



**University of Nairobi**

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

**M.A Environmental Planning and Management**

**Research Proposal:**

**ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO FOREST RESOURCE USE  
CONFLICTS: A CASE STUDY OF EBURU FOREST, KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Conflicts among stakeholders over access, control or ownership of forest resources is a major impediment to achieving sustainable outcomes in the forest sector. It leads to diminished local community livelihood, loss of income, employment, government revenues and environmental goods and services.

Although majority of forests in Kenya experience forest resource use conflicts, the extent, severity and nature of conflicts differ. This is dependent on a number of factors that may be related to tenure of the forest resource, governance and management of the forest resource, competition over dwindling resources, population pressure, and poor information sharing among others.

Kenya's closed forest cover has been reducing and now stands at a critical 1.7% of the total land area, far below the recommended 10% (GOK, 2010). The rate of forest loss is estimated at 12,000 ha annually (KFS,2012). Human population growth rate and demand for forest ecosystem based services and goods have been increasing. In a bid to reverse the situation, forest management in Kenya has undergone a paradigm shift, that has seen adoption of a decentralized system. This has seen creation of new structures to take on decentralized authority and responsibilities.

While decentralization of natural resource management is aimed at increasing service efficiency, democracy, devolution of power over the disposition of resources, improve community livelihoods and manage divergent multi-stakeholder interests while ensuring equity of costs and benefits, forests related conflicts are on the increase, as witnessed in Eburu forest. Damage and losses brought about by such conflicts is significant. Of concern as well is the magnitude of resources invested in managing conflicts, yet conflicts persist, compromising conservation initiatives.

This study sets fought to assess factors that contribute to forest resource use conflicts and their manifestation in Eburu area as well as opportunities for conflict management. The study area is purposively selected because it is a conflict hotspot and lies within one of the largest water towers in Kenya. Data will be collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be obtained through use of structured questionnaires focused group

discussions, key informants and direct observation. Among the research hypotheses is that different factors interact to contribute to forests resource use conflicts in Eburu, and that there exists opportunities for conflict resolution within Eburu Forest

This study employs Barnes' (2005) model or method that defines: "Conflict as occurring when two or more parties (individuals or groups) have – or *perceive* that they have – incompatible goals and this perception of incompatibility shape their attitudes and behaviors toward each other". Findings of the study will fill the knowledge gap as relates effective management of forests resource use conflicts. Findings will inform Policy makers and forest resource managers towards crafting strategies for managing and solving resource use conflicts not only in Eburu but other forests in Kenya.