

## Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Sustainable Development in Africa: Case Study on Kenya

Davis Wekesa Barasa

*Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, Department of Tourism,  
Box 54666 - 00200, Nairobi, Kenya.*

*Telephone: +254 20 313010 (Office), Fax: +254 20 217604, E-mail: dwbarasa@yahoo.co.uk*

**KEYWORDS** Indigenous knowledge; sustainable development; ecotourism; sustainability

**ABSTRACT** Sacred forests worldwide have existed for many centuries and have been used by different communities for different purposes. *Kaya* forests at the Kenyan coast have been in existence since the 16th century and were used by the *mijikenda* people as burial grounds, for habitation and defence barriers during times of war, and as worship places among others. Today, *Kaya* forests are faced with threats of extinction, if issues of their sustainable management and utilization are not addressed. The use of *Kaya Kinondo* forest for ecotourism based on *mijikenda (digo)* indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) points to the fact that IKS can play an important role in resource base protection. Concepts related to IKS and sustainable tourism development are briefly discussed to set the ground for understanding their link with *Kaya* forests conservation through IKS and ecotourism. The paper also attempts to look at the emergence and historical uses of *Kaya* forests in Kenya, their current uses, and the link between these forests on one hand, and tourism on the other. The institutional framework of this forest is examined. A case study of *Kaya Kinondo* forest ecotourism project is then presented. The paper suggests that sustainable eco-tourism coupled with co-management could be the most suitable non-use (non consumptive utilization) way of these forests and that the successful implementation of *Kaya Kinondo* forest eco-tourism could be replicated in other *Kaya* forests with similar conditions.