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Environmental Change in South Central Chibuto Southern Mozambique 1965-2000

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ABSTRACT

Southern Mozambique has experienced changes in land-use and land-cover over the last 45 years. South Central Chibuto is a dynamic environmental change 'hotspot' of this region, and because of the socio-economic development that is taking place it is unveiling a number of land-use changes in Mozambique. In this research, environmental changes in the region are shown to be a function of various socio-economic and biophysical drivers of change. A variety of research methods including interpretation of aerial photographs and satellite images, analysis of archival material, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and structured interviews, have been used to derive some of the drivers of environmental change. These drivers of change include socio-economic factors, the colonial dual economy and the increase in cash crop production that led to negative impacts on some lands in the steep slopes of the ancient dunes, the post-independence policy of nucleation of settlements that has induced extensive conversions of land use together with the war and the recent shifts into a market economy that have led to further intensification of land use. The biophysical drivers include, among others but not limited to, fluctuations in rainfall, with periods of alternating dry and wet spells shaping land-use change, as well as single shock events, such as extreme droughts and floods. New factors, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic and globalization have been identified as having an impact on the livelihoods in the study area. A valuable, local-scale case or place-based case study approach is shown to enable a detailed and rich analysis of the complex trajectory of environmental change. Finally, lessons drawn from this study are shown to have the potential to inform policies for sustainable livelihoods in Mozambique.