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Ecological Assessment of the Wood Vegetation of Rashad District, Nuba Mountains, Sudan

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study is to analyze the phytosociological characteristics and the diversity patterns of woody plants in Rashad district. The study was conducted in selected 6 vegetation sites. Important Value Index (IVI) and density were used to estimate the phytosociological characteristics, the Shannon index to measure the plant diversity and the Pielou index for species equitability. During the study period, a total of 64 species, representing 39 genera from 17 families, were recorded. The phytosociological characteristics revealed that *Dichrostachys cinerea*, *Balanites aegyptiaca* and *Vachellia seyal* var. *seyal* dominated woody species in sites of clay plains with IVI values 180.1, 128 and 116.4 respectively. While *Terminalia leiocarpa*, *Boswellia papyrifera* and *Adenium obesum* dominated woody species in hilly sites of rocky soil with IVI values (45.76), (45.38) and (43.97) respectively. The distribution pattern revealed that 54% species showed aggregated distribution, while 46% were randomly distributed. The highest density was 766 stem/ha recorded in site 6. Species richness varied through different sites; the highest number of species was 44, recorded in community 4. The highest values of Shannon diversity index and equitability index were in community 4. The highest similarity was recorded between site 3 and site 4 (50.9%) and the lowest (17.9%) between site 1 and site 2. Biodiversity indices relatively increased with increment of elevation.

Keywords: Beverages vegetation, Diversity, Equitability, Species, Plants, Taxonomy

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INTRODUCTION

The natural vegetation is one of the renewable natural resources, which includes natural forests and natural pasture, both plays important role for rural communities. It provides fuel, famine food, medicines, building materials, gums and fodders; in addition to its environmental importance.

The Nuba Mountains is located in South Kordofan State, which bordered the Republic of South Sudan. It is a mountainous region, with topographic features dominated by isolated mountains that are dissected by seasonal *KHORS*. In addition to lowland plains, the region consists of some high plateaus, the greatest one is Rashad massif. Eastern Nuba Mountains Region selected for the present study exhibits wide topographical variations; which are reflected in vegetation diversity. There are no available detailed

studies on the floristic composition and vegetation status of the proposed area. The vegetation of this region like other parts of the Sudan is expected to be affected by the seventies and eighties drought periods, in-addition to the expanded agricultural practices and grazing.

Andrews (1948) classified the study area into two vegetation divisions as follow: *Acacia* tall grass forest where *Acacia* species are dominant in addition to *Terminalia* spp., *Combretum* spp., *Guiera senegalensis*, and *Tamarindus indica*. Smith, (1949) classified the area as *Acacia* tall grass country similar to that of (Andrews, 1948) with slight modification. Harrison and Jackson, (1958), classified the area as low rainfall woodland savannah on clay where *Acacia mellifera* thorn-land on hill soil formed *in situ* associated with *Commiphora africana* and *Boscia senegalensis* and as special areas of low rainfall wood land savanna under Hill catena's. These hills have a characteristic vegetation of their own generally much moister in character than surrounding plain and showing erosion catena development. Between the groups forming the Nuba Mountains are extensive plains of dark cracking clays carrying *Vachellia seyal* - *Balanites aegyptiaca* savanna.

This study is aimed at assessing the vegetation composition and forecasting the future behavior of plant composition and regeneration power through studying natural regeneration in the study area.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Description of the study area

The study area is located in the northern part of eastern Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan State and including two localities (Rashad and Alabassia), extending from latitude 11° 33` to 12° 33` N and from longitude 31° 08` to 31° 18` E (Fig. 1). Most of the area under study is covered by scattered isolated hills and it is dissected by many seasonal watercourses (*KHORS*). Study area occupies a total area of 7872 km² (UNDP, 2003). The study area belongs to low rainfall woodland savanna (Harrison and Jackson, 1958).

Vegetation sampling

Six vegetation communities were selected, based on observed variations in vegetation types, topographical feature and soil types to represent most of the study area (Table 1). For vegetation assessment within the natural stands 70 circular 0.1

ha (17.84m in radius) sample plots modified from Adam and Eltayeb (2008). 14 transect were made to cover the whole study area. Along each transect 5 circular 0.1 plot were conducted for studying trees and shrubs. The first plot was established randomly, the number of trees and shrubs species and the number of individual of each species per/plot were counted.

Data analysis

Phytosociological analysis

Species encountered in each quadrat were counted. From count data, density (D), abundance (A), frequency (F %), relative density (RD %), relative abundance (RA %), relative frequency (RF %) and importance value index (IVI) were calculated for each species in each site using the following formulas as used by Dangoli and Shivakoti (2001) and Chaudhry et al. (2006).

$$\text{Density (D)} = \frac{\text{number of plant of a certain species}}{\text{Total area sampled}}$$

$$\text{Relative density (RD \%)} = \frac{\text{Density of species}}{\text{Total density of all species}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Abundance (A)} = \frac{\text{Total number of individual}}{\text{No. of quadrat where species occur}}$$

$$\text{Relative abundance (RA\%)} = \frac{\text{Abundance of species}}{\text{Total abundance of all species}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Frequency (F\%)} = \frac{\text{No. of quadrat where species occur}}{\text{Total numbers of quadrat}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Relative frequency (RF\%)} = \frac{\text{frequency of species}}{\text{Total frequency of all species}}$$

$$\text{Importance value index (IVI)} = \text{RD\%} + \text{RA\%} + \text{RF\%}$$

Diversity indices

Species richness was determined as the total number of species present in the studied site. The Shannon diversity index applied to estimate woody plant species diversity along the study area (Shannon, 1949). This index was calculated by the equation $H_s = -\sum p_i \ln p_i$. Where, p_i is the proportion of individuals found in the i th species and 'ln' denotes the natural logarithm. Pielou index used for estimation of species evenness (E) after (Pielou, 1966). This index was calculated by the equation $E = H/\ln S$. Where: H' is the Shannon-Wiener diversity measure, S is Number of species. Species distribution pattern test and Comparisons of woody plant species composition between different plots were estimated using single linkage cluster analysis based on Jaccard similarity, Biodiversity Pro version 2 (Mc Alece, 1998).

Table 1: Selected Vegetation Communities

community	Area	Latitude	Longitude	Elevation	Topography
1	Um fakareen area	12° 33` N	31° 18` E	500 m	Cracking clay plain
2	AlAbassia area	12° 10` N- 11° 57` N	31° 15` E- 31° 12` E	826.5 m	Hill (Rocky soil)
3	Rashad area	11° 52` N-11° 49` N	31° 08` E- 31° 03` E	871.5 m	Hill (Rocky soil)
4	South Rashad area	11° 45` N-11° 43` N	31° 02` E- 31° 03` E	722.5 m	Hill (Rocky soil)
5	Tandek area	11° 42` N	31° 02` E	695 m	Cracking clay plain
6	Dibekkir area	11° 33` N	31° 08` E	618 m	Cracking clay plain

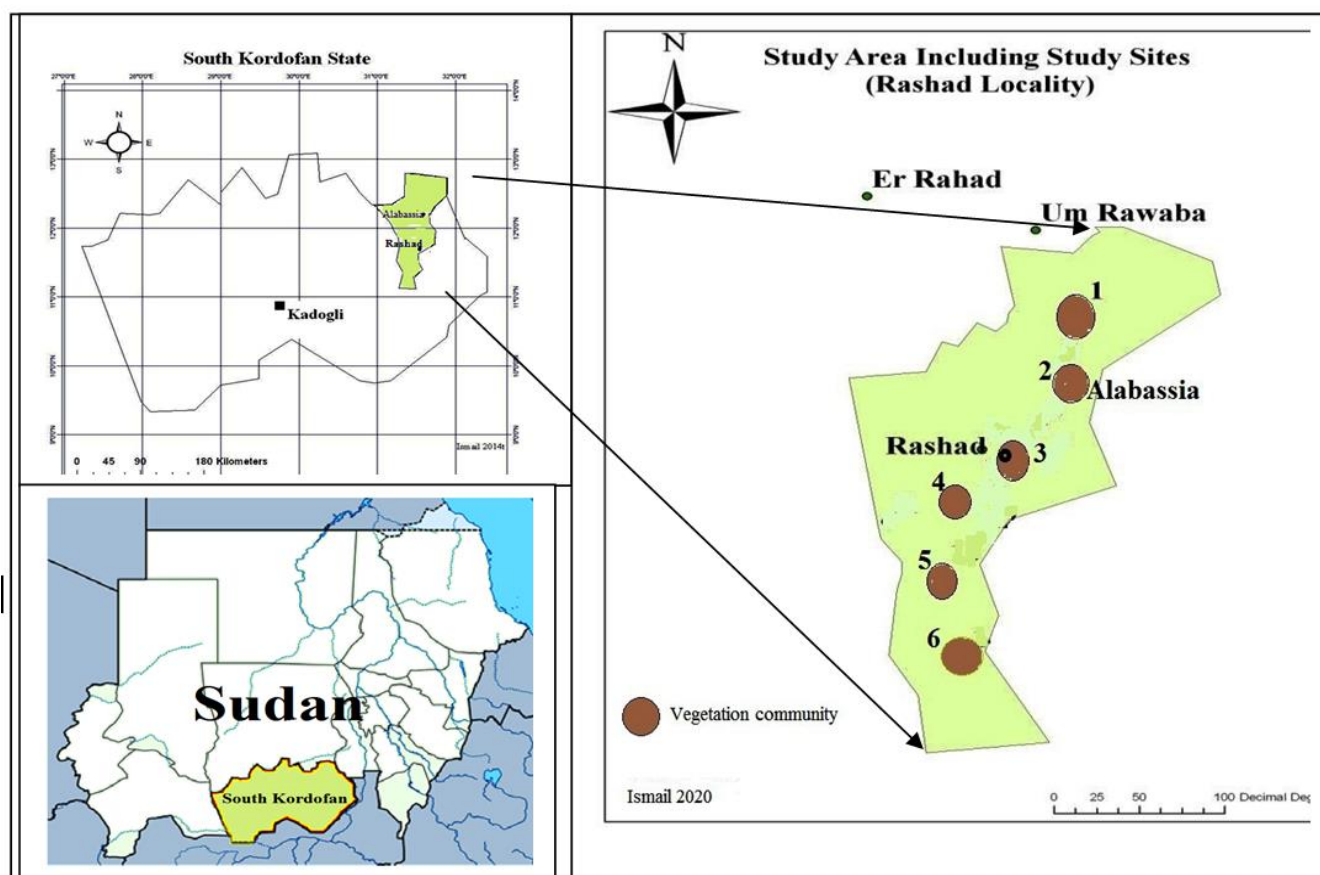


Figure 1: Map of the Study Area

RESULTS

Taxonomy

A total of 64 species, representing 39 genera from 17 families, were recorded from the studied sample plots. Fabaceae was the dominant family with 15 species, followed by Combretaceae (8), Malvaceae (6), Moraceae and Rubiaceae (5 species each), Anacardiaceae and Capparaceae (4 species each), while the other 9 families were represented by less than 3 species (Table 2).

Dominance

The topography and soil types play an important role in dominance and distribution of species. The dominance of species was assigned based on the calculated IVI values. *Dichrostachys cinerea* which dominated community 6 that located in clay plain, was recorded a highest value of IVI (180.1) in the study area. *Balanites aegyptiaca* dominated

community 5 in clay soil with IVI value (128) where the *Acacia seyal* var. *seyal* dominated community 1 which described as clay plain with IVI value with (116.4). While community (4) in rocky soil was dominated by more than on species which are *Terminalia leiocarpa*, *Boswellia papyrifera* and *Adenium obesum* with IVI values (45.76), (45.38) and (43.97) respectively. *Combretum glutinosum* dominated community (3) with IVI value (31.32) and community (2) was dominated with *Commiphora africana* and *Balanites aegyptiaca* with IVI (36.76) and (27.52) respectively. The above mention results relatively agreed to distribution map of Harrison and Jackson (1958).

Density

The highest density of woody plants was recorded in community 6 (766 plant/ha.), followed by community 3 (262 plants /m²), while community 5 showed the lowest density (48 plant /ha.) (Fig. 2). *Dichrostachys cinerea* in community 6 showed the highest relative density (85.12%) of woody plants in whole the study area, followed by *Balanites aegyptiaca* in community 5 and *Vachellia seyal* var. *seyal* in community 1 with relative density (58.33%) and (54.4%) respectively, *Vachellia oerfota* with relative density (29.8%) and *Ziziphus spina-christi* (20.83%) in community all above mentioned communities located in clay plains. But in communities of hilly sites, *Boswellia papyrifera* in community 4 showed highest relative density (25.20%) followed by *Terminalia leiocarpa* (23.09%) in the same community, and *Commiphora africana* (17.86%) in community 2. While the rest species their relative density ranging between 0.38% -11.02 percent (Table 2).

Species Distribution Patterns

Distribution of plant species was assessed and result revealed that 29 species (47%) were randomly distributed and 33 species (53%) were aggregated (Table 2). It is Obviously from the above results that most (53%) of the species were aggregately distributed this may due to that their regeneration close to seed sources, vegetative regeneration or the occurrence in safe site" (Augsburger, 1984), or on traces of animal movement or in catchment are especially the case of *Dichrostachys cinerea*. While (47%) of the species encountered during the sampling were randomly distributed and this indicates that the environment in which these plant species grow is homogeneous and has many factors

acting on the population (Ewusie, 1980), these factors includes seed dispersal and anthropogenic factors.

Species richness and diversity indices

The composition among the different communities in terms of species richness showed that the highest species diversity was observed in community 4 (44 species) in hilly sites,, while the least values of richness (6 species) was observed in communities 1 and 5, both located in clay plains.

The highest Shannon diversity index was 3.05 in community 4, followed by 2.88 in community 2 and 2.74 in community 3, whereas the least Shannon diversity index was 0.69 in community 6. The highest species equitability index (J) was recorded in community 2 was (0.806), whereas the least evenness index was 0.302 in community 6 (Fig. 3).

DISCUSSION

Overall population species diversity index, evenness, richness and density of all species through different communities increased with an increment of elevation and also affected by soil type. The quantitative inventory of plant species diversity showed considerable diversification in vegetation component throughout different communities.

The lowest elevations of clay plains (communities 1, 5 and 6) are characterized by the fast growing species, specially *Vachellia seyal*, *Senegalia senegal* and *Senegalia mellifera* in community one, and *Balanites aegyptiaca*, *Vachellia nilotica* and *Vachellia seyal* in community two, while community three is characterized by the dominance of *Dichrostachys cinerea* and *Vachellia seyal*. These communities agreed with zone of *Vachellia seyal* – *Balanites* in cracking clay plains of low rainfall woodland savanna which stated by Harrison and Jackson, (1958). While the other three Communities (2, 3 &4) are characterized by the species of hill catena's which fall under the special areas of the low rainfall woodland savanna zone, such as *Sterculia setigera*, *Sclerocarya birrea*, *Strychnos innocua* in addition to other savanna tree species, (Harrison and Jackson, 1958).

Fabaceae, Combretaceae, Malvaceae, Moraceae and Rubiaceae are well represented in all six communities. On the other hand the number of species included by Fabaceae, Combretaceae,

Malvaceae increased in hilly communities (2, 3 and 4), with the increment of elevation and the dominance of gravelly soil.

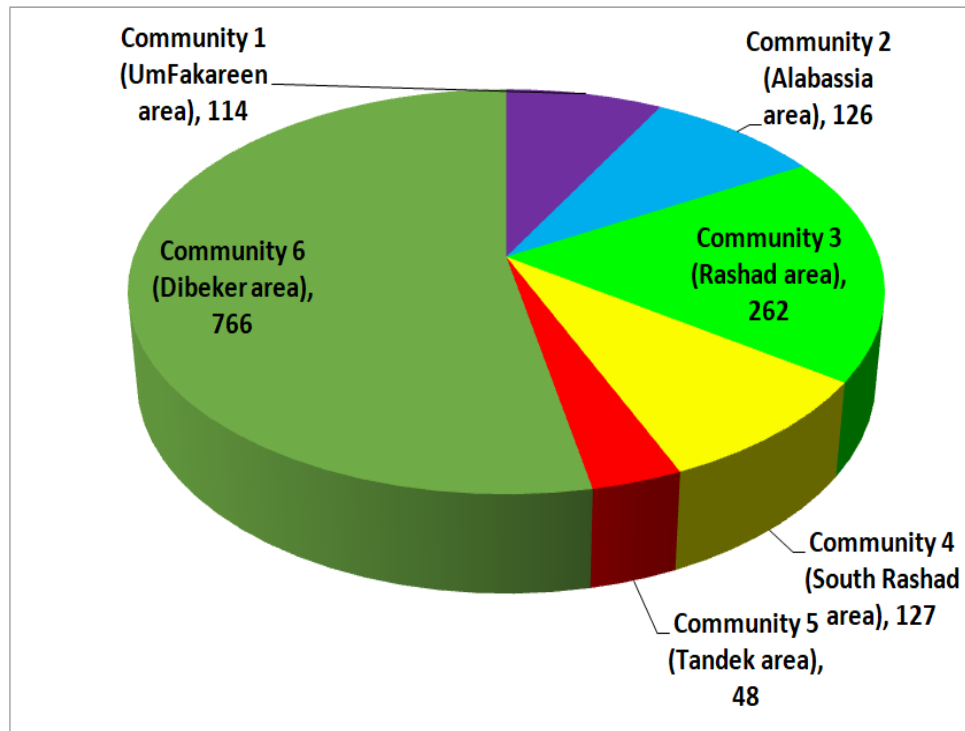


Figure 2: Showed stem density (plant/ha.)

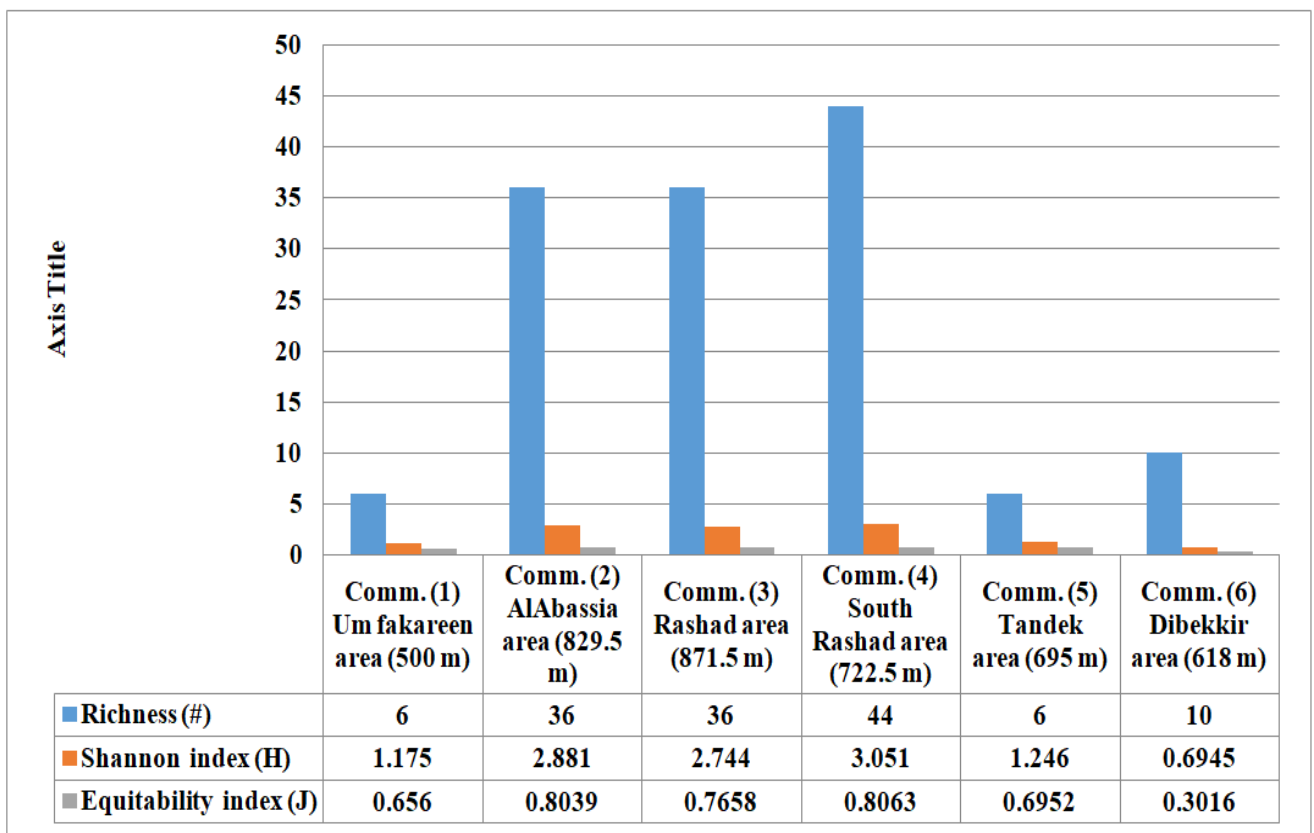


Figure 3: Showed Richness and Diversity indices

CONCLUSION

The quantitative inventory of plant species diversity showed that a considerable variation in vegetation components throughout different communities. The communities of lowest elevation and clay plains (1, 5, 6) is characterized by the fast grown species of *Acacia seyal* –*Balanites* in dark cracking clay plain sub-zone of low rainfall woodland savanna, such as *Vachellia seyal*, *Senegalia mellifera*, *Senegalia senegal*, *Balanites aegyptiaca* and *Dichrostachys cinnarea*. While the communities of higher elevations (2, 3 & 4) characterized by the species of high rainfall woodland savanna zone, such as *Sterculia setigera*, *Sclerocarya birrea*, *Strychnos innocuain* addition to other savannah tree species.

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Table 2: Analysis of Phytosociological Parameters and Distribution Pattern Along Six Vegetation Communities

Family	Species	Vernacular name	Canopy layer												Distribution Pattern
			Comm. 1		Comm. 2		Comm. 3		Comm. 4		Comm. 5		Comm. 6		
			Rd	IVI	Rd	IVI	Rd	IVI	Rd	IVI	Rd	IVI	Rd	IVI	
Zygophyllaceae	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i> (L.) Delile	Hijlij	2.26	25.4	13.095	27.52	1.91	7.94			58.33	128.7	3.66	20.62	Aggregated
Fabaceae Subfamily Caesalpinoideae	<i>Bauhinia rufescens</i> Lam.	Kulkul					1.72	6.79			4.17	22.69			Aggregated
	<i>Bauhinia reticulata</i> DC.	Kharoub			0.4	2.91	0.76	3.25							Aggregated
	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	Aradeib			0.40	2.90	0.76	3.25	1.05	5.25					Random
Subfamily Mimosoideae	<i>Vachellia gerrardii</i> (Benth.) P.J.H.Hurter	Salgam					0.19	1.43	1.31	5.68			2.6	7.61	Random
	<i>Senegalia mellifera</i> (Vahl) Seigler & Ebinger.	Kitir	7.02	31.8	12.3	25.77	0.76	2.77					2.6	7.61	Aggregated
	<i>Vachellia nilotica</i> subsp. <i>adstringens</i> (Schumach.) Kyal & Boatwr.	Sunt									8.33	34.7			Random
	<i>Vachellia oerfota</i> (Forssk.) Kyal & Boatwr.	Laot	29.8	95.11	1.98	7.39							2.35	15.3	Aggregated
	<i>Senegalia polyacantha</i> (Willd.) Seigler & Ebinger.	Kakamut			0.40	2.90									Random
	<i>Senegalia senegal</i> (L.) Britton.	Hashab			1.98	7.39	1.15	4.92	2.62	9.19			1.57	15.4	Random
	<i>Vachellia seyal</i> (Del.) P.J.H.Hurter	Talih	54.4	116.4			0.38	2.39	0.53	3.38			3.66	23.1	Aggregated
	<i>Acacia sieberiana</i> (DC.) Kyal & Boatwr.	Kuk					6.11	14.52	1.05	5.25					Aggregated
	<i>Albizia amara</i>	Arad			0.79	4.22	0.38	2.10	2.10	6.76	4.17	22.69			Random

	subsp.sericocephala (Benth.) Brenan.														
	<i>Albizia anthelmintica</i> (A. Rich.) Brongn	Um-Takirna		1.98	7.39	0.38	2.39	1.05	5.41						Aggregated
	<i>Dichrostachys cinerea</i> (L.)White & Arn.	Kadad		0.79	4.89	0.76	3.69	0.53	3.38			85.12	180.1		Aggregated
	<i>Anonychium africanum</i> (Guill. & Perr.) C.E.Hughes & G.P.Lewis	Abu-Suruj				0.38	2.10								Random
Subfamily papilionoideae	<i>Dalbergia melanoxyton</i> Guill. & Perr.	Babanos		3.18	10.31	1.53	6.11	4.72	13.29						Aggregated
	<i>Erythrina abyssinica</i> DC.	Hab Elaroos		0.79	4.22	0.19	1.43	0.53	3.38						Random
	<i>Mundulea sericea</i> (Willd.) A. Chev.	Abu-Galinga				0.19	18.46								Aggregated
Rhamnaceae	<i>Ziziphus abyssinica</i> Hochst. ex A. Rich.	Nabag Elfeel				0.38	1.62	1.57	7.13						Aggregated
	<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i> (L.) Wild..	Sidir		2.38	9.48	1.91	7.94	1.57	6.53	20.83	68.98	2.35	20.34		Random
Moraceae	<i>Ficus abutilifolia</i> Miq.	Gumaiz				0.19	1.43								Random
	<i>Ficus glumosa</i> Del.	Gumaiz (Umbalil)		0.79	4.22	0.38	2.39								Random
	<i>Ficus platyphylla</i> Del.	Gumaiz				0.19	1.43								Random
	<i>Ficus populifolia</i> Vahl.	Gumaiz		0.4	2.91	0.57	2.77								Random
	<i>Ficus thonningii</i> Blume.	Gumaiz (Hadana)						0.53	3.38						Random
Euphorbiaceae Subfamily Euphobioideae	<i>Euphorbia candelabrum</i> Welw. ex Hiern	Zagoom				1.15	4.92								Aggregated
Passifloraceae Subfamily Passifloroideae	<i>Adenia venenata</i> Forssk.			0.40	2.90										Random

Combretaceae	<i>Terminalia leiocarpa</i> (DC.) Baill.	Sahab			5.16	14.11	3.05	8.40	23.09	45.76					Aggregated
	<i>Combretum aculeatum</i> Vent.	Siheit			9.13	19.86	4.58	16.85							Aggregated
	<i>Combretum collinum</i> subsp. <i>binderianum</i> (Kotschy) Okafa.	Habeel					0.38	2.10							Aggregated
	<i>Combretum glutinosum</i> Perr. ex DC.	Habeel			1.59	6.45	17.37	31.32	2.10	9.51					Aggregated
	<i>Combretum hartmannianum</i> Schwein f. Beitr.	Habeel							0.53	3.38			0.52	9.37	Random
	<i>Guiera senegalensis</i> J. F. Gmel.	Ghibeish					3.82	9.30							Random
	<i>Terminalia brownii</i> Fresen	Subagh			1.98	7.64	1.91	6.16							Aggregated
	<i>Terminalia laxiflora</i> Engl.	Daroat					0.19	1.43							Random
Burseraceae	<i>Boswellia papyrifera</i> Hochst.	Taragtrag - Luban			0.40	2.90			25.20	45.38					Aggregated
	<i>Commiphora africana</i> (A. Rich) Engl.	Gaffal			17.86	36.76	2.29	6.50	1.05	5.25					Aggregated
Anacardiaceae	<i>Lannea fruticosa</i> Engl.	layon			1.59	6.45			1.05	5.25					Aggregated
	<i>Lannea humilis</i> Engl.	layon										2.6	7.61	Random	
	<i>Lannea schimperi</i> Engl.	Layon (Mileis)					1.15	5.54	0.53	3.38					Aggregated
	<i>Sclerocarya birrea</i> Hochst.	Himeid			0.79	4.22	0.57	3.34	1.57	7.13					Random
Sapindaceae	<i>Allophylus africanus</i> P. Beauv.			1.59	6.60	4.77	11.83							Aggregated	
Meliaceae	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i> A. Juss.	Mahogan i					0.19	1.43	3.15	10.36					Aggregated

	<i>Trichilia emetica</i> Vahl.	Dimso					0.57	2.77							Random
Malvaceae Subfamily Bombacoideae	<i>Adansonia digitata</i> L.	tabaldi			0.40	2.90									Random
Malvaceae Subfamily Grewioideae	<i>Grewia flavescens</i> Juss.	Khlekhsan					3.63	10.79	5.77	15.31					Aggregated
	<i>Grewia mollis</i> Juss.	Basham					1.91	7.29							Aggregated
	<i>Grewia tenax</i> (Forsk.) Fiori.	Gudeim	1.75	14.2	3.57	11.1	0.19	1.43	1.05	5.25	4.17	22.69			Aggregated
	<i>Grewia villosa</i> Willd.	Gregdan			2.38	9.35	1.34	5.23	1.05	5.41					Aggregated
Subfamily Sterculioideae	<i>Sterculia setigera</i> Del.	Tartar			5.95	16.87	0.38	2.39							Aggregated
Capparaceae	<i>Boscia angustifolia</i> A. Rich.	Sarah, Sireih			0.4	2.91	4.01	14.84							Aggregated
	<i>Boscia senegalensis</i> Lam.	Mikheit,	-	-	0.79	4.89									Random
	<i>Cadaba rotundifolia</i> Forssk.	Kurmut	1.75	14.2											Random
	<i>Capparis tomentosa</i> Lam.				0.40	2.90	0.19	1.43							Random
Ebenaceae	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i> Hochst. ex A.DC.	Joghan					0.38	2.39							Aggregated
Rubiaceae Subfamily Cinchonoideae	<i>Nauclea latifolia</i> Sm.	Karmadoda					0.38	2.10							Random
Subfamily Ixoroideae	<i>Catunaregam nilotica</i> (Stapf.) Tirveng.	Shigart Elmarfaen			0.79	4.22	2.29	6.69	1.05	5.41					Aggregated
	<i>Feretia apodanthera</i> Del.	Shegart ElShai					2.29	8.81	2.10	7.81					Aggregated
	<i>Meyna tetraphylla</i> (Schweinf. ex Hiern) Robyns.	Simeim							0.53	3.38					Random

	<i>Vangueria madagascariensis</i> J.F.Gmel.	Kirkir			0.79	4.22									Random
Loganiaceae	<i>Strychnos innocua</i> Del.	Um Bikhesa					0.19	1.43	11.02	43.97					Random
Apocynoideae Subfamily Apocynoideae	<i>Adenium obesum</i> (Forssk.) Roem & Schult.	Shigart Elsim			2.38	8.31	0.76	3.25							Aggregated