

AROUND & ABOUT

Floods force many into IDP camps, poverty annually

Many people are killed while several others are forced into Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps annually as a result of flooding across Nigeria. The occurrences have also left many families in abject poverty with nowhere to turn to for succour.



Streets taken over by flood

Eugene Agha, Lagos

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 showed how vulnerable the world is when it comes to environmental, health and economic issues.

The pandemic forced all the countries of the world to recognise how multiple economic, social and institutional drivers are closely linked with disasters such as flooding and pandemic.

Like the pandemic, a good number of countries have also been ravaged by floods annually.

Nigeria, which occupies two-thirds of the Gulf of Guinea and part of the Sahara Desert, has also had its own fair share of some of these natural disasters.

Every year, several thousands of families in coastal states and those who reside along the banks of the rivers Benue and Niger in Nigeria have been affected by floods caused by the opening of the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon.

In the South, as well as most parts of the North, families have been forced to flee their homes to escape the floods that have claimed many lives, destroyed homes and ruined sources of livelihoods.

With these occurrences, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been working closely with states and local governments to assist victims.

In July, 2022, emergency workers rescued three persons from a Lexus jeep that was swept away by flood in the Oyatoki area of Agege, Lagos State.

Mr Ibrahim Farinloye, the Zonal Coordinator, South West, NEMA, said the incident involved two vehicles, a Lexus jeep carrying three persons and a Toyota car with three occupants.

He said the six persons were reported to have been swept away when rainwater overflowed an uncompleted canal.

Rainfall across the states has resulted in heavy flooding which has affected almost all the 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Last year in Lagos, two residents of Orile-Agege were declared missing, while four were rescued in an incident.

Rescuers from both NEMA and those from the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), as well as those from the fire service, searched for the two missing persons without success. Their bodies were later fished out from the murky waters from the drainage.

Recall how the heavy rains in 2012 led to heavy flooding that devastated different parts of the country.

Emergency workers said over seven

million people were affected while over 300 people lost their lives and 2.1 million others displaced.

It took some of them months and even years to put what remained of their lives back together. Some of them probably never recovered from the shock.

In 2022 alone, over 600 immediate deaths were recorded. This according to an environmentalist with the Human Environmental Agenda (HEDA), Comrade Sulaiman Arigbabu, the figure excluded those who might have died in the hospital where they were rushed to as a result of injuries sustained, as well as those who might have died as a result of diseases contracted during the flood.

Comrade Aribanu, who spoke to our correspondent on phone, said, "Earlier in the year, precisely in January, the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) released its annual climate predictions, where it was clearly stated that there was going to be heavy rains that could lead to heavy flooding this year."

"Based on that, the Nigeria Radiological Service came out with their own warning that there is going to be heavy flooding. Right now there are parts of the country that are experiencing low rains, but are going to witness heavy flooding. These areas are currently not getting enough rainfall. Farmers are complaining, and all of these things are going to come within a shorter time."

"This kind of situation also leads to flooding and nightmares to those entities that manage flooding from dams and water bodies. This kind of situation is when you see river banks over flooded because dams have to be reopened," he explained.

He said that ironically, little or nothing was being done by the local governments as a result of starvation of funds from their respective state governments.

He further stated that NiMet, in its forecast for the year, warned that most parts of the country would witness heavy flooding.

This according to the NiMet's weather forecast might lead to loss of many lives while several thousands of households might be displaced if precautionary measures are not taken.

Ibrahim Farinloye, NEMA's South West Coordinator, on phone, also said that the increasing impact of climate change had also left non-resilient Nigerian communities vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters like flooding.

He said before the rainy season began in February, and the resultant flooding in May and June, relevant government agencies had predicted heavy rainfall and warned states to prepare in order to prevent sad incidents,

but that despite the warning alerts, deaths from flooding had sent communities into mourning.

Number of deaths

Kano

On August 8, 2022, three persons were killed by flood in Ajingi LGA of Kano State. 495 families also lost their homes the same day, while in September, the overflow of water from the Tiga Dam in Bebeji LGA after a heavy downpour led to the deaths of 23 persons. KASEMA also said over 100 other persons were seriously injured.

June 28: No less than five persons were reported dead as a result of floods and windstorms in Randi, Kibiya, Doguwa, Dambatta, Kiru and Tsanyawa LGAs, and about 3,000 houses were destroyed.

Anambra

July 1: An eight-year-old boy, identified as Izuchukwu, was killed when a surging flood flushed him into a deep gully in Nkpor town in Idemili North LGA.

Lagos

July 13: Seven persons died in heavy flooding. Three among the deceased were members of the same family.

Yobe

July 26: SEMA reported that over 21 deaths were recorded in the flood that devastated the state since the beginning of the rainy season in May. 4,095 households were said to have been affected.

August 2: A flash flood caused by a heavy downpour across the state resulted in the deaths of three persons.

September 17: Flooding in the state led to the death of 11 persons while destroying 180 houses and washing off 752 hectares.

Gombe

August 1: A heavy downpour in Bajoga town in Funakaye LGA led to the collapse of the walls of a room where two children were sleeping, leading to the death of a three-year-old child, while his two-year-old sibling was critically injured.

Zamfara

August 20: A large waterway in the Fira-da Kwaddi community in Gusau LGA was reported to have overflowed and two people drowned in the process.

Kebbi

August 31: Two persons were killed in Shanga LGA after heavy flooding that submerged over 300 houses.

Borno

August 31: Heavy rainfall led to the overflowing of the River Ngadabul in Maiduguri and 15 bodies were recovered from it afterward.

Niger

September 3: Flooding in Magama and Rafi LGAs led to the deaths of seven persons, six in Magama and one in Rafi. Several houses, farms and bridges were also destroyed.

September 19: 14 persons were killed by flooding in Magama, Kontagora, Agwara, Rafi, Lavun, Bosso and Paikoro areas of the state.

Bauchi

September 7: 10 persons lost their lives during a flooding that happened in Zaki LGA.

September 10: Three persons were said to have died by flood in Zaki and Gamawa LGAs. Up to 1,453 houses and several farmlands were also destroyed.

September 15: Five persons lost their lives during flooding in Jama'are LGA.

Jigawa

Recently, the SEMA announced that the

death rate from flooding in the state was 98.

Adamawa

September 21: Heavy rainfall accompanied by the release of water from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon flooded communities and led to the deaths of 25 persons.

However, the data presented was not exhaustive of the number of deaths recorded that period.

While 29 states and the FCT have been seriously affected by flooding, Jigawa has recorded the highest number of deaths.

What emergency workers are doing

Ibrahim Farinloye explained that the first step that NEMA, Lagos office, embarked on after the 2022 rainy season from January, 2023, was to reappraise the previous year's effect on the people and the environment, and take steps at preventing a recurrence and drew the attention of all critical stakeholders who, he noted were statutorily saddled with the responsibility of managing various aspects of rainy season and its consequences.

He said, "One major step that was first taken was by the Ogun/Osun River Basin Authority on the Oyan Dam. The management of the basin has been regular in the release of water for dry season farming with the aim of getting the dam almost empty before the onset of rainfall."

"Because of the proactive measures taken by the basin, as at the end of last week, the emergency flood level had not risen to 13 per cent, which indicated that the communities in the lowland have nothing to fear."

"Despite this, NEMA and some stakeholders have carried out assessment on the level of River Ogun, which was already full without release of dam water. Visits to various communities like Maidan, Ajegunle, Elede, Agboyi and Odo Ogun were aimed at sensitising residents on NiMet and NiHSA's predictions, as well as the unprecedented rainfall effects being expected in the year."

"The visits also exposed the vulnerability of the residents to boat mishaps, as most of the communities are not complying with the mandatory use of life safety jackets on the inland waterways."

"This made NEMA to invite the National Inland Waterways Agency (NIWA) to educate and enlighten the people."

"Apart from this, the residents interacted with NIWA on their challenges on the waterways."

"In accordance with the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) imperatives, the points raised were articulated and most of them concerning the state's Ministry of Environment and Water Resources were presented in a brotherly atmosphere."

"The ministry acknowledged all the issues raised, while making it clear that they were already working on the challenges. The then Commissioner for Environment and Water Resources further reiterated the continued efforts of the state government to strengthen and advance all efforts to mitigate any effects of rainfall."

"True to this, the presence of the ministry in Oke Ishagun, where three siblings were lost in last year's flooding, was being noted with continuous works on expansion of canals and upgrading of bridges. The Ijora Badia axis is also being attended to."

"The efforts of a former Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon Femi Gbajabiamila, in his constituency with the expansion and upgrading of canals have impacted positively on Mushin, Idi Oro and Unilag communities."

"The Kushela, Ijede and Itowolo communities are being looked into," Farinloye explained.