

Water dilemma in Nyando River Basin

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In the tropical regions, climate change effects have resulted to increase in flooding of the river basins. At the same time, there is increased occurrence of drought in places which had been receiving adequate and reliable rainfall. Nyando river basin lies in the Eastern side of Kisumu City, Kenya. The area is traversed by River Nyando whose catchment extends to Nandi Hills and drains into Lake Victoria. It forms part of the larger Kisumu County. Most of the residents of this area are farmers apart from a few who are fishermen. The fishermen are living on the shores of Lake Victoria while the farmers are distributed along the river basin. Nyando is one of the places in Kenya which is prone to flooding due to the fluctuating levels of River Nyando.



Nyando River bed during dry season

Part of the river basin is used for rice growing and the government of Kenya, through ministry of water and irrigation has put up infrastructure for irrigation of the rice fields. Although this has contributed to the management of the floods in the area, many people are still facing the problems of floods as well as drought. According to Mr. Lazaro Nyawara, one of the residents of a village in the Kano plains, they usually face drought during the dry seasons and suffer from floods during the rainy seasons. To the residents of this village, the presence rainy seasons comes not only with the blessings of increased crop production but also with destruction of property and loss of lives due to floods.



Crops which are poorly performing due to lack of rain

On the other hand the residents of the village are not able to harvest anything during dry spell. Due to climate change, the weather has become so unpredictable and farmers do not know when to plant their crops. When they go by the normal trend in planting with the expectation of the normal long rains and the short rains, they fail to harvest because the rains delay and crops dry or come in excess leading to the destruction of the crops.

Meanwhile, River Nyando remains one of the permanent rivers in the area draining millions of litres of water into the lake daily. It is a concern of the residents of this village that effective water resource management would enable them to reduce the effects of floods and minimize the effects of drought by harnessing the waters of River Nyando. To the community members in Kano plains, water is both a blessing and a curse and presents a real dilemma to the villages.

This problem has increased in intensity due to the increased climate variability due to climate change. The community members are calling upon their leaders to work with them and ensure that they put in structures to harness the flood waters and make use of them during drought. Although opening of the drainage channels and directing the water into the lake has been fruitful in regulating floods, the community is usually left drought stricken as soon as the flood waters have subsided. There is need to ensure that they can be able to get water whenever they need it.

In order to reduce the impacts of climate change, the leaders have been asked to take climate action by ensuring that they put in place policies and laws to support environmental conservation. They are also reminded to be able to work towards improving the adaptive capacity of the community members towards climate change

by engaging in climate smart agriculture. This can be done by planting food security crops and engaging in tree planting which will ensure continuous supply of food and conserve their environment respectively.
