

This article examines the perception of climate change, in relation to 21 other socioeconomic and environmental problems, on the part of 132 respondents to a survey conducted in the city of Nairobi, Kenya. Factor analysis, used to condense these interrelated problems into a few dimensions, identified two overriding threats: the first being to socioeconomic security, and the second to the physical environment. Threats to socioeconomic security explained 76.6% of the variance in the rating of environmental and socioeconomic problems facing Nairobi, with very high factor loadings from corruption, unemployment, crime, street children, garbage, transport, poverty, pollution of Nairobi River, HIV/AIDS and immorality/promiscuity. Threats to the physical and living environment explained 22.2% of the variance in the rating of environmental and socioeconomic problems facing Nairobi. We were led to conclude that the respondents did not perceive climate change as being a significant problem in Nairobi. The global concern about climate change appeared like a mere drop in the oceanic context pervaded by problems of poverty, unemployment, crime and corruption, etc. which Nairobi faces, as does Kenya as a whole. Our conclusion is partially reflected in the priorities of the Kenyan government, which focus on poverty alleviation, the fight against crime and graft, improved access to education, and on addressing health problems; it also poses a challenge to the climate change community to find ways to making interventions relevant to local socioeconomic reality facing a developing country city like Nairobi. There may be a need to reconsider 'whose reality counts' (borrowing from Robert Chambers, *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London, p 122, 1997) in addressing climate change: should protracted Kyoto protocol negotiations be given priority or should a long lasting solution be sought to socioeconomic problems facing developing world cities such as Nairobi? We recommend that the ongoing efforts at integrating climate risk management, as components of climate-sensitive sustainable development, be studied in many settings, with a focus on the developing world which is the most vulnerable, in order to inform decision-making and development of intervention measures.