

The Slawson Award

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Susannah Sallu

Susannah is an interdisciplinary researcher of environmental dynamics with particular expertise in biodiversity, rural societies, livelihoods, indigenous knowledge and natural resource management in desert, savanna and tropical forest environments. She has 10 years experience working in Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Indonesia and Europe.

Education

- BSc (Hons) Tropical Environmental Science, Aberdeen University (1998)
- MSc Environmental Technology (Ecological Management), Imperial College London (1999)



Current position

Final year DPhil research student at Oxford University Centre for the Environment

Slawson Award

Susannah received the Slawson Award in 2004 which funded the first phase of her DPhil fieldwork in Botswana ***Biodiversity dynamics, knowledges and livelihoods in Kalahari dryland biomes of Botswana***. This interdisciplinary research project aims to tackle some of the major challenges to the implementation of the UNCBD in arid lands identified by McNeely (*J. Arid Environ.* 54: 61-70, 2003), those of climatic variability, and the social, economic, and political arenas within which people operate.

Research is comprised of four components: 1) a scientific assessment of biodiversity dynamics surrounding two remote settlements in Botswana; 2) an investigation of how this dynamics has and does implicate rural livelihoods; 3) an investigation of local knowledge, understandings and perceptions of dynamics; and 4) the resultant politics associated with differential understandings of biodiversity dynamics in the Kalahari.

Field research was undertaken in collaboration with the Regional GEF 'Management of Indigenous Vegetation for the Rehabilitation of Degraded Rangelands in the Arid Zone of Africa Project' (IVP) managed by UNDP and the Governments of Botswana, Kenya and Mali.

In addition to The Slawson Award, Susannah also received funding from ESRC, Royal Society, Sheffield University and Hertford College (Oxford University). Supervised by Prof David Thomas, Prof Sarah Whatmore and Dr Chasca Twyman, she is due to complete in April 2007. The research funded by the Slawson Award was presented at the Royal Geographical Society in 2005 and more recently at the International Conference on Ecosystems dynamics and Implications for Rural Livelihoods in Africa, October 2006, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

Since the Slawson Award

As a consequence of the experience gained in the Kalahari with the support of the Slawson Award, Susannah has gone on to be involved in the following research projects:

- Vegetation dynamics and implications for rangeland management in Turkana District, northern Kenya (IVP Kenya).
- Ecological, hydrological and sociological implications of damming the River Turkwel in Turkana District, northern Kenya (Egerton University and IVP Kenya).