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FLOOD DISASTER: AN IMPACT ON PLATEAU STATE

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Dogo, Grace Jonathan
Social Work Student of The University of Jos, Department of Sociology
Email:gracejdogo@yahoo.com/08060899880

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the occurrences and prevalence of flooding and their impact on the people in Plateau State. The main aim is to create an understanding on how to exert concerted efforts aimed at reducing the trends and devastating impact of flooding and mitigating risks on the already vulnerable people. The author utilized the flood situational reports from the Plateau State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and other secondary research work to analyze the situation. The findings revealed a sharp rise in the occurrence of floods with devastating impact largely being felt by the poorer section of the society. People are affected socially, psychologically, economically, agriculturally and health wise leading to exacerbated human sufferings; the deterioration and degradation of the environment while relief and intervention measures are often inadequate. Many reasons account for this situation ranging from climatic conditions, negative lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours, overpopulation, overcrowding and lack of political will at various levels among other things. The people are not sufficiently educated on the practices that serve as contributory factors to flooding and those saddled with the responsibility of ensuring strict compliance of rules and regulations often compromise on these standards. It is recommended that investing in prevention and mitigation is economically and socially more beneficial than expenditure in relief and rehabilitation. Government should be prepared to cushion the effects and impact on victims and intervention at all levels should be proactive through policies, implementations, enlightenment and collaborative efforts on mitigation and prevention. It is also advocated that Agencies entrusted with town planning laws should live up to expectation in ensuring strict compliance of such laws. In addition, helping professionals like social workers and psychologists should be deeply involved along with other stakeholders in disaster policy formulation, preparedness, response, reconstruction, rebuilding and reintegration towards building a culture of safety. Otherwise many lives and property may continue to be endangered.

KEY WORDS:

Flood, Impact, Disaster, Climate Change, Plateau State

Introduction

Seasonal Rainfall Predictions (SRP) in 2017 reported by the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET) is anchored by two federal agencies, the Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency and the Federal Ministry of Water Resources. The 2017 SRP indicated that climatic tendencies that could possibly

engender high intensity rainfall, characterized by heavy flooding will be experienced in about twenty one states in Nigeria, Plateau state was named as one of the states. Plateau state has seventeen local government areas (LGAs), a teaming population with diverse economic endeavours. If no intervention is taken to safeguard against the destructive effects of the predicted climatic tendencies, many lives and property may be endangered

Man's effort at survival and self-preservation is directed towards the mastery of his environment. Unfortunately, there are limitations to this effort; he cannot completely wipe out disasters, and in several cases, his efforts are inadequate toeradicate disasters and sometimes even for mitigation, reduced impact and prevention especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Flood disaster concerns have increased in recent years due to several factors such as climatic changes resulting in more frequent windy and severe rainfalls, urbanization, overpopulation, lifestyles, attitudes and behaviour.

According to Agbonkhese, Ocholi and Adekunle (2014),flooding is when a body of water moves over and above an area of land which is not normally submerged. It could also be seen as the inundation of an area not normally covered with water, through a temporary rise in water level, stream, river, lake or sea. Emeribeole (2015), viewed flood as a natural consequence of stream flow in a continually changing environment. Sada and Odemerho (1988), defined flooding as unusually high rates of discharging; often leading to inundation of land adjacent to streams, and it is usually caused by intense or prolonged rainfall.

The Annual Disaster Statistical Review (ADSR, 2013), argued that flooding can be caused by natural or man-made factors and they are among the most devastating disasters in the world, claiming more lives and causing more property damage than anyone would imagine. Nigerian flood affects and displaces more people second only to the insurgency in the country. Emeribeole, (2015) reported that at least 20% of the population is at risk from one form of flooding or another. There is no doubt that the world is under serious threat from the environment, beginning from China to Mexico, Indonesia, United States of America, the United Kingdom and Nigeria. Analysts have argued that the environment was only responding to the abuses heaped on it by the activities of man.

The predictions by NIMET coupled with the incidences of flooding across the country and the devastation confronting Nigerians, calls for concerted efforts aimed at reducing the trends of flood and other disasters and mitigating risks on the already vulnerable people. This is to curtail the exposure of people to the possible rise in simultaneous disasters and the odds or possibilities of cascading crises - where one disastrous event triggers another disaster, resulting in yet another event. For instance, floods could lead to food shortages, to housing or health crises beyond the LGAs, state or nation's resources to cope.

Dimension of Floods

Unprecedented floods are being witnessed in many parts of the world, the U.S in August-September, 2017 experienced the devastation caused by several storms during the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season which was significant as hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria hit Texas and Florida, described as the worst in 50 years and racked up over $200 billion. The Washington Post (2017, pp.1) commented "the U.S has never been hit by three storms this strong, same season in modern records". In Southern Thailand the flood of January, 2017 killed at least 21 people, nearly a million people were reportedly affected. In 2000, Mozambique floods left 950,000 people homeless. Kerski and Ross (2000) cited over 14 million Indian victims in the flood of 2007 and 6,054 deaths in 2013.In the same year, Haiyan in the Philippines recorded 7,354 deaths, described as the second costliest disaster far behind Hurricane Katrina with US$ 149.1 billion. It was one of the strongest storms ever to make landfall, it tore through Central Philippines killing nearly 6,000, displacing 3.6 million (ADSR, 2013).According to UN-Water (2011), worldwide, there has been rapid growth in the number of people killed or seriously impacted by flood disasters. Large scale damages affecting large proportion of people in low laying coastal zones and other areas at risk of flooding have been reported. The United Nations Water (2011.pp.1-3), stated "extreme weather conditions and floods have caused half of disasters worldwide and 84% disaster deaths was attributed to flooding".

In Nigeria, frequent flood occurrences have been reported, and these reports in cities and towns of Nigeria in recent times have become a matter of great concern and challenge to the people and government. Its impact and dimension is equally becoming increasingly severe and more worrisome that it is mostly felt by the urban poor in such a way that recovery is unlikely without external support. In other words, urban poor are most vulnerable to suffer the impact of flood because they set up homes in the flood plains. And several analyses have shown that flooding is one of the most devastating hazards likely to increase in many regions of the world partly due to global climate change and poor governance in the developing world

Nigeria, one of the most populated countries of the world, with an estimated population of over 170 million people (Nkwunonwo, 2016) experienced flood that affected about 30 states of the federation, causing the deaths of over 400 persons and displaced about two million people in the year 2012. The total amount of losses was estimated at N2.29 trillion and termed the worst in 40 years (NEMA, 2013).The devastation caused by extreme events has been exacerbated by low level of awareness of the consequential effects of human activities on drainage systems and other environmental issues.

Residents of Lagos are now accustomed to challenges posed by flooding, in addition to gridlock on major roads, causing people to remain indoors. Thousand stranded commuters have to pay increased fares for those willing to risk travelling on the flooded roads Agbonkhese et al, (2014). The government in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State resolved that certain structures on waterways had to be demolished as residents flee their residence According to Gwary (2008), flooding occurs in Nigeria in three main forms which are: river flooding, urban flooding and coastal flooding. The release of water from the Lagdo Reservoir in Cameroun caused the death of 30 people in Benue State, the floods spread to Delta State, Bayelsa, Kogi and many other states with dare consequences to citizens – thousands were displaced, properties, and farmlands were all destroyed. The President of Nigeria, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan at that time, called these floods "a national disaster" and released 17.6 billion naira to the states and agencies for response, flood relief and rehabilitation (All results web, 2017, pp.1-3).

Flood events in many capital cities in Nigeria, are mostly due to lack of proper the poor consciousness of the inhabitants on environmental literacy and education by the inhabitants, inadequate or absolute lack of information on the flood prone areas, waste dump and construction of buildings (commercial, residential, and even public offices) on river channel. In 2017, Lagos flooding caused gridlock and some residents confirmed it was due to blockage of major canals, people had dumped all sorts of waste – empty containers, takeaway plates, plastics, etc, into the canals and drainages (Ayankola, 2017).

Apart from precipitation, other factors contribute to flooding in Nigeria, some of these factors are geology, land use, topography, soil characteristics, vegetation etc. These factors are not homogenous across the country, therefore, there are no uniform patterns of rainfall intensity. According to NEMA (2013), the largest rivers of Nigeria, Niger and Benue, are trans-boundary water bodies. The Niger River Basin and the floods within the basin are influenced by factors operating from outside Nigeria as far away as the foothills of the Futa Jalon Mountains in the Republic of Guinea which end up in Niger Delta, Nigeria. Parts of Nigeria become susceptible to flood because some of the forces of the floods outside its territorial boundaries and can be controlled only through regional agreements and cooperation on reservoir and management.

Nature of Flood on the Plateau

In 2012, at least 39 people were killed in Plateau state due to flooding. Heavy rainfall caused the Lamingo Dam to overflow, sweeping through neighborhoods and approximately 200 homes were submerged, 35 people were missing and 3000 people were left homeless. In August, 2012, flooding killed 33 people, over 12,000 people were affected in six LGAs of the state and hundreds rendered homeless. Reportedly, the massive floods washed snakes from far distances into

farms and residents in Pankshin, Kanke, Kanam constituency increasing vulnerability of the people (Mojeed, M., 2015).

Table 1: Some Incidences and Impact of flood disaster in Plateau State

Year/Date	Place	Cause	Estimated Damages	Estimated Cost N
May, 2013	Bassa LGA	Flood	574 displaced, 318 homes,35 classroom block	26,884,511.00
June, 2014	QuaanPan LGA	Rain/windstorm	263 displaced, 105 homes	12,463,012.00
April, 2014	Barkin Ladi LGA	Rain/wind storm	803 displaced, 108 homes	21,284,181.00
August, 2015	Bassa LGA	Flood	801 displaced, homes and farmlands	98,050,000.00
August, 2015	Jos East	Rainstorm	302 displaced, farmlands, crops and homes	25,000,000.00
July, 2016	Jos South	Flood	2 comm, 146 displaced	13,615,000.00
July, 2016	Jos North LGA	Flood	2 communities, 215 displaced	25,000,000.00
April 2017	Kanam LGA	Rain storm	45 villages,74 homes, 370 people displaced & farmlands	27,700,000.00
April 2017	Kanke LGA	Flood	42 villages,95 homes, 425 displaced & crops	
June 2017	Jos South LGA	Rain/thunder storm	44 villages, 43 homes, 363 displaced, livestock	48,890,000.00
June, 2017	Jos North LGA	Flood	520 people displaced, 115 homes & 5 dead	36,000,000.00
July, 2017	Jos East LGA	Flood	36 villages, 39 homes, 303 displaced, 1 dead, crops & livestock	47,401,400.00

Source: SEMA Report/Details of Flood/Rainstorm Disaster in Plateau State 2013 – 2015 and Situation Report on Flood Disaster in Plateau State April – July, 2017

Evidently, table 1 showed hardly does the rainy season passes without some incidences of flood across the seventeen LGAs of the state or at least some parts of the state, with diverse losses and more hardship for the people. This calls for a sense of responsibility on citizens and political will on the part of government, since heavy rainfalls are becoming the norm. According to SEMA's report (2017), torrential rainfall lasting several hours continue to cause massive flooding across the seventeen LGAs of the state, the ravaging flood wiped out whole families,

some corpses were not found. Many houses and property, livestock, crops and farmlands were lost. The heavy rainfall coupled with bad human activities in relation to the environment and lack of drainage infrastructure in most Nigerian communities has left hundreds of people distressed and homeless.

A survey of some of the areas frequently affected by flooding in the state shows that the situation further aggravates due to the compulsion of the poor to exploit environmental resources for their survival in terms of deforestation and thereby, increasing the risk and exposure of the society to disasters, in particular those triggered by flood, drought and landslides. People also fill up and block the drainages, the rain water over flows, carrying debris, and anything that stand on its path. This is further compounded by the narrow drainage systems-built decades ago across the state that have become either blocked or inadequate to contain the large volume of water from the heavy rainfalls, the results are the devastation being experienced.

Impact of Flooding:

The impact of flood is usually of great magnitude as they affect individuals, families, and communities with social, psychological, health, economic, agricultural, and environmental consequences. The impact of flooding depends greatly on the location, severity and duration as well as the vulnerability of the people and their environment. In flood situations, people experience several traumatic conditions at the same time and apart from that, in some occasions, hoodlums take advantage of the situation to loot the victims' properties under the guise of rendering voluntary assistance. The onset of the rainy season on the Plateau is becoming a period of apprehension for citizens, with many people living in flood prone areas or economically or agriculturally engaged in similar risky areas. It is particularly worrisome that the few and late warnings governments sometimes give to the people do not offer any alternatives as to where they can relocate to and when the flooding occurs, the relief government provides through SEMA is often grossly inadequate since it is usually on short term basis and the people are left on their own to rebuild their lives.

Impact on Agriculture and Economy

Disasters have direct impact on agriculture and means of livelihoods of millions of small farmers, pastoralists, fishers and forest dependent communities especially in the developing countries like Nigeria. Floods tend to further degrade already degraded systems, the removal of vegetation in and around rivers, increased channels size, dams, levee banks and catchment clearing all work to degrade the hill-slopes, rivers and flood plains, increasing erosion and transfer of both sediment and nutrients from the land, distorting the natural balance of the ecosystem NEMA, (2013). The Food Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2015, pp.8-14) reported that disasters destroyed critical agricultural assets and infrastructure

and losses in agricultural dependent manufacturing sub sectors such as textile and food processing industries. The report asserted "disasters can slow economic growth in countries where the sector is important to the economy and where it makes significant contribution to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP)". Countries where agriculture contributes 30 percent GDP include Burkina Faso, Kenya, Chad, Mali and many other countries.

The Situational Report and incidences of flooding on the Plateau shows high impact of disaster on agriculture. SEMA (2017) revealed that hardly any LGA existed that was not affected by flood with high impact of agricultural destruction in terms of widespread farmland and crop damages. Livestock losses, etc. such as crops still to be harvested can completely be lost or limited in terms of quality or quantity harvested; newly planted crops yet to germinate are endangered due to inaccessibility; new crop planting become difficult due to wet conditions, manpower lost and equipment. Damages to roads, bridges, rail lines hamper movements of food crops or cattle, fisheries and other products or businesses.

Though SEMA distributes some food items and other basic necessities to the victims, they are usually on temporary basis and are hardly sufficient for meeting the humanitarian crises brought by the floods. This adds up on the already vulnerable citizens who are caught in the web of poverty with its vicious cycle creating increased hardships. Economic activities involve the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. The occurrences of floods are capable of affecting these processes resulting in increased food costs with people hardly able to afford basic supplies probably due to scarcity, low purchasing power and high cost.

Impact on Health

Flooding can be the reason for outbreaks of diseases and infections as water sources become contaminated and intensify the spread of epidemic diseases, diarrhea, typhoid, scabies, cholera, malaria, dysentery, pneumonia, cholera, measles, insects and animal bites, other water-borne and communicable diseases. The dramatic nature of any disaster with relatively high death toll and psychological impact can overwhelm an unprepared health and emergency response system resulting in chaos for the affected community and its surroundings, crippling their ability to meet demand for health care and return to normalcy. Weiwei, Gerard, Clark & Xiang-Yu (2010, pp.3-5), opined that "effects of floods can lead to loss of health infrastructure including essential drugs and health supplies". This could result in poor mental health, poisoning, infected wounds, chronic diseases, disability and poverty-related diseases such as malnutrition and starvation.

Consumers may be forced to review the cost-benefit analysis of food products they can afford for their families in terms of quantity and quality of healthy foods. Survival becomes the goal rather than nutrition with implications especially for children growth and health. The victims of flooding are subjected to psychological torture, fear and anxiety as they may become subjected to real or imagined sense of helplessness or traumatized leading to illnesses or even deaths, overwhelming individuals' abilities to cope. It is evidently clear that much more remains to be done in reducing the occurrences of floods in our communities. In terms of building critical resilience nationally, in states and LGAs to enable actionable results to the grassroots within every community and every sector.

Suggested Intervention Strategies in Flood Situation

Since the efforts of man towards the mastery of his environment falls short of what is adequate and different forms of disasters like flood keep occurring and traumatizing people, and with the recognition that disasters affect the poorer section of society who take the major share of the impact of flooding. Professional intervention is advocated to adequately cater for the welfare of the people – psychologically, socially, economically to enable victims to heal, gain equilibrium and stability to become contributors to their social system and not become perpetually helpless, hopeless, and dependent or destitute.

Many professionals like the social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, Doctors, and other members of the helping professionals must play their roles in assisting the people who are affected. These professionals have long been involved in disaster management and relief from the chaos of the Industrial Revolution, wartime relief and their concern with the physical environment. Zakour (2012.pp 1-2), opined that “the environment is included among the physical, biological and social factors influencing the welfare of individuals, groups and communities”. crisis occur, individuals interpret traumatic events in different ways - their coping ability and the limitation of their social resources could lead to stress beyond the individual, family or community to cope (Demsy and Idyorough, 2011). It then becomes necessary for professional social workers to intervene and offer help to the victims. However, many factors influence intervention including: the magnitude and type of event or crises or disaster involved; coping capability and emotional resources of the victim; previous traumatic events and resources of the person and the network of social support of the individual.

When flood disasters happen, stresses culminating to all kinds of traumas and seeming helplessness and hopelessness and if crisis intervention is lacking, it could result in dare consequences because some people may never heal or find the impetus to fulfil their purpose in life. This is provided through the efforts of the interdisciplinary helping team comprising - social workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, lab scientists among others to provide the needed

treatments, counseling and psychosocial support for victims to find some relief. Social workers and psychologists are professionally trained to offer psychosocial therapy using social casework, psychological theories, social work professional ethics, principles, values, and skills in counseling individuals, families and communities for better adjustment, vocational training, occupational rehabilitation and many other intervention strategies aimed at restoring health, hope and equilibrium at all levels.

Professional social workers are also involved in working with individuals, families and communities to prevent or reduce the occurrence of floods as much as it is humanly possible. Since there is a consensus that investing in prevention and mitigation is economically and socially more beneficial than expenditure in relief and rehabilitation. Fahrudin, Baco, Malek & Haji-Yusuf, (2000) emphasized a world report on disaster in establishing that one dollar spent on prevention is more than ten times valuable than a dollar spent on relief in net present value. Therefore, social workers and other stakeholders like the National Orientation Agency (NOA), SEMA and others in public or private practice should be coopted, trained and re-trained and sufficiently mobilized to work in communities with the aim to promote preventive measures which is cost-effective, to encourage healthy attitudes and living through education, enlightenment, counseling among others. Since prevention is often possible and cost-effective; many measures- private and public must be mobilized to work well together for effectiveness. The exposure to hazards may rise in communities, but greater exposure need not increase vulnerability. Flood management depends on effective integration of assessment, response, planning, mitigation, prevention/preparedness, and recovery/ reconstruction at the individual, family, community, LGs, state, national and regional levels.

Recommendations

i) Government to sustain public enlightenment programmes towards educating the citizenry on floods and other disaster preventive measures as well as bridging the gap between communities and policy makers using NOA in dissemination.

ii) Government to ensure that flood disaster risk reduction is given a national, state and LGAs priority with strong institutions for implementation. The Jos Metropolitan Development Board (JMDB) entrusted with town planning be strengthened to ensure adequate laws are not only made but enforced. Expansion of drainage systems across the state is necessary as well as better living conditions for citizens to avoid building or living in disaster prone areas.

iii) Main streaming the different sectors into disaster risk measures like the agricultural sector, health sector, and all other relevant sectors viewed as necessary to prevent, reduce, and mitigate the significant impact of

disaster on these sectors towards effective living.

iv) The interdisciplinary helping team professionals of social workers, clinical psychologists should be engaged in the handling of disaster issues – counseling, psychotherapy for professional and effective services with adequate re-trainings on best practices.

v) The disasters often faced in Nigeria and indeed Plateau State are generally man-made disasters, therefore, conceited efforts must be put in place to forestall the frequent occurrences of flood in the state through the provision of adequate water ways, policies that are workable in preventing people from building on water ways with frequent inspections to ensure compliance by the government.

Conclusion

Flood disasters usually experienced in Nigeria are mostly from negative human activities and poverty and risk to disasters are also inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing to vulnerability therefore the poor and vulnerable are worst affected in cases of disasters as they are compelled to live at physically more vulnerable locations, often on unsafe land and in unsafe shelters. Increasing the budget on research and development and making disaster risk reduction a priority is advocated. Improving risk information and early warning and NOA empowered so that knowledge, education and innovation is used to build a culture of safety and resilience across the nation. In addition, regional cooperation is also necessary towards the fight against floods with waters flowing across countries.

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