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IRD Mombasa, Kenya: The "Rabai kaya conservation community project" in coastal Kenya.

Rabai Heritage landscape is very diverse in nature. It embodies several values, which include the missionary history, the cultural and natural that is signified by the kayas forests and the slavery history. This presentation will explore the concept of the relationship between the researchers, the work they do within the local heritage resources and the community involvement and benefits as well as the challenges. In this case, we will use the example of the "Rabai kaya conservation community project".

The kayas are natural forests that owe their existence to the culture, beliefs and history of the Mijikenda. This makes the kayas a good example of the continued existence of traditional forms of land use that supports biological diversity.

The objective of the project was to develop an integrated management plan that could sustainably utilize the kayas as a resource for the well-being of the community and encourage the conservation and promotion of the cultural and natural significance of the Rabai Cultural landscape. Some of the on-going activities include site surveys and documentation of both cultural and natural aspects of the Rabai kayas, and historical research from oral, written and archaeological sources. All these activities are undertaken with full participation of community members. The objective is to show that ethno-historical research into the construction of identity can lead to practical measures to protect and safeguard natural and cultural heritage.

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