

STEMMING THE TIDE: POLICY BRIEF



**ON RECURRING FLOODINGS RAVAGING
NIGERIAN STATES, AND THE
IMPLICATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS'
LAXITY**



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1. BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS:

Nigeria has had a history of flooding, and in the last decade, the country has experienced recurring and devastating floods that have caused loss of life, population displacement, and extensive destruction of houses, farms, and infrastructure.

Since the devastating 2012 nationwide flooding disaster, for instance, over 22 million people have been affected in 34 of the country's 36 states, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). In 2022, Nigeria experienced the worst flooding the country has seen in over a decade. At least, 603 people died and over 2,400 were recorded to have been injured. According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), over 1.4 million people were displaced due to the floods as of November 2022.

Given this context, the purpose of this policy brief is to examine the phenomenon of perennial floodings in Nigeria, its causes and impact, gaps in policy responses, as well as make recommendations to improve the capacity for prevention, mitigation, and recovery from flooding disasters in the country.

River Flood

A river flood occurs when a river overflows its banks; that is when its flow can no longer be contained within its channel. Flooding is a natural and regular reality for many rivers, helping sculpt soil and spread nutrients in alluvial valleys and supporting vast ecosystems – such as swamps and bottomland forests – adapted to occasional inundation.



To begin with, it is important to undertake a process of clarifying some of the associated concepts for ease of shared understanding.

A flood is a significant overflow of water that submerges an area of land that is usually dry. Flooding may occur as an overflow of water from water bodies, such as a river, lake, or ocean, in which the water overtops or breaks levees or its normal confinement, resulting in some of that water escaping its usual boundaries, or it may occur due to an accumulation of rainwater on saturated ground in an areal flood.

Depending on their nature, character, and causes, floods can be categorised into distinct types, including:

Flash Flood

A flash flood is a rapid flooding of low-lying areas: washes, rivers, dry lakes, and depressions. It may be caused by heavy rain associated with a severe thunderstorm, hurricane, or tropical storm, or by meltwater from ice or snow flowing over ice sheets or snowfields. Flash floods may also occur after the collapse of a natural ice or debris dam, or a human structure such as a man-made dam. Flash floods are distinguished from regular floods by having a timescale of fewer than six hours between rainfall and the onset of flooding.

Coastal Flood

Coastal flooding normally occurs when dry and low-lying land is submerged by seawater. The range of coastal floodings is a result of the elevation of floodwater that penetrates the inland which is controlled by the topography of the coastal land exposed to flooding.

Coastal flooding is largely a natural event, however human influence on the coastal environment can exacerbate coastal flooding. Extraction of water from groundwater reservoirs in the coastal zone can instigate subsidence of the land, thus increasing the risk of flooding.

2. FLOODING TREND IN NIGERIA:

Until recently major flood disasters rarely occur in Nigeria. Early recorded cases of flooding in Nigeria date back to 1963 when the Ogunpa River flooded Ibadan city causing loss of lives and property with reoccurrences in 1978, 1980, and 2011.

Between the years 2011–2020, Nigeria recorded about 1,187 deaths connected to flooding, 15% of Africa's deaths by flooding within the same period. The cost of damage to properties was \$904.5 million, which comprised 21% of property damage in Africa from flooding. As well as in 2012 and 2018, flood damage and impact were also high in 2011 and 2020.

The 2022 Nigeria floods affected many parts of the country. From the Federal Government Data, the floods displaced over 1.4 million people, killed over 603 people, and injured more than 2,400 persons. Over 200,000 houses were completely or partially destroyed, and 332,327 hectares of land had also been affected, including more than 110,000 hectares of farmland.

Although Nigeria typically experiences seasonal flooding, this flood was the worst in the country since the 2012 floods.

The 2012 and 2022 flood disasters were especially devastating, making them the worst in over 50 years. The 2012 Nigeria floods began in early July 2012. It killed 363 people and displaced over 2.1 million people as of 5 November 2012. According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), 30 of Nigeria's 36 states were affected by the floods. The floods were termed the worst in 40 years and affected an estimated total of seven million people. The estimated damages and losses caused by the floods was N2.6 trillion.

The flooding was caused by heavy rainfall and climate change as well as the release of water from the Ladgo dam in neighbouring Cameroon, which began on 13 September. Flooding, which affected Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and the surrounding region, began in the early summer of 2022 and ended in October.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that in Nigeria, flooding is both perennial and seasonal. This should make it possible not only to be able to develop an effective preparedness capacity but it should also make the development and acquisition of risk reduction and mitigation capacities not only feasible but possible.



1 Flood Risk Management in Nigeria: A review of challenges and opportunities; V O Oladokun & D Roberts; International Journal of safety and security engineering. Vol 6, No 3, 2016.

1 Flooding in Nigeria: A review of its occurrence, impacts and approaches to modelling flood data: Nura Umar & Allison Grey; International Journal of Environmental studies. Published online, 31st May 2022.

1 See wikipedia

1 See Wikipedia

1 Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management

3. CAUSES OF FLOODING IN NIGERIA:

Perennial flooding is the most prevalent natural disaster in Nigeria, with many communities across many states experiencing annual flooding during the rainy season. Nevertheless, Nigeria's flooding is largely human-induced, stemming mostly from nonexistent and or inadequate environmental infrastructure, and poor urban planning practices.

Several factors acting rarely alone can be identified as predisposing to flooding in the Nigerian context.

These include

- Heavy rainfall resulting from tropical weather disturbances.
- Deforestation.
- Improper agricultural practices.
- Blockage or obstruction of water channels including rivers and streams.
- Poorly designed and or inadequately maintained infrastructure including bridges, dams, etc.
- Construction of settlements in flood plains.
- Rapid urbanization and poor urban planning.
- Poor spatial planning.
- Poor solid waste management, including drainage systems being used as dump sites.
- Inadequate design of drainage channels and structures.
- Inadequate maintenance of drainage facilities, blockage by debris brought by flood waters.

4. IMPACT OF FLOODING:

The effects and impact of flooding in Nigeria are diverse and varied, including on individual citizens, households, and communities, as well as on the socioeconomic fortunes of the country as a whole.

Businesses are also impacted due to damage to businesses premises, and or closure of businesses due to risks associated with flooding disasters.

The closure of businesses, and the disruption of transportation caused by floods precipitate job losses, and economic losses for businesses, and interrupt the movement of goods and services. This can have a significant impact on the availability and accessibility of basic necessities for citizens. Farmlands and farm animals are also destroyed, again severely impacting on livelihoods of communities

The implication of flooding does not only include the cost of loss of lives, but also injuries sustained by people, and the cost of treatment and relocation. Additionally, houses are damaged or outrightly destroyed, including the loss of other types of properties, such as vehicles, buildings, economic enterprises and businesses, and storage facilities, among others.

From the foregoing, the major effects of flooding can be summarised as follows:

- a. Loss of lives and injury to people.
- b. Destruction of houses and properties.
- c. Displacement.
- d. Destruction of basic infrastructure and basic social amenities in educational (schools), and health (hospitals and clinics) facilities.

4. IMPACT OF FLOODING:

e. Destruction of farmlands, including food crops, cash crops, farm animals, and food storage.

f. Destruction and disruption in livelihoods, means, and sources for micro, small, and medium-scale enterprises.

i. Destruction and disruption of waste management and sewage systems.

k. Increased stress on social cohesion due to disruptions in normal community life, leading to greater threats of insecurity.

g. Destruction and closure of businesses, leading to job losses and financial losses.

h. Destruction of transport infrastructure and disruption to the movement of people, goods, and services.

j. Increased risk of ill health and diseases due to pollution of water and the environment and increase in the risk of waterborne diseases.

l. Increased cost of living due to scarcity of basic necessities, etc.

5. GAPS IN POLICY RESPONSES:

In October 2022, at the peak of the 2022 flooding disaster, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management launched a National Flood Emergency Preparedness and Response plan to mitigate and reduce the impact of the flooding disaster on citizens.

In the aftermath of the 2012 flood disaster for instance, and with the support of international development partners, the Nigerian government had undertaken a post-disaster assessment and produced a report (Nigeria Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: 2012 Floods – PDNA 2012) which included a Transitional, Recovery, and Reconstruction plan to improve preparedness and response capacity to prevent and mitigate future occurrences.

Yet, despite the conduct of this assessment and finalization of the assessment report and its recommendations, it is not clear if the report was ever utilised and implemented. If it was, then the 2022 flood disaster should not have happened at such a scale as it did.

Although the plan is said to include immediate actions, as well as medium-term and long-term measures to be carried out by responsible agencies, it is not clear what these proposed actions and measures are, and who the responsible agencies are.

In any case, as in the case of the 2012 flooding and other flooding disasters, the official response has often been limited to managing the crisis after the occurrence and trying to tend towards humanitarian needs, with scant or no attention and or priority given to long-term recovery measures, support for building enhanced resilience, and improved preventive and mitigative capability and capacity of individuals, communities, and the nation and its institutions at large.



There is in place a National Disaster Response Plan (NDRP). The Plan establishes a process and structure for the systematic, coordinated, and effective delivery of Federal assistance, to address the consequences of any major disaster or emergency declared by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Nigeria has had a National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) since 2010. This framework provides a mechanism that serves as a regulatory guideline for effective and efficient disaster management in Nigeria. Some of the framework's objectives include:

- Establish functional disaster management institutions at all levels of governance to prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disaster events in Nigeria.
- Develop the capacity of relevant institutions and stakeholders for effective and efficient disaster management in Nigeria.
- e. Monitor the state of preparedness of all organizations and agencies which may contribute to disaster management in Nigeria.
- f. Collate data and reports from relevant agencies to enhance forecasting, planning, and field operations of disaster management.
- g. Educate the public on disaster prevention and control measures.
- l. Work closely with State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA) to assess and monitor where necessary the distribution of relief materials to disaster survivors and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, and those adversely affected by mass deportation and repatriation from any other country as a result of crises, disasters, or foreign policies.
- n policies.

The NDRP sets forth fundamental policies, planning assumptions, a concept of operations, response and recovery actions, and Federal agency and private sector responsibilities; organizes the forms of Federal Response Assistance that a State is most likely to require under 13 Support Service Areas (SSAs); each of which has a designated primary agency, provides a focus for inter-agency and inter-governmental emergency preparedness, planning, training, exercising, coordination, and information exchange.

The framework also required that the Federal Government through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) shall by the policy perform the following disaster management functions:

- Formulate policy on all activities relating to disaster management in Nigeria;
- b. Coordinate the activities of other stakeholders in Disaster Management.
- c. Co-ordinate plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disasters in the country.
- d. Co-ordinate and promote research activities relating to disaster management in the country.
- h. Coordinate and facilitate the provision of necessary resources for search and rescue and other types of disaster curtailment activities.
- i. Coordinate and support the activities of non-governmental organizations and development partners engaged in disaster management in the country.
- j. Mobilize financial and technical resources from the private sector, international non-governmental organisations, and development partners for the purpose of disaster management in Nigeria.
- k. Collect emergency relief materials or supplies from local, international, and non-governmental agencies for distribution to the people affected by disasters.
- m. Assist in the rehabilitation of survivors, IDPs, and refugees where necessary, and those adversely affected by mass deportation and repatriation from any other country as a result of crises, disasters, or foreign policies.

- n. Prepare the annual budget for disaster management in Nigeria.
- o. Process relief assistance to such countries that have experienced disaster as may be determined by the Federal Government of Nigeria from time to time.
- p. Foster strong working relationships with all relevant National and International Agencies including the United Nations institutions for the reduction of disasters.

The National Agency for Disaster Management (NEMA), established in 1999 is Nigeria's primary disaster risk reduction and preparedness management institution, responsible for coordinating policy formulation and implementation around the management of disasters, including risk reduction, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery efforts in the country. It is a federal government agency with presence and coverage across the country.

Nevertheless, although perennial flooding is perhaps the single most devastating annual disaster experienced in the country, given the scale and scale of its impact on the socio-economic life of the country and on the polity, no national flood response policy has been developed, and no specific framework and response plan has been developed to address the scourge of perennial flooding.

- q. Facilitate the establishment of enabling legislation and monitor the activities of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA).
- r. Perform such other functions which, in the opinion of the Governing Council are required to enhance effective disaster management in Nigeria.

State governments have also established State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs), some of which are backed by legislation, to coordinate disaster response management at the state level. NEMA is responsible for the effective implementation of the National Policy on Disaster Management (NPDM), as well as the NDRP and NDRF.

Such a national policy, framework, and response plan should be focused on preventing flood disasters, considerably mitigating their impact, reducing the risk of flood disasters, and enhancing community and national resilience.

6. THE ECOLOGICAL FUND:

Background on Ecological Fund: The Ecological Fund is an intervention Fund by the Federal Government of Nigeria to address the multifarious ecological challenges in various communities across the Country.

Aims and Objectives: The prime objective of this initiative was to have a pool of funds that would be solely devoted to the funding of ecological projects to ameliorate serious ecological problems nationwide.

Establishment: This special fund was established in 1981 through the Federation Account Act 1981, on the recommendation of the Okigbo Commission. Decree 36 of 1984 and 106 of 1992 as well as the allocation of the Federation Account modification order of 2002 subsequently modified the act.

The Fund which originally constituted one percent (1%) of the Federation account was reviewed to 2% in 1992, and later 1% of the derivation allocation was added, thus bringing the total percentage to three percent (3%).

¹ See www.osgf.gov.ng

¹ Premium Times Investigation: Ecological Funds; How Billions Go Down The Drain. May, 28th 2016.

Given the perennial nature, very destructive and devastating effect of flooding, as well as the fact that flooding has significant impacts on the environment and on ecological systems, flooding, as it happens in Nigeria is undoubtedly an ecological problem, and as such it should be one of the specific ecological problems that should be prioritised for funding through the Ecological Fund.

The investigation further revealed that according to a four-year audit of the Ecological Fund Office carried out by the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, NEITI, between 2007 and 2011, the government diverted several billions of naira from the Fund to projects clearly not ecological in nature.

Money was doled out to government ministries, departments, and agencies, including the military, for projects that were not ecologically related. Additionally, the Federal Government even borrowed monies from the fund to meet shortfalls in its revenue projections.

However, no such comprehensive audit of the fund has yet been undertaken, nor is there any indication in the public domain that the other recommendations of the 2007 to 2011 audit of the Ecological Fund by NEITI have been implemented.

For instance, according to the findings of a Premium Times Investigative report on the utilisation of the Ecological Fund, published in May 2016, in nine years, between 2007 and 2015, Nigeria set aside an average of N48,055,829,613 yearly as the ecological fund.

Thus, a total of N432,502,466,521 accrued to the Fund during this time. Out of this sum, 57 percent, N245,721,482,473, was realised in four years, 2011 – 2014, when the country earned a lot of money from the rise in global oil prices.

NEITI further found that, in the period under review, a total of N217 billion was allocated to the Fund. The utilisation of the funds was, however, largely questionable.

NEITI has, based on its audit findings, called for a comprehensive Audit of the Ecological Fund from its inception to date.

The inability to target dedicated long-term funding towards addressing the flooding crisis in Nigeria through the mechanism of the ecological fund has thus been a missed opportunity.

7. CONCLUSION:

What appears to be clear is that the approach to flood response management in Nigeria is inadequate, ineffective, reactive rather than proactive, as well as inchoate and uncoordinated among the different players and actors involved.

A missing link in this is the absence of a dedicated policy and funding mechanism for flood response management in the country.



Although there are several government agencies, including NEMA, NOA, NIMET, and the Hydrological agency, among others, that play some roles in disaster response management there does not appear to be an integrated and coordinated approach that enables synergy among the respective agencies, and this would have enabled the amplification of their combined efforts.

A deliberate and intentionally driven policy and practice of Public – Public Partnership underpinning a mutually reinforcing collaborative culture will be key to achieving success in this regard.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Government

I. Undertake in the short term, immediate audit, and review of the National post-disaster assessment; the 2012 flood, along with the 2022 National Flood response plan.

II. Take steps to put in place a multi-stakeholder, participatory and inclusive process towards the development of a National Flood Response Management Policy, along with a national framework and national response action plan for preventing flooding disasters, and building flood response preparedness, risk reduction, and mitigation capacity.

V. Undertake a comprehensive and forensic audit of the Ecological Fund from its inception till date.

VI. Overhaul and Reorganise the Ecological Fund Office and reposition it to make it fit for purpose.

VII. State Governments should take immediate steps to establish and operationalise mechanisms for developing and implementing State Level Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs). These FRMPs should align with and complement the National Flood Response Policy and other frameworks and mechanisms, while also focusing more directly on building community capacity for Flood Resilience

X. Undertake a comprehensive review of urban planning, waste management, inland waters management, building and construction, and infrastructure development and rehabilitation policies and processes to make them flood resilient.

III. Establish a multistakeholder coordination mechanism, including state actors at federal, and subnational levels; communities, organised private sector, and civil society; that is operational at strategic policy (political), operational (management), and field (implementation) levels; for the implementation of the flood response policy, framework, and action plan instruments across the country.

IV. Dedicate specific funding towards flood response management, drawing significantly from the Ecological Fund.

VIII. Support communities to establish and fund Community Disaster Response Management Committees and Frameworks – with a priority focus on risk reduction, response preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and reconstruction; to build and enhance community resilience.

IX. Put mechanisms in place and build institutional capacity to undertake (and implement the results of) regular and periodic Flood Risk Assessments; as well as for conducting Rapid Needs Assessments at the onset of flooding; and conduct of Post-Flooding Impact Assessments.

ActionAid and other Civil Society Organisations

i. Conduct advocacy towards the adoption and implementation of the recommendations directed at the government above, through strategic engagement with executive and legislative arms of government at the Federal and State levels.

ii. Raise awareness and build the capacity of local communities on Disaster Response Management focusing on flood disasters and other disasters which may be prevalent in particular to specific communities.

iii. Mobilise and leverage support to build and develop community capacity for disaster response management.

v. Establish partnerships on research into the development of appropriate solutions and responses to flooding, including the development of toolkits that can be utilised and deployed in flood response management by various stakeholders.

vii. Organise periodic national policy dialogues and experience-sharing forums on reducing the risk of flood disasters through effective and appropriate flood response management mechanisms and systems.

iv. Establish a civil society-led campaign for a community-focused National Flood Response Mechanism.

vi. Establish a mechanism for comprehensive dissemination of research reports, toolkit products, and knowledge products on effective and appropriate flood response management systems and mechanisms.

9. ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: Design mechanisms for engagement with

i. The Federal Executive: Including The Presidency; The Federal Executive Council (FEC); The Federal Ministry of Environment; The Federal Ministry of Water Resources; The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management;

The Ecological Fund Office, the Office of the Secretary to The Government of the Federation (OSGF); The Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning; among others

v. The Nigeria Conference of Speakers of State Houses of Assembly

vi. State Houses of Assembly (SHAs); Including their leaderships and relevant legislative committees

vii. Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON)

ii. The National Assembly (NASS): Including The NASS leadership; The relevant NASS Committees

iii. The Nigeria Governor's Forum (NGF)

iv. State Executive Councils and relevant state MDAs

viii. Local Government Area Councils

ix. Civil Society Organisations: Including relevant NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, professional associations, trades, and artisanal associations.

x. Direct Community level engagements



PHOTO GALLERY

