

The role of wetlands utilization in poverty alleviation and impact on the environment
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This study aims at understanding the role of wetlands utilization in poverty reduction and identifying environmental impacts of wetland uses. The study was undertaken in Simiyu river wetland, Magu district, Mwanza, Tanzania. It was conducted through field survey and data were collected using questionnaires, informal interviews, observation, meetings and focus group discussions. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in Bubinza, Kipeja and Nyalikungu villages. About 92% of the questionnaires were completed and returned. Remote sensing image processing was done to identify the changes that have taken place in the wetland. The results revealed that Simiyu wetland plays important role in poverty reduction. Activities undertaken on the wetland contribute in income generation and food production. However, there are negative impacts resulting from the existing uses. The major impact is wetland loss where 75% of the wetland has been lost. Poor farming implements, lack of capital and knowledge on wise use are the major causes of unsustainable uses of the wetland and perpetuation of poverty. At the national level the contradictions existing in wetlands management and lack of environmental framework law over a long time contribute to unsustainable uses and thus poverty. The study, recommends that the poor are empowered knowledge wise and financially to manage the wetland and improve their livelihood. The contradictions in wetlands management should be resolved and the newly enacted environmental law used to back up environmental policy to achieve sustainability.