

# Risk acceptance in flood affected areas in Nyando, Kenya

**The people living in areas subject to perennially floods are tolerating their situation in living in a high-risk area. This is the conclusion of a report through a fieldwork in social study of the peoples' risk perception.**

This study describes how the risk acceptance is developed in flood affected areas. This will make it easier to help people in need and to decide what measures to take. The risk acceptance compares the human values with the perceived risks within a situation. In addition, risk reduction and opportunities of moving was interesting factors to widen the perspective of risk acceptance. The risk that was in focus was floods but since risk acceptance involves all risks within a situation, others were also brought up. The data of this study was collected by interviews in Kochogo, Wawidhi and Kakola, southwest of Ahero in Kano plains, Kenya.

This study was conducted with a case study approach. Together with some general observations of the area, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The respondents were all living within the local research area and the researchers tried to get a good selection of respondents to represent the community. Both individual and focus group interviews was conducted. The collected data were then analysed and coded to create categories and see trends and patterns.

The subject area is in Kisumu County, western Kenya. This place is affected by floods perennially due to heavy rain. The catchment area of the Nyando river is big, and the river easily overflows before entering Lake Victoria. Where the river runs, the land is very flat, and the overflowing water can cover large areas. Due to the soil and the flat land, the water can stay for weeks before it goes down to the lake. This has a huge impact on the people living in the area and much of their properties gets harmed or destroyed.

People were also affected by droughts and the situation then becomes the opposite. It was

hard to find water for agriculture and even to survive became an issue. These two natural hazards were the main concerns even though other risks like corruption, bad roads and low income were mentioned. Due to low resources, people became vulnerable and the effects of the hazards could become very serious. Even though people were concerned about the risks, not much work was done to prevent or mitigate the effects. It was believed that the problems were too big to handle themselves and much was expected to be done by the government or the NGO's. Some measures had been done and the people believed that the situation overall has developed over the years to the better.

Even though few people accepted the risks that surrounded them, few wanted to move. The floods created a very fertile soil which made the agriculture favourable, the lake created great possibilities for fishing and the community had created a friendly environment. Tradition and culture had a great impact on the local people and many people referred to this when they said that they wanted to stay.

As a combination of strong values within the community and a fear of the situation in the surrounding areas, almost everyone was willing to stay in the high-risk area. This doesn't mean that they accepted the risks. The people were clear that they needed help, and this could be seen as a tolerable situation. Even though the concern about the risks were obvious, it became a part of their life and they thought that they couldn't do anything about them. Additionally, in a country exposed to violence between people over the last decades, the natural hazards could have been seen as harmless when they compared to other alternative areas.

Viktor Asking, Jonas Nilsson