

UAPS CONFERENCE

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

WOMEN, WORK ,WOODFUELS: ENERGY UTILSATION PATTERNS IN AN
AFRICAN CITY.

Woodfuel utilisation especially for households have been well researched and it is now well accepted that determinants of demand include the relative price of the fuel, the disposable income of the household, The availability of the fuel and related appliance(s) in the market, Particular requirements related to each end-use, and Cultural preferences.(Dzioubinski & Chipman 1999) This lopsided knowledge production has ignored woodfuel use for commercial activities neither is it clear how it contributes to urban women's livelihood portfolios.

Traditionally, the Energy Ladder hypothesis has been used to explain how people choose to use fuels over a period as incomes improve. It details the movement of energy consumption from traditional sources to modern fuels along an imaginary ladder with woodfuel users moving from consuming less costly and less convenient fuels (wood, other biomass) to energy of intermediate price and quality (charcoal, kerosene) to more expensive, highly convenient types of energy (LPG, electricity). (ESMAP 2002, Dzioubinski & Chipman 1999) Current criticisms levied against this hypothesis relates to the fact that households do not make a full switch to modern energy sources.(Masera 1997) Other emerging paradigms such as the FUEL STACKING suggest that a combination of fuels are consumed as from a menu, rather than completely switching from one form or fuel to another. (Masera 1997, 2000, Brouwer 2004, Joon et al 2009, Mekonnen et al 2009).In tandem with the questions set

out for this study, these hypotheses do not adequately explore the linkages between the poor and woodfuels.

Therefore the Sustainable livelihoods analysis (SLA) comes in as a useful framework for a proper understanding of the concerns of this study. While current conceptualizations of livelihoods define it as comprising of *the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living*. (Soussan et al 2001), SLA takes into account the complex and multidimensional relationships between the social and physical environments, especially highlighting the vulnerability context in which decisions about woodfuel livelihood strategies take place. Many studies have pointed out the issue of access to these woodfuel resources as well as questions on gender dynamics are becoming progressively more important in research. (Ribot 1995, Benschel 2006, Bailis 2005). It has been shown that connections between the access to / control over resources and its implication for environmental change are indeed site specific, contextualized and sensitive to regional variability (Bassett 1988, Leach and Mearns 1988)

In localizing the SLA to woodfuel dependent livelihoods it will be instructive to note that Ibadan, the most populous indigenous sub-Saharan African city though urban is an obvious choice for this study. The upwardly skyrocketing prices of woodfuels are pointers to a thriving wood fuel trade (informal sector) amidst signs of formal sector economic stresses and high enterprise decline in the Nigerian economy. Further analysis will make obvious the precarious nature and vulnerability of woodfuel dependent livelihoods given the way government energy and forestry policies have impacted upon them. The results of this work highlight the existing woodfuel dynamics within the context of rapid ongoing urbanization and will reduce the gap in knowledge about urban woodfuel issues in Ibadan which can aid the formulation of frameworks necessary for relevant urban policy decisions.

Due to the trans-disciplinary nature of this study, an eclectic outline was employed in the sourcing of research data. This is to eliminate possible shortcomings of mono-disciplinary methods and elicit enough data for the study. An analysis of primary data generated by focus group discussions, interviews and sample weighing in addition to secondary data (Archival materials and secondary source materials (published and un-published). Findings border on the linkages between governmental policies, the prevailing local institutions of restraint that govern access to resources and the sustainability of these women's livelihoods.