Abstract

Kenya is a country of great diversity both in a regional and geological sense. Its geographical location is unique and its physiography characterised by a range of altitudes dissected by the Great Rift Valley with its peculiar hydrological network. Again too, public infrastructure and private building construction and mining companies in the country are expanding and require a variety of geological inputs, from hydrogeology and groundwater engineering in the water sector, geotechnical assessments for often difficult foundation designs, to appraisal of aggregate reserves and marine investigations for land reclamation, port extensions and sewage outfalls. These reasons underscore the challenge both of providing a sound geoscience education and the prosecution of meaningful geological research.

Formal geoscience education in Kenya began in 1961 with the setting up of a Department of Geology within the then Royal Technical College of East Africa which had since been reconstituted into the present University of Nairobi (UoN). The Department of Geology at UoN is a constituent department of the Faculty of Science within the College of Biological and Physical Sciences. At present it is the only institution that offers a dedicated degree course and is also the major geology research establishment in the country. The Department also offers M.Sc. and Ph.D. programmes in which the interdependence of teaching and research are emphasised as essential components of scholarship.

Recent and ongoing geoscience research carried out in Kenya cover a wide spectrum of topics relevant to the country's development and the continued quest for solutions to the rising incidence of geo-hazards. In recent years, effort has focussed on the themes : seismology, mass-movements, volcanism and geothermal research, the impact of mining and mineral processing and the management of water resources. Most geoscience research done in the country is thus inevitably environmental. The results of these studies are contained in published works in various scientific journals or documented in unpublished works or institutional reports. The Geological Society of Kenya holds an annual conference at which results of recent geoscience research are presented and summarised in a proceedings volume. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight a selection of the mass of recent literature embodying the more important geoscience research activities. The interdisciplinary aspects of these researches are emphasised throughout, as well as collaborative efforts with counterparts in the East African Region and elsewhere.