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**Contribution of Woodlands for Rural Livelihoods: A Study in Agro-ecological Zones IM2b (Belihuloya) and DL1a (Kaltota)**

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**Abstract**

Woodlands support rural livelihoods by providing means of income generation for the rural inhabited close to these woodlands. The objective of the study was to identify the contribution of woodlands for rural livelihoods and thereby to generate an initiative to conserve woodlands by the village community themselves. Data were gathered using an initial transaction walk, a series of focus group discussions with elder farmers of the area, and digital storytelling technique. Story telling activity allowed participants to express their views on the subject freely while the session was recorded by the researcher. A structured questionnaire was used to verify the qualitative data gathered. 10 individuals from each Agro-ecological zone was selected for data collection. Natural woodlands and forest plantations contributed significantly in managing the household economy (by selling timber for construction work, firewood for tea factories, selling underutilized fruits/wild bee honey, *Apis dorsata* honey, sand mining, eco-tourism), established family food and nutrition security (natural fruits/vegetables/green leaves/yams etc. and sources of wild collected meat), and provides a source of medicinal herbs used in indigenous medicine, promotes psychological wellbeing (providing playground for kids/youngsters to play, bonding among women while collecting firewood), supports crop cultivation (source of timber for making agricultural tools and equipment, i.e hoe, mamoty, sickle, etc.) and supports in carrying out other household chores (firewood for cooking, making tooth brushes and tooth picks, making kitchen utensils; wooden spoons, motor and pestle, landscaping with wild ornamental plants). Wood species identified from each woodland for timber purposes were recorded and classified under the categories of super luxury class, luxury class, special upper class, special class, class 1, class 2, class 3 and class 3 lower grade. The challenge of maintaining food and nutrition security during the pandemic was made easy by the woodlands. A single woodland renders multiple functions owing to the high crop richness and diversity.

**Keywords:** Crop diversity, Rural livelihoods, Timber, Woodlands