

Introduction

Above 60% of urban residents in Kenya live in informal settlements and experience frequent flooding events.([Mosiori et al., 2026](#)).

Urban cities in African countries have unique characteristics that further increase their vulnerabilities to extreme weather events. Rising populations due to processes such as rural-urban migration put pressure on existing infrastructure within these cities leading to crisis.([Adetokunbo & Emeka, 2015](#)).

Studies have shown that extreme weather events have extensive impacts on various spheres of the lives of those who experience them. They range from social, economic to psychosocial impacts

Understanding the lived experiences of extreme weather events remains an important national priority in order to design effective climate response policies.

Study Objectives

1. To examine residents’ experiences of recurrent flooding in Kibera informal settlement.
2. To explore the social, emotional, and economic impacts of flooding on residents living in Kibra.
3. To investigate how housing conditions and infrastructure contribute to residents’ vulnerability to flooding in Kibera.
4. To identify the coping strategies used by residents in responding to flooding and other climate-related challenges.



A house in Kibra Slums during floods,Photo credit:Jeff Angote | Nation Media Group

Methodology

Exploratory semi-structured interviews conducted on 30 residents’ of Kibra

Thematic data analysis

Findings

Participants revealed that there was a wide range of perceptions about factors that cause flooding in Kibra. The main contributors to flooding were infrastructural, human activities and climate related events.

Flooding has mental, economic, physical and social impacts on the lives of residents of Kibra. Floods also brought about challenges to existing systems bringing about food and water insecurity to the residents.

Stress, depression, anxiety were various terminologies used by participants' to describe the state of their mental health during floods.

Flooding worsens existing conditions of poverty affecting residents’ livelihoods which further contributes to disruption of their mental wellbeing. Additionally, uncertainty about the future that made residents’ experience negative mental health impacts.

Land insecurity, land grabbing and lack of proper monitoring of infrastructure sites contributing to exposure of residents to flooding effects.

Floods disrupted normal food accessibility through making the roads unpassable, reducing the availability of food items in markets, closure of food stalls as well as rising costs of food items during flood seasons due to reduced supply.

Water insecurity was attributed to the water piping system and linked to health impacts.

Participants’ Responses

“I can say it's poor drainage that causes flooding because if we have good drainage there cannot be flooding”

“And at that time, we were sleeping on the floor. It was just a small room at that time. I was living with my sister. So, we slept, and when we woke up, we found the mattress soaked in water.”

You can't sleep because you're anxious. Like, if it's raining like this, you're just anxious about your place. Will the water get in? So the whole time, that whole day, you might just stay awake. You're just waiting, in case anything happens, staying alert.”

“That rumbling gives you anxiety.”

“Communicating through phones. You tell someone if they are somewhere they can sleep if the floods are too much. You tell them to sleep there or you explain the paths they can use to get there.”

Acknowledgments

I deeply appreciate my mentors Prof. Mendenhall and Dr. Bosire for bringing me into this project. I would also like to thank Colleen Dougherty, the Laidlaw Scholars Programme and the Georgetown University Center for Research and Fellowships for providing the funding. Additionally my gratitude goes to the Brain and Mind Institute in Nairobi for providing me a space to develop this research.