

INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY FOREST ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES ON DRYLAND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: CASE OF KIBWEZI FOREST IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Gazetted forests in Kenya are owned and managed by the government through Kenya Forest Service. Other stakeholders including communities formally participate in forest management through Participatory Forest Management, concessions and leasehold. In each management regime, the forest has to be well managed and the community continue accessing forest products. The aim of this study was to investigate whether Community Forest Association activities lead to improved forest cover in a leased forest. The study adopted a descriptive survey design where both qualitative data and satellite data was collected. A sample size of 139 individuals was issued with questionnaires and 5 key informants were interviewed. Satellite imagery was used to quantify changes and trends in forest cover of Kibwezi forest for ten years. Results showed that infrastructural development had a great effect on destruction of forest cover in Kibwezi forest. There was significance relationship between community participation and improvement of forests since Chi square results were ($\chi^2 = 27.631$, $df=9$, 0.001). The improvement of the forest was partially contributed to by presence of community forest association during inception of project but later David Sheldrick Trust which fenced the forest. There should be deliberate action by stakeholders to give community forest association incentives to operate optimally.

Keywords: *Community Forest Association, Leasehold, Forest-Cover, Forest Destruction, Conservation, Incentives.*