

Geothermal energy research in Kenya: a review

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Journal of African Earth Sciences Volume 23, Issue 4, November 1996, Pages 565–575
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0899-5362\(97\)00019-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0899-5362(97)00019-5),

Abstract

Geothermal energy for electricity generation is likely to become increasingly important in Kenya in the future. There are numerous centres of thermal activity in Kenya, particularly within the Rift Valley, although aridity and, consequently, availability of water may be a constraint to the development of large scale natural hydrothermal systems. Geothermal resources in the islands of Lake Turkana and those close to other rift lakes deserve further investigation as they do not suffer from the constraints of a shortage of water. The experience gained so far at Oikaria shows that environmental problems can be adequately addressed, though constant monitoring is necessary. H₂S emissions preclude the setting up of permanent residences within about 5 km of the geothermal power stations. Trace elements and radiation from geothermal fluids need to be monitored with respect to their impacts on plants and animals. The impact on the local hydrogeology also requires close observation. Multistage uses of geothermal fluids will greatly increase the benefits derived from this resource.
