

## VILLAGERS SPEARHEAD FLOOD MANAGEMENT IN NYANDO

By Christabel Telewa

Standard Seven pupils of Kanyika Primary School, in Nyando, stare at the chalk wall intently as they listen to their English teacher, Mr. Cila Onyango.

Mr. Onyango is serious and focused. When he speaks his voice is firm telling his students of how much danger and destruction floods can cause. This is a practical class where the children dramatize the signs of the floods, where to run to in case of such a disaster and how to mitigate floods.

The Students learn signs of impending floods such as frogs croaking in a different manner and the appearance of different species of birds. They are also taught to climb to higher grounds in case there is flooding because water can sweep them off their feet and result into injury and death.

The school infused flood management courses in the usual subjects because perennial floods are not a new phenomenon in the Nyando basin and the impacts increasingly disrupt the lives of the local community, explains Mr. Onyango. The Nyando River basin experiences two including long rains in March to May and short rains in October to December, these are the times when the area floods.



**Mr.Cila Onyango conducts a flood management class at Kanyika Primary School in Nyando Country.** Photos: Patrick Mungai

The flood management lessons were introduced after three teachers in the school came back from a teachers training workshop in disaster prevention and flood management held last year. The objective of the workshop sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was to train teachers on disaster management and how they can infuse flood management courses into the primary school curriculum for pupils from class four to seven.

Mr. Onyango says that they choose to educate children because the children will carry the knowledge for a longer time. “They are also willing to spread the knowledge to their parents and siblings,” he says explaining that the children need to be empowered because some of them have lost their parents in such disasters.

The infusion of flood management in the lesson is part of a programme that aims to establish a flood management system by implementing structural and non-structural measures for integrated flood management in the 24 villages that were initially Nyando and Kisumu district. Japan International co-operation Agency (JICA) carried out a study on integrated flood management from Nyando basin as a technical assistance project. Based on the results of the study, the Kenyan government submitted a request for programme grant aid to the Japan government.

There are signboards around the school that point towards a raised evacuation center for use by villages during the flooding areas. The technical assistance supervisor, Mr. Clement Ngida explains that the signs help the pupils or villagers who might not know where to go when the when it is flooding.



**LEFT: A worker points at an evacuation centre. RIGHT: A villager uses the newly constructed borehole.** Photos: Patrick Mungai

Mr. Clement Ngida says that the school was chosen as a site to construct the evacuation center because it is located on a higher ground and therefore rarely covered by water during the floods. “It is an outcome of a community action plan,” he says, explaining that the community came up with what concept before asking for assistance where they could not raise enough finances. The evacuation center has a kitchen with running water and a store to use to cook food during when the area is flooding. The community members have also formed a committee to maintain the resources.

The school also has raised pit latrines and a bore hall to be used by the villages when it is flooding. When it floods villagers rarely get clean water to drink or cook with and sometimes there is an outbreak of a lot of waterborne diseases. The bore hall will therefore provide them with much needed clean water, Emphasizes Mr. Ngida.