



Kenya: A Natural Outlook: Chapter 21. Floods in Kenya (Developments in Earth Surface Processes)

Alfred Opere

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The vulnerability of a water resource system to climate change is a function of a number of physical features and social characteristics. The physical features associated with maximum vulnerability of water resources in a region include the marginal hydrologic and climatic regime; high rates of sedimentation leading to reduction of reservoir storage; topography and land-use practices that promote soil erosion and flash flooding conditions; and deforestation, which allows increased surface run-off, increased soil erosion and more frequent significant flooding. Coupled with these factors, the social characteristics that increase vulnerability of water resources include poverty and low income levels that prevent long-term planning and provision at the household level, lack of water control infrastructures, inadequate maintenance and deterioration of existing infrastructure, lack of human capital skills for system planning and management, lack of appropriate and empowered institutions, absence of appropriate land-use planning and management, and high population densities and other factors that inhibit population mobility. Of all the relevant factors in climate, precipitation is the main cause of disasters in flooding, water pollution, soil erosion, dam breaks and water-related disease outbreaks among others. Floods increase vulnerability of society and thereby perpetuate and increase the incidence of poverty.

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