

Drivers of land use / cover changes and its implications on sustainable natural resources management: a case of Kilombero valley flood Plain (KVFP)

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Worldwide the land use and land cover change is associated with the increase of built up and the stock of facilities areas at the cost of natural vegetation i.e. grasslands, savannas and forests. The underlying causes for land use and land cover changes are complex forming a web of socio-economic and ecological factors. The aim of this study was understand the drivers and impacts of the land use and land cover change on the overall integrity of natural resource management in Kilombero Valley Flood Plain. The study assessed the past and current changes on land use practices and land cover over the past 30 yrs.' examined the people's perceptions on land use management practices in and implication of LULCC drivers on the sustainable natural resources management. Both qualitative data (interviews) and quantitative data (geo-coding surveys) have been used in this study. The study observed spatial and temporal changes in LULCC mainly decreased Bush land, Grassland, Water, Wetland and Woodland cover and Agriculture land use expansion and intensification. Further, the study established that, socio-demographic factors such as household size, educational level, and occupation have substantively influenced the occurrence of LULCC in KVFP. Furthermore, the drivers to these changes were expansion and intensification of agriculture, technological innovation, high population growth, and the growing market demands for forest products, together with presence of good road and railway structures. Other factors include Variability of rainfall and temperature increases have also fueled LULCC. Based on these changes, local residents have recognized the negative change of LULCC. They described that wild animals have become rare or almost extinct, and large part of the forest have been replaced by houses, grazing area, and agriculture leading to conflicts between natural resources officers and villagers. Based on the findings there is need for sound management decisions that are publicly acceptable, economically feasible and ecologically sustainable in order to achieve the long term solution in sustainable management of natural resources of KVFP.