

Negligence and desecration observed among Tiriki sacred groves during causal visits by the authors in January 2007 was associated with their loss of cultural values and protection among local people. Household interviews were held with 65 randomly selected key informants (51 males, 14 females) from all (6) locations of Hamisi district, Kenya, between March and August 2007. The study objective was to determine the persistence and loss of traditional cultural values of the groves among local people plus respective causes for loss of the individual cultural values. Of the 10 traditional values named, the most dominant was as sources of herbal medicine (100%) and as sites for boys' circumcision (100%). The least dominant were as sources of food (13.85%) and materials for house construction (21.54%). Persistence was highest with their value as sources of herbal medicine (100%) and lowest as burial sites for community heroes (0.00%) and as sites for special prayers (4.17%). Break-down in the socio-cultural fabric of the Tiriki community due to the influence of modern religion, education and government regulations were responsible for loss of cultural values and indigenous knowledge associated with sacred groves among local people. Sustainable preservation of the sacred groves requires strategic government intervention with an appropriate institutional framework that empowers local people to effectively manage and benefit from them. Emphasis is on enterprises that combine biodiversity conservation with poverty eradication as outlined by the Millennium Development Goals. Establishment of local, regional and global partnerships towards this end is encouraged.