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ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION OF FLOOD DISASTERS IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY, NORTH-WEST CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this work was to characterize and explain the Bamenda community's perception of flood disasters based on causes and management. The reconnaissance survey method was used for this work by means of field questionnaires, geologic and topographic maps and previous literature. The main results revealed that the main causes of floods are heavy rainfall, inadequate drainage systems and water-saturated soils. The best flood prevention techniques according to respondents include straightening the River Mezam bed, building drainage systems, construction of levees along the river and a dam at up station to hold rain water and release it at safer rates after heavy downpour. The common strategies used by the inhabitants to prevent floods are building of embankment walls, raising foundations of houses and straightening of river channels. Respondents agreed that the best flood management strategies that the Government should adopt to prevent floods are channelling of major streams and rivers, building of drainage systems in town, earmark resettlement sites to relocate people from high risk zones, construct embankments along major rivers, construct, a dam to hold water during heavy rains, convert wetlands to touristic sites. However, 50% respondents do not agree that conversion of wetlands into touristic sites and relocating people from high risk zones (50% disagree) are good strategies. Contrary to the literature, most of the respondents denied that deforestation, landfills, refuse disposal in streams and water-saturated nature of the soils contribute to flooding in Bamenda. This could be attributed to low level of education as 42% and 27% of respondents where respectively holders a First School Leaving certificates (FSLC) and General Certificate of Education Ordinary Levels (GCE OL) and might not master methods of flood management. The Government, therefore, ought to sensitize the inhabitants of Bamenda on issues of flood and environmental management. Meanwhile, a community-based approach of flood prevention and management will be a relief to the Bamenda inhabitants.

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