



# Flood, Livelihood Displacement, and Poverty in Nigeria: Plights of Flood Victims, 2012–2018

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## Abstract

The impacts of flood on the Nigerian population over the years have been enormous. This is because the attendant associated risks such as destruction of lives and properties, livelihood displacement, and impoverishment of victims arising from increasing flood cases have constituted a threat to the citizens' survival and therefore inform the attention the menace has drawn among scholars, policy analyst. This chapter has as its primary aim, a critical assessment of the impacts of government responses over the plight of victims of flooding in Nigeria over the years under review. Thus, special attention is given in this chapter to the various barriers or challenges facing government response to the plight of flood victims in Nigeria. Finally, some valuable steps, which if taken will reduce these

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barriers or challenges, are outlined. Though, the study adopted the use of secondary sources of data collection via content analysis, the experiences and knowledge gathered in this chapter will be strategically useful to people and organizations interested in the government of Nigeria's response to the plight of flood victims, barriers inhibiting the success of fund utilization in reducing the suffering and impoverishment of the flood victims, number of deaths, and population displaced as a result.

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**Keywords**

Flood · Livelihood displacement · Poverty · Government responses · Flood victims

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**Introduction**

Now in its sixth year, the threats the 2012 flood disaster along with the subsequent flood disasters that accompanied it posed on the livelihood of the victims in relation to the protracted impoverishment and displacement that these victims suffered while awaiting the government and private led humanitarian groups on relief materials have been the subject of debate among scholars, policy analysts, and climate change mitigation and adaptation experts (Nwodim 2016). The 2012 flood disaster in Nigeria that began in early July alone killed 363 people and displaced over 2.1 million people as of November 5, 2012 (Adekola and Lamond 2018).

According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), 30 out of the 36 states were affected by the floods. The floods were termed as the worst in Nigeria history in 40 years, and affected an estimated total of seven million people (Nkwunonwo 2016). The estimated damages and losses caused by the floods were worth 2.6 trillion naira (Cirella and Iyalomhe 2018). As rightly noted by Ndujihe (2018), flood disasters which followed the devastating 2012 event have the usual trend of submerging houses, deaths of people, population displacement, washing away of farmlands, and destruction of people sources of livelihood which have implications on the growing incident of impoverishment among affected Nigerian population. In fact, the 2018 flood disaster recorded in different states in Nigeria alone, especially from Bayelsa state, has been rated as the worst in the last 6 years (Akukwe et al. 2018).

In Nigeria, different factors have been deduced which account for the incessant cases of flood disaster in the country especially in states declared as the flashpoints for flood disaster (Nkwunonwo et al. 2016; Conversation 2017). First, climate change which causes global warming has been singled out as the basic factor that accounts for the increasing cases of flood disaster which has been shown to contribute to more extreme storms and rainfall. Another factor contributing to flooding in the country is that of the increasing rapid urban growth and poor drainage/culvert system planning. This chapter has as its objective the impacts of government response over these years on the plight of the flood victims. The assessment of the successive flood disasters from 2012 to 2018 on how it undermined livelihood, displaced population, destroyed farmlands, and foster impoverishment on the

affected population. The rest of the chapter includes the introduction, definition of terms, method and sources of data collection and analysis, government response to the victims of floods in Nigeria, and protracted challenges facing the government in this regard. The reported cases of deaths, population displaced, damages and victims impoverished by flooding in Nigeria within the period under review. We draw conclusion with strategic recommendations.

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## Definition of Terms

The concepts of flood, livelihood displacement, poverty, government response, and victims of flood are pivotal in this discourse. Hence the definition of these terms will enhance a shared understanding of their usage in this discourse.

- *Flood:*  
This is the outpouring or overflowing of water usually through rainfall which covers dry space and causes devastations on the socioeconomic activities of the people. Flood can occur through outburst of dam which releases much water on the dry spaces. Recent flood disasters in Nigeria have brought about the deaths of Nigerians, the washing away or destruction of farmlands, submerging of houses which heralds population displacement. Flood can be defined as an overflow of large quantities of water onto a normally dry land. Flooding happens in many ways due to overflow of streams, rivers, lakes, or oceans or as a result of excessive rainfall. Flood or flooding also destroys crops and can wipe away trees and other important structures on land.
- *Livelihood displacement (LD):*  
Livelihood implies various means through which individuals secure a living. Livelihood also involves individuals or people assets, capabilities, income, and activities required to secure a living. Livelihood displacement encompasses threats that disarticulate or disrupt the operations of livelihood. In Nigeria, like in any other parts of the world, floods or flooding has proved to be the potent threat to livelihood displacement or disruption. Natural disasters like earthquake, hurricane, and climate change could become threat to livelihood displacement. In Nigeria, the 2012 flood disaster and the successive disasters have washed away cash crops and farmlands, fish pond, poultry business economic activities where people derived their livelihood.
- *Poverty:*  
The displacement of people from their means of livelihood through flooding without the provision of relief material either from the government or private sector led humanitarian agencies to cushion the devastating impacts of the displacement could exacerbate impoverishment among the victims of flooding. Poverty in this chapter means lack of capability or the capacity by the victims of flooding to provide for their basic necessities of life such as house, food, water, and healthcare, among others.
- *Government response (GR):*  
This is taking to mean, assistance, and support in the forms of relief materials given to the flood victims with the intention to reduce their sufferings brought

about by flood disaster. In Nigeria, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) oversees and supervises the delivery of these relief materials across the Nigeria. Each state in Nigeria, for administrative convenience, has their respective State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). Part of government response to the plight of flood victims in Nigeria is the release of fund. In 2012, the government under President Good luck Jonathan released the sum of ₦17.6 billion for the support of flood victims. Under President Muhammadu Buhari, the federal government has earmarked ₦ 1.6 billion each for the following states in the wake of the 2018 flood disaster across these states. The benefiting states are: Ekiti, Osun, Akwa Ibom, Kebbi, Niger, Kwara, Ebonyi, Enugu, Abia, Oyo, Lagos, Plateau, Sokoto, Edo, and Bayelsa.

- *Flood victims (FV)*

This is taking to mean individuals, groups, households, and communities that suffered from the devastating impacts of flood disaster. In Nigeria, there is victims support fund for flood disaster. Flood victims are person or persons whose houses were submerged by floods, farmland and livestock's destroyed, and source of livelihood is undermined or disrupted by flood disaster.

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## Method and Source of Data Collection and Analysis

This chapter adopted the documentary method of data collection that derived its base from the secondary sources of data gathering that include journal articles, newspapers, books, government publications, among others. The qualitative method of data analysis via content analysis was used to analyze the materials gathered from the secondary sources.

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## Reported Cases of Deaths, Population Displacement, Damages, and Victims Impoverished by Flooding in Nigeria, 2012–2018

From the year 2012 to 2018, the incident of flood disasters and its associated impacts on the victims of flood has been enormous (Onwuka et al. 2015). Table 1 below covers the series of livelihood displaced, farmlands and cash crops washed away by flood, displaced people and livestock, impoverishment, and deaths, which occurred in Nigeria in some selected states. The logic behind the selection of these states was based on the declaration of the states as flashpoints or state vulnerable to flood disaster.

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## Government Responses to the Victims of Flooding and Challenges to Government Responses to the Plight of Flood Victims in Nigeria

In meeting with the increasing humanitarian needs of the flood victims, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was established via Act 12 as amended by Act 50 of 1999, to manage disasters in Nigeria. Therefore, from inception,

**Table 1** Shows reported cases of deaths, population displacement, damages and victims impoverished by flooding in Nigeria, 2012–2018

S/ No.	State	Month & year	Reported cases of deaths, displacement, damages, and impoverishments of victims by floods	Remarks
1.	Enugu	March 2018	Flood destroyed buildings, killed a brick layer and 2 students at Uhuwerre community in Igbo Eze South L.G.A in the state	The flood incident destroyed farmlands of villagers with cash crops washed away by marauding flood
2.	Ogun	June 2018	Farmers in Idagba area of Ayetoro in Yewa L.G.A recorded loss of lives and fishes worth 100 million naira to flood. Twelve persons killed, 3,800 displaced, 200 homes destroyed in Abeokuta. Areas affected in the city include: Lafenwa, Ijaiye, Kuto, Oke Lantoro, Amolaso, Kobiti, and Ilawo	The people whose source of livelihood is tied to farming have been threatened and many became internally displaced in the process
3.	Delta	July 2018	Flood submerged 63 communities, destroyed 43 houses in Koko, Warri North, Araya, Isoko South L.G.A. Agbarhor Ughelli North and Oghara communities in the state	The flood was accompanied with heavy downpour and brainstorms
4.	Niger	July 2018	Twenty-three persons were reported dead while bridges, roads, and culverts linking villages were destroyed. Two persons were allegedly missing	The flood forced many villagers out of their homes, and economic activities were severely halted
5.	Kano	August 2018	Eight local government areas in the state were affected, and hardest hit was Kiru local government area which recorded the deaths of 3 persons	Indigenes/residents of these local areas are predominantly farmers. The flood halted their livelihoods, and their movement were restricted for days thereby undermining economic activities
6.	Bayelsa	October 2018	Seventy percent of the Bayelsan communities were submerged by flood. The hardest hit was communities in Sagbama L.G.A. Many persons were displaced. These communities include	The flood disaster led to closure of schools

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

S/ No.	State	Month & year	Reported cases of deaths, displacement, damages, and impoverishments of victims by floods	Remarks
			Sampou, Kaiama, Bolou Orua, Toru Orua, etc.	
7.	Lagos	July 2017	Homes and buildings were submerged, movements along the roads became difficult in Lekki, Victoria Island, Ajah and other cities and towns in the state	This flood halted economic activities. Poor drainage system and inadequate urban planning were said to be force multipliers of the flood
8.	Benue	August 2017	An estimated 1,000 persons were displaced, 2,000 homes damaged and lives lost. The flood is peculiar to Benue state due to Benue river and serial heavy downpour as flashpoints state	Benue is known for consistent agricultural produce. Six Local government areas affected were Markudi, Agatu, Guma, Tarka, Logo, and Buruku
9.	Katsina	August 2017	According to the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), an estimated 1,000 houses were destroyed, many displaced from their homes and lives lost to flood in Inwala Jangebe village in Batagarawa, Kaita, Malumfashi, Mabai village of Kankara, and Kusada L. G.As	Majority affected by the flood were rural farmers. SEMA had distributed 2 trailers of cement and 600 bundles of roofing zinc to the flood victims across the L.G.As
10.	Imo	October 2017	The flood that occurred in Umuohii village in Oboama Autonomous community in Ezinihitte Mbase destroyed buildings, farmlands, livestock, and economic trees	The heavy downpour that lasted for 2 days rendered 50 household homeless
11.	Oyo	June 2017	Over 3,000 houses were submerged as lives and properties were destroyed in Olodo, Oki, Akobo, Onipepeye, Kute, Eleyele, Ariyo, and Celestial Church Orogun along University of Ibadan-Ojo road in Ibadan metropolis by heavy downpour	The Oyo state government had promised to support the affected residents and repair roads, culverts, and drainages. Absence of these amenities widens the damages from flooding

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

S/ No.	State	Month & year	Reported cases of deaths, displacement, damages, and impoverishments of victims by floods	Remarks
13.	Nassarawa	August 2016	Fifteen persons died, 36 houses submerged, and handful scores of people missing in the flood disaster in Mararaba, Gurku, Kabayi, and Ado communities in Karu L.G.A	Nassarawa state is among the flashpoint states warned by NEMA of impending flood disaster in the beginning of the year
14.	Yobe	August 2016	The SEMA estimated that about 300 houses were destroyed; farmlands and livestock were destroyed in Jakusko and Adaya communities by the flood disaster. Other villages affected by the flood include Ngelzarma, Jajere, Nangere, Buduwa, Nguru, Gashua, Damagum, Dapchi, etc.	Agrarian Yobe state is among the frontline states that Boko Haram had caused havoc; flood disasters intensified the sufferings of the people. Food, clothes, and building materials were provided to the victims by the state government
15	Sokoto	August 2016	Fifty houses were destroyed in Bachaka village in Gudu L.G.A by flood disaster caused by early morning downpour	No loss of lives was recorded but people farmlands and crops worth millions of naira were destroyed thereby aggravated the poverty of the locals
16	Bauchi	August 2016	Four persons died of flood disaster in Galamakira and Galam Baba communities in Ganjuwa L.G.A. Eight persons killed by flooding in Gulbuk community in Giade L.G.A	Lack of access to primary health care for those who sustained injuries during the emergency in these localities was glaring
17	Plateau	August 2016	All-night downpour destroyed 20 cows by herdsmen in Fobor-Angware and Maza, houses were destroyed, people in Jos East L.G.A. Roads linking communities were also washed away by the heavy flood	Twenty-nine other cows were discovered after the flood disaster. Farmers lost their sources of livelihood as many farmlands were destroyed by the flood
18	Kano	September 2015	Six persons were killed in Shanono, Dala, Tundu Wada, Gabasawa, and Takai L.G.As by flood and 1,600 persons representing families and properties	15.8 million naira was said to have earmarked for the purchase of relief materials for the support of the victims

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

S/ No.	State	Month & year	Reported cases of deaths, displacement, damages, and impoverishments of victims by floods	Remarks
			worth millions were displaced by flood disaster	
19	Edo	September 2015	More than 35 communities were submerged by flood in Etsako East and Etsako Central L.G.A. An estimated 30,000 persons were displaced on the two divides, and farmlands with cash crops were destroyed by flooding. The affected communities were Udaba, Uneme, Usomegbe, Anegbette, Uneme- Ugwoyo, etc.	Victims of the flood were women and children who were in dire need of health- care facilities, foodstuff, shelter, etc.
20	Adamawa	September 2015	Seven communities in 5 local governments' areas were submerged by flood that includes Guluk, Shelligence, Lamurde, Demsa, and Numan. Borongo community was the hardest hit communities. People were displaced, and properties and farmlands were destroyed by flooding	Alleged to have caused by outburst flood water from Kiri-Dam and heavy downpour
21	Ebonyi	September 2014	Over 200 houses were submerged, families displaced by flood, and 2 persons killed as a result in Onuebonyi Inyimagu, Abakaliki, and Izzi local government area	The flood came as a result of a 3-day downpour which affected rice plantations plus other farms input. Ebonyi state is an agrarian state
22	Kaduna	September 2014	The flood claimed the life of a 7-year-old girl Theresa James at Anguwar Yelwa community in Chikun L.G. A. Other areas affected by the flood include Unguwar Rimi, Lere, Kachia, Kaduna North & South, Unguwar Dosa, Zaria council, etc.	The flood was said to have caused by 2-day heavy downpour
23	Oyo	June 2014	Ten persons were killed in Apete Ibadan when a makeshift bridge was collapsed by floodwater	Oyo state is among the flashpoints for high incident of flooding in Nigeria

(continued)



**Table 1** (continued)

S/ No.	State	Month & year	Reported cases of deaths, displacement, damages, and impoverishments of victims by floods	Remarks
24	Anambra	November 2013	An estimated 1,000 people of the 2012 flood victims lost their voter's card in Ogbaru and Anambra East L.G.A	Anambra state is one of the states in the federation declared by NEMA as the national disaster in the country
25	Kano	August 2013	Five hundred persons were displaced by heavy downpour, 100 homes submerged, 4 person missing	Kano is the largest city in northern Nigeria where torrential rainfall is fairly common and residents in rural areas rely on agriculture for their livelihood
26	Yobe	August 2013	Over 300 houses were submerged and 1,000 persons displaced by from their homes. Areas affected in the state are Potiskum, Gashu'a, Nguru, Fika, Gaidam, Damagum, and Damaturu, the state capital	The flood also destroyed farmlands and crops
27	Cross River	July 2012	49,000 people were displaced by the flood. Over 212 communities, 1,800 houses, 82,361 farmlands, 13 lives lost, 13 suffered severe injuries, 18 markets, 15 churches, and 13 schools were destroyed	Agrarian communities whose farmlands and cash crops were destroyed became vulnerable. One among the states in Nigeria affected by the 2012 unprecedented flood experience
28	Plateau	July 2012	Thirty-nine persons were killed by the flood and 35 missing. An estimated 200 homes were destroyed by the flood, and 3,000 persons were displaced	Enlisted in the club of states severely affected by the 2012 flood disaster
29	Kogi	September 2012	An estimated 623,900 persons were displaced and 152,575 hectares of farmlands were destroyed by the flood	Flashpoints of states in Nigeria that are flood vulnerable
30.	Niger	October 2012	Over 117 communities submerged by flood, 663,000 persons were affected as the victims displaced from their homes. Farmlands destroyed and	The victims and displaced persons in the various resettlements camps in the state appealed to the government to make their stay permanent. That is the degree of frustrations

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

S/ No.	State	Month & year	Reported cases of deaths, displacement, damages, and impoverishments of victims by floods	Remarks
			cash crops uprooted by the disaster	experienced by these flood victims

Source: Compiled by the Author

NEMA has been tackling disaster-related issues through the establishment of concrete structures and measures, such measures as the education of the public in order to raise their level of awareness and reduce the effects of disasters in the country. In each of the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory, there exists the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). From 2012 to 2018 involving the administration of President Good luck Jonathan and the current administration of President Muhammad Buhari, various emergency interventionist funds have been given to the states affected by the flood disasters. Under the former President Goodluck Jonathan, the sum of ₦17.6 billion naira was shared to states by the federal government to states hard hit by flooding. Following the rampaging floods of 2018, the federal government released ₦1.6 billion naira to 16 states that benefited from the intervention. The states are Ekiti, Osun, Akwa Ibom, Kebbi, Niger, Kwara, Ebonyi, Enugu, Abia, Oyo, Lagos, Plateau, Sokoto, Edo, and Bayelsa.

Despite federal government efforts in ameliorating the humanitarian needs of the flood victims, in 2018, the government pledged \$8.2 million for relief efforts as well as declaring a state of emergency in four states, namely, Niger, Anambra, Kogi, and Delta States. NEMA set up five emergency operation centers to facilitate search and rescue operations and humanitarian support. Orji (2018) had revealed that the various efforts and program in rescue and support for the flood victims have faced huge practical challenges in reaching flood victims; however, these efforts have also reportedly been undermined by poor management, bad governance, and corruption. Other challenges derailing the government efforts in meeting with the humanitarian needs of the floods victims is failure on the part of successive government to plan and prepare for long-term solution to the crisis of flooding in the country. People mistrust on government ability to come to their rescue in the face of national disaster and inability of the Nigerian state to judiciously implement the provisions of disaster management plan. The widening gap in the interaction between the state (Federal Government) and various Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in the country have not been cordial.

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## Conclusion and Strategic Recommendations

We began the chapter with the position that the lives of the victims of floods in Nigeria from the illustrated cases in our Table 1 show that from 2012 to 2018, destruction of farmlands and cash crops, population displacement, deaths of many

Nigerians and the wanton destruction of people livelihoods were devastating in Nigeria. With this, the following strategic recommendations are offered:

- Nigerian government should develop a long-term strategic plan toward the rescue, support, and release of humanitarian needs of the population. The culture of reactive from the federal government toward the plight of the floods victims should be discouraged.
- Fund so released for meeting the demands and needs of the floods victims should be monitored by the federal government to avoid rascality, misuse of funds, and diversion of the fund for personal aggrandizement of their members.
- There should be appropriate climate-related education in order to sensitize the population on risks associated with the floods.

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