Abstract

Socio-Economic Activities in the Malagarasi Wetland

The socio-economic activities in the Malagarasi wetland have provided an invaluable source of livelihood for decades. However, unguarded, these activities have imposed negative effects on the resources and environment through loss of soil fertility, reduced animal and plant species, pollution and associated health risks, reduced productivity and increased vulnerability to poverty. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is used to analyse alternative livelihood strategies in Nguluka, one of the study sites with primary focus on issues of poverty, stock of natural resource depletion and environment. Factors that influence the level and intensity of human activities are examined with particular attention to the "poverty-environment" nexus.

It is important to enlist broad participation of community members in promoting awareness of "extractive technologies" in agriculture, fishing, logging that are scientifically consistent with sustainable use of natural resources. The interventions that are recommended to improve income-earning capabilities should build in conservation strategies. Existing regulations should be enforced to control members of society who pursue self-gain through extractive methods which wantonly deplete resources and damage environment. Alternative sources of livelihoods should be promoted through awareness-raising, training and increasing access of community members to productive resources such as working capital, credit, training and access to improved techniques of production and better tools. These will release pressure on the wetland's resources and environment and, together with better management of the catchments, promote sustainable use of natural resources.