

**An investigation into the challenges and the management of  
firewood scarcity on rural livelihood in Limpopo Province, Vhembe District:  
A case study of Nweli Village**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in the rural communities of Nweli village in Limpopo Province, with the aim of identifying types of energy resources used and the patterns of utilization of such energy sources. Surveys were conducted in village and semi-structured questionnaires were used to interview 50 randomly selected households in villages. Data obtained in all surveyed villages showed that fuel wood is the main source of energy for cooking and heating while paraffin and candles are mainly used for lighting.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis. Qualitative techniques were mostly used in that they provide the researcher with an understanding of experiences and problems faced by communities who receive scarcity of firewood on their livelihoods. Random and purposive samplings were used for the selection of sample for the study. Both primary and secondary data were used for analysis in this study. Secondary data were obtained from government publication, research publication, and report. Primary data were obtained through personal observation, questionnaires survey.

Wood in these villages is very scarce and communities spend 5 to 6 hours per trip collecting fuel wood. Women using the load head method of carrying wood and occasionally wheelbarrows are the main source of labour used in collecting fuel wood. The paper concludes that there is a need to promote sustainable energy resources and technologies such as the use of improved wood and charcoal stoves. Furthermore, the paper recommends the promotion of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, which have a potential of being adopted in the area. It is also argued that policies which enhance integrated rural development and promote sustainable energy utilization in rural communities need to be put in place and implemented.

The findings of the study show fuelwood use is prevalent, perhaps due to the limited ability to pay for electricity therefore firewood scarcity is the major predicament in Nweli village.