance livelihoods of the local people despite the fact that these strategies have not been integrated into the development planning. This study recommended developing and utilizing appropriate strategies not only for water but also for agricultural production and other alternative productive activities such as fish farming and capacity building of local people on the appropriate strategies that can be used for water utilization is very vital. This study also recommended the creation of incubation centres to enhance skill transfer for rain water harvesting and utilization. Finally the study also recommended integrating water utilization strategies into the development planning and strategies for Mwingi district in order to ensure sustainable rural livelihoods.