

Abstract

Avitourism in the Kenyan Coast has received little research attention. This study examined issues relating to the level of local community involvement in avitourism in Arabuko Sokoke forest in Kilifi County. An adapted community involvement framework was used to assess community involvement with other stakeholders in relation to avitourism activities and programs by collecting the views of both the local community and other external avitourism stakeholders. Results indicate that although the community is willing to participate in avitourism, lack of knowledge, limited economic resources and the poor negotiation skills of local tour guides has disempowered them from maximally benefiting from their guiding services. Furthermore, collaboration and partnership among the different key avitourism stakeholders had brought positive development results on the prospects of avitourism growth in Arabuko Sokoke forest. Limited avitourism funding was noted to be a major challenge, however, safety and security of avitourism projects was adequately guaranteed. Both state agencies and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have greatly supported the community in avitourism through capacity building and funding with little contribution from the county government of Kilifi. For the success and growth of avitourism in the study area, conservation and marketing of Arabuko Sokoke forest as an avitourism destination need to be up scaled and the local community need to be assisted in capacity building, marketing, negotiation skills, training and funding as well as awareness creation, while the county government of Kilifi should play its rightful roles.