

Abstract

The success of nature conservation strongly depends on the attitudes and awareness of people, as well as on the level of poverty, land scarcity, communication gaps, and governance structures. In this commentary we elaborate potential effects of inter-community differences on peoples' attitudes towards nature conservation and the role of land management, communication and governance in nature conservation for three forest regions in south-eastern Kenya. We considered the following areas: the riparian forests in the semi-arid Kitui county, the Arabuko Sokoke coastal forest, and the cloud forests of the Taita Hills. In all three areas, the remaining forests are strongly fragmented and forest habitat quality is degraded, yet still supports outstanding diversity of plant and animal species richness. Despite current efforts to conserve these ecosystems, its degradation continues due to various reasons: (1) Population and economic pressure; (2) Limited land availability and insecure land tenure systems; (3) Inconsistencies between the legislation and governance; and, (4) Communication gaps and a lack of information flow among stakeholders from the national to the local level. Here we identify and present common and diverging coherences among the three study regions. We found that people's awareness and willingness play a rather marginal role to turn nature conservation into successful management, but shortcomings in policies and governance are the main drivers.