



Community Forest Governance and Non-Timber Forest Product Livelihoods

A Comparative Analysis from the Cross River Rainforest, Nigeria

Adebayo Eze^{1,2}, Chinwe Okonkwo³, Mfoniso Ekpo¹

¹ Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

² Department of Research, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

³ Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Correspondence: aeze@gmail.com

Published: 18 November 2023

Received: 04 June

Accepted: 23 September 2023

DOI:

2023

[10.5281/zenodo.18944188](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18944188)

Author notes

Adebayo Eze is affiliated with Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Chinwe Okonkwo is affiliated with Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Mfoniso Ekpo is affiliated with Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

ABSTRACT

Community forest governance is a critical determinant of livelihood outcomes in tropical forest regions, yet the specific mechanisms linking governance structures to non-timber forest product (NTFP) income remain under-examined in the West African context. This study comparatively analyses how differing community forest user group (CFUG) governance characteristics influence the generation and distribution of NTFP-based livelihoods. A mixed-methods comparative case study was conducted across four purposively selected CFUGs. Data collection involved household surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observation of governance meetings. CFUGs with inclusive, transparent decision-making and equitable benefit-sharing rules generated 40% higher average NTFP income per household than those with hierarchical governance. A key theme was that gender-inclusive leadership directly correlated with enhanced market access for women's primary NTFPs. The formal architecture of community forestry is less impactful on livelihood outcomes than the internal social and procedural equity of the user groups themselves. Policy interventions should prioritise supporting participatory governance processes within existing community forestry institutions over establishing new forest management areas. Donor programmes must integrate explicit gender equity and leadership training components. community forestry, forest governance, non-timber forest products, livelihoods, Nigeria, comparative case study This paper provides novel empirical evidence on the internal social equity mechanisms within CFUGs that mediate NTFP livelihood outcomes, moving beyond a focus on formal tenure or management plans.

Keywords: *Community forestry, non-timber forest products, livelihood strategies, comparative analysis, West Africa, forest governance, participatory management*

Article Highlights

- Inclusive, transparent CFUG governance generated 40% higher average NTFP income per household.
- Gender-inclusive leadership directly correlated with enhanced market access for women's primary NTFPs.
- Internal social equity mechanisms mediate outcomes more than formal tenure or management plans.
- Policy should support participatory governance processes within existing institutions.

Policy Imperative

Interventions must prioritise supporting equitable, participatory governance processes within existing community forestry institutions over establishing new forest management areas.

This comparative analysis reveals the critical social mechanisms within forest user groups.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

REQUEST FULL PAPER

 **Email:** info@parj.africa

Request your copy of the full paper today!

SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH

Are you a researcher in Africa? We welcome your submissions!

Join our community of African scholars and share your groundbreaking work.

 **Submit at:** app.parj.africa



Scan to visit app.parj.africa

Open Access Scholarship from PARJ

Empowering African Research | Advancing Global Knowledge