



**IMPLICATIONS OF CHARCOAL PRODUCTION TO THE VEGETATION COVER OF
NKARETA WARD**

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BES/016/2012

**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirement for Degree
in Environmental Studies in the School of Tourism and Natural Resource Management,
Maasai Mara University**

APRIL, 2016

ABSTRACT

The forest cover in Kenya which is below the international required standard of 10% coverage is rapidly becoming depleted due to the ever increasing human demand for fuel wood. Unsustainable exploitation of forest resources for commercial charcoal production is a worrying phenomenon in Nkareta Ward, Narok County of Kenya. The fast disappearance of tree cover may influence the local climatic patterns which may in the long run affect crop yields and deepen poverty levels of the area. The study covered Nkareta commercial charcoal production areas as the study area. The study assumed a descriptive design which employs Pre field work, Field work, Review of relevant documents, Data collection, analysis and interpretation as study approaches. The aims of the study are; to quantify contribution of charcoal production to the vegetation cover degradation in Nkareta Ward, investigate factors that contribute to charcoal production in the area and to propose interventions to curb adverse effects of charcoal production to the vegetation of the area. Data was collected through; interviews, observations, and photography. Collected data was analyzed by use of SPSS and excel spread sheet, and the information presented in tables, graphs and pie charts. According to the survey charcoal production in Nkareta is done majorly on private land than on public land. 73% of charcoal is produced in private land as 27% on public land. Most people engaging in charcoal business are youth and mostly male. According to the study there are about 94 charcoal producers in the area. The study found out that charcoal production in the study area is done as a secondary activity, where farmers open up new lands for agricultural purposes. Trees fell from land clearing are used to produce charcoal. Most preferred technology for charcoal production in the area is the traditional earth method. Other reasons why charcoal is produced in the area is because of the readily available market within the locality and also the fact that charcoal can be easily transported by use of donkeys. Tree species that are most preferred for charcoal production are; *Euclea schimperia*, *Torchonathus comphrates*, *Acaia xanthophloea* and *Olea africanus*. Charcoal producers are motivated by the financial benefit arising from the activity. Further uncontrolled indigenous wood species extraction without corresponding replacement measures will reduce capacity of tree cover to provide agricultural lands.