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The Governance of Biodiversity: the Case of Kakamega Forest, Western Kenya

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Abstract

Kenya is endowed with diverse land based natural resources, which contribute directly or indirectly to the socio-economic welfare of its people. Institutions responsible for managing natural resources in Kenya are many and varied. These being the product of a series of legislative measures and administrative decrees promulgated through out the last century. This includes the multiple statutes addressing biodiversity conservation, which are implemented by various organisations that include the sectoral ministries and the civil society. This system encourages duplication of efforts and sometimes counters effects in policy implementation due to lack of proper networking. This has resulted to a competitive, independent approach towards biodiversity management thus evading the holistic approach required for effective biodiversity conservation. The outcome is an un-integrated system with each sector viewing its territory as a platform for its own exclusive activities irrespective of the other players. Biodiversity degradation in Kenya has therefore persisted despite the efforts geared towards its conservation. The challenge is in harmonising the institutional network, that is, the statutes and organisations mandated with biodiversity conservation so that the actor's roles are better defined and linked thus enhancing its conservation. This study examines the effects of the multiple institutions on biodiversity conservation. It further looks into a way forward in harmonising the institutional set-up with the aim of contributing to a less beauracracic and streamlined system that would be better implemented.

The main objectives of this study therefore are to attain institutional order that will enable sustainable conservation and management of biodiversity in Kenya. It is also meant to institutionalise the outcomes of the Biota research project by addressing the proper institutional hierarchy appropriate for the implementation of Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) and other approaches recommended for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods .

Keywords: Biodiversity, governance, institutionalisation, sustainability