

## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the findings of a study on the role of indigenous knowledge in the management of the mangrove bio-diversity in Msambweni Division of Kwale District on the Kenyan south coast. The study site covered the area between Gazi and Vanga in Msabweni Division. The central problem of the study was to describe indigenous knowledge and analyse its role in mangrove environmental management. The study was also intended to identify the existing knowledge which is utilised in the management of the mangrove ecosystem and to describe perceptions towards the present day institutional location of the mangrove management responsibility and how these influence the management of the ecosystem. The study was carried out among the residents of Msambweni Division, the majority of whom are Wadigo, a sub-group of the Mijikenda ethnic group; Between January and March 1998. Data collection methods included key informants, focus group discussions, observation methods, the survey method, and the use of secondary data. Qualitative methods of data analysis were used. These were supplemented by descriptive statistical methods to analyse the impact of various variables on the conservation of the mangrove bio-diversity. Accordingly indigenous knowledge, the institutional location of natural resources management responsibility and coordination among stakeholders are found to have an influence on the success of conservation efforts. Findings from the study show that the mangrove bio-diversity is threatened through excessive harvesting of trees, poaching and pollution. The local community also feels that they have been alienated from the mainstream activities touching on the management of the mangrove bio-diversity. They, therefore, do not see the value of conserving the mangrove ecosystem, especially in cases where government officers are seen to abet the depletion of the resources. Although this is dismissed by the environmental management bodies, this study recommends that it is important to include the local community in the management of natural resources. The people who live in close proximity to the resources are the ones who stand to lose most should the resources be depleted