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Abstract

Arabuko Sokoke Forest (ASF), found in Kenya on the East African Coast covers an area of about 420 Km² and is the largest single block natural coastal forest remaining in Africa. It is locate between Kilifi and Malindi districts on latitude 3° 20' S and Longitude 39° 50' E. The ASF is an important conservation area due to its biodiversity richness of the rarest species of birds, butterflies and small mammals in the world. It is endowed with Twenty Six (26) seasonal water pools from which the surrounding community draws water during the dry season. Indigenous knowledge and practices on biodiversity conservation on wetland resources has been threatened by intrusion of foreign culture and technologies. The interaction of the culture of the indigenous people and modern technology is creating a conflict where modern technology is likely to malign the indigenous knowledge (IK) some of which is important in biodiversity conservation in the wetlands. The main objective is to asses and documents the Indigenous Knowledge base on the conservation of the wetland resources in ASF that will contribute positively to the biodiversity conservation and wise use of wetland resources of forest reserve. The study involves collection of data through sociological inquiry in form of survey using structured questionnaire. A questionnaire was developed, pre-tested, and administered to randomly select 50 households in each of the five (5) locations around the ASF. A total of 250 households covered. The locations are Mkongani, Kakuyuni, Bura Magongoloni, Jilore, Girimacha and Dida. Focused group discussion and key informants session will be used to further cross check the information provided from the questionnaire. Preliminary findings are that most of the wetlands have dried up and the species biodiversity lost. Invasive species of plants and small animals have been observed to replace the lost species. Another round of data collection is on to verify these facts and suggest appropriate course of action. Initial findings show that the catchment areas for water collection for the wetlands have been severely affected by human activities including farming and deforestation. The largest water pool lake Arabuko is facing a high demand of water by elephant population that seems to be beyond the holding capacity of the forest. Increased population of elephants, impassive species of plants and interference of the catchment areas of the wetlands are responsible for the disappearance of the wetlands in Arabuko Sokoke wetlands. Study still going on to the role indigenous knowledge can contribute to the conservation of the wetlands.

Key words: Assessment, documentation, indigenous, Conservation, biodiversity

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