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Incessant Flooding of River Niger and the Role of the Church in Creating Awareness

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ABSTRACT

The incessant flooding of the River Niger has become a significant environmental and humanitarian challenge in Nigeria, transforming a once-beneficial seasonal event into a recurring disaster with severe socio-economic consequences. Driven by climate change, poor dam management, deforestation, sedimentation, unplanned urbanisation, and inadequate drainage systems, floods have caused widespread loss of lives, displacement, and economic devastation, with notable events in 2012, 2016, 2022, and 2024. Despite the crisis, community awareness and preparedness remain low due to limited information access, mistrust in official warnings, and weak early-warning systems. This study examines the escalating flood risks along the River Niger and explores the pivotal role of the Church in creating awareness and fostering resilience. Leveraging its widespread presence, moral authority, and trust within communities, the Church serves as a vital platform for disseminating flood alerts, promoting environmental stewardship, mobilising community action, partnering with government and NGOs, and building capacity through youth and women's ministries. By integrating flood preparedness into its activities and advocating for sustainable practices, the Church can significantly enhance community resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and mitigate the impacts of flooding, offering a collaborative, faith-based approach to disaster risk reduction in Nigeria's riverine regions.

Keywords: *River Niger, incessant flooding, climate change, Church, awareness creation, environmental stewardship*

INTRODUCTION

The River Niger, Africa's third-longest river, stretches over approximately 4,100 kilometres, flowing through Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria before reaching the Atlantic Ocean. In Nigeria, it serves as a vital lifeline, sustaining agriculture, enabling inland water transportation, supporting fisheries, and generating hydroelectric power (Food and Agricultural Organization, n.d.). Beyond its economic value, the river also plays an important ecological role, supporting wetlands, biodiversity, and fertile floodplains that have nourished communities for centuries. However, this lifeline has increasingly become a source of devastation as seasonal overflows escalate into frequent and severe flooding events, causing widespread destruction across riparian communities.

Flooding along the River Niger is not a new experience for the people living along its banks. In the past, the river's seasonal overflow was often seen as a blessing. It brought water to farmlands, made the soil more fertile, filled underground water sources, and supported fishing activities that fed many families. These natural floods were part of a cycle that sustained both the land and the people. However, in the last twenty years, the situation has changed for the worse. The floods have become more dangerous, frequent, and destructive (Odiji, James, Oyewumi, Karau, Odia, Idris, Aderoju & Taminu, 2024). One major reason is climate change, which has shifted weather patterns and caused heavier, more unpredictable rainfall. Rains that once came in steady, manageable amounts now fall in intense bursts, overwhelming the land and riverbanks. Human activities have made the problem even worse. Poor urban planning has led to buildings and roads being constructed in flood-prone areas. Deforestation has removed trees that once absorbed water and prevented soil erosion. Mismanagement of dams has sometimes caused sudden water releases, adding to the flooding. In addition, careless waste disposal clogs drainage channels, making it harder for water to flow away.

Together, these factors have turned what was once a helpful seasonal event into a recurring national disaster.

Notable flood events highlight the magnitude of the problem. In 2012, prolonged heavy rains and the overflowing of the Niger and Benue Rivers submerged hundreds of thousands of acres of land. The Niger River reached an unprecedented 12.84 metres (42 feet), displacing millions and causing billions in economic losses (BBC News, 2018). In 2016, intense rainfall during June, July, and August triggered widespread flooding along the Niger and its tributaries, affecting both Nigeria and neighbouring countries (BBC News, 2018). The 2022 flood disaster, fuelled by exceptional rainfall, was particularly devastating—destroying infrastructure, killing hundreds, and inundating vast farmlands (Gambo, Roslan, Shafri, Ya, Yusuf, & Ang, 2024). By mid-August 2024, severe flooding had already destroyed over 15,000 homes and displaced thousands, deepening humanitarian needs across affected states (Assessment Capacities Project [ACAPS], 2024).

The human and socio-economic impacts of incessant flooding are far-reaching. Lives are lost, families are displaced, and livelihoods are destroyed. Agricultural losses trigger food shortages and price hikes, while damage to roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals disrupts essential services. The displacement of populations often leads to overcrowded temporary shelters, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks. Over time, recurrent flooding erodes community resilience, traps households in poverty, and widens socio-economic inequalities (Dube, Adelakun, Ishaku, Ubon, Mukhtar, Chukwuedo & Ogbuke, 2024). Mitigating this crisis requires both structural and non-structural interventions. While infrastructural solutions—such as improved drainage systems, levees, and sustainable dam operations—are crucial, awareness creation is equally important. Communities need to understand the risks, adopt preventive behaviours, and prepare adequately for potential disasters. This is where non-governmental actors, particularly faith-based institutions, can play a pivotal role.

In Nigeria, the Church is one of the most influential community-based institutions. Its reach extends across rural and urban areas, and it commands a high level of trust among its members. This influence positions the Church as a strategic partner in flood awareness campaigns. Through sermons, workshops, and community outreach, churches can disseminate information on flood risks, evacuation plans, and environmental stewardship. They can frame disaster preparedness within moral and theological contexts, mobilise volunteers for clean-up drives, and collaborate with government agencies and humanitarian organisations to extend the reach of early warning systems. The Church has historically been active in disaster relief, providing shelter, distributing food, and offering counselling to affected communities (Akpan, Umoren & Mboho, 2024). However, its potential as a proactive agent in disaster risk reduction—particularly in flood awareness—remains underexplored. Integrating the Church's communication platforms and moral authority into flood preparedness strategies could significantly enhance community resilience along the River Niger's flood-prone zones.

This study examines the incessant flooding of the River Niger and explores the role of the Church in creating awareness. It situates the Church as a critical stakeholder in addressing flood-related challenges, not only through post-disaster relief but also by engaging in preventive education and advocacy. In doing so, it underscores the need for a collaborative approach to disaster risk management—one that harnesses the strengths of both secular and faith-based institutions to safeguard lives, livelihoods, and the environment.

Statement of Problem

Incessant flooding along the River Niger has emerged as one of Nigeria's most pressing environmental and humanitarian challenges. The river's basin, spanning states such as Niger, Kogi, Anambra, Delta, and Bayelsa, experiences annual overflows triggered by heavy rainfall, dam releases (notably from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon), sedimentation, and climate-induced sea-level rise. Once a natural seasonal occurrence that enriched farmlands and supported livelihoods, flooding has in recent years escalated in frequency, scale, and destructiveness. Factors such as climate change, poor urban planning, deforestation, dam mismanagement, and indiscriminate waste disposal have compounded the problem, turning the river from a source of sustenance into a recurring national

disaster. The impacts are devastating. In 2022 alone, floods claimed over 600 lives nationwide, displaced millions, and inflicted agricultural losses worth billions of naira. Riverine communities, particularly in the Niger Delta and low-lying areas such as Mokwa and Ahoada West, experience recurrent submersion, resulting in food insecurity, disease outbreaks (e.g., cholera), and extensive damage to infrastructure. Recent events in 2024 and 2025, such as the Mokwa floods that killed over 100 people and displaced thousands, underscore the growing intensity of the crisis.

Despite the scale of the problem, awareness and preparedness among vulnerable populations remain inadequate. Many residents ignore early warnings due to limited access to information, cultural misconceptions, or distrust in government-issued alerts. While agencies like the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) exist to coordinate responses, their interventions often suffer from delays, insufficient resources, and weak community engagement. Consequently, there is a critical need for alternative, trusted communication channels to effectively disseminate flood risk information and preparedness strategies. The Church, with its widespread presence in flood-prone communities and its strong moral influence over congregants, is uniquely positioned to fill this awareness gap. Through sermons, community outreach, and social support networks, the Church can foster a culture of preparedness and promote environmental responsibility. However, its potential role in proactive flood awareness and disaster risk reduction remains largely underexplored and underutilised. Without deliberate engagement of such trusted institutions, the cycle of destruction will persist, deepening poverty, worsening vulnerability, and undermining sustainable development in Nigeria's riverine regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Underlying Causes and Risk Drivers of River Niger over Flooding

1. Stronger, more frequent heavy rains: Climate change has amplified the intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall events across the Niger Basin. Scientific analyses, including recent hydrometeorological studies, indicate that annual and seasonal rainfall maxima have been trending upward over the last two decades, with significant deviations from historical averages (Abu & Ibebuchi, 2025). This shift is particularly evident during the peak wet season between July and September, when the river system is most vulnerable to flooding. Warmer air holds more moisture, leading to heavier downpours, and this mechanism—confirmed by climate attribution studies—means that even single storm events can now deliver unprecedented volumes of water into the river network. As a result, the River Niger and its tributaries are more prone to breaching their banks, overwhelming embankments, and inundating floodplains. The increasing likelihood of back-to-back intense rainfall events further compounds this risk, as soils and reservoirs have less time to recover between storms, making large-scale floods more probable.

2. Dam management and upstream releases: The operation of upstream dams—particularly the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon—plays a critical role in the downstream flood dynamics of the River Niger. These dams are often forced to make emergency water releases when heavy rains threaten their structural safety, especially during years of above-normal precipitation (Eteh, Egobueze, Paaru, Otutu, & Osondu, 2024). Such sudden discharges can dramatically raise water levels downstream within hours or days, overwhelming communities in Nigeria's riverine states. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of coordinated transboundary water release protocols and Nigeria's limited capacity to store or detain excess water through complementary reservoirs or flood retention basins. Historical flood records—such as the major events in 2012, 2020, and 2022—show a recurring pattern where Lagdo releases coincide with intense local rainfall, producing compounding flood waves that devastate agriculture, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Without improved predictive release scheduling and basin-wide flood management cooperation, this remains a major driver of flood disasters in the Niger Basin.

3. Land-use change and loss of natural buffers: Human-driven changes to the Niger Basin landscape have significantly reduced its natural flood-moderating capacity. Large-scale deforestation for timber, firewood, and farmland expansion has stripped hillsides and riverbanks of vegetation that once slowed runoff and stabilized soils (Charles & Chinedu, 2024). Wetlands—critical for temporarily storing floodwaters—have been drained or converted into agricultural plots, settlements, and industrial zones. In many floodplain areas, uncontrolled urban growth has pushed housing and infrastructure into natural overflow zones, placing people and property directly in harm's way. Such modifications to land cover reduce infiltration rates and increase surface runoff velocity, meaning that rainfall translates more quickly into peak river flows. Studies of recent flood events show that catchments with higher rates of land clearance and wetland loss experience sharper flood peaks and wider inundation extents, even under similar rainfall conditions. The cumulative effect is a heightened flood hazard, worsened by the fact that much of this development occurs without adequate drainage or flood-resilient infrastructure.

4. Sedimentation, clogged channels, and poor drainage: The hydraulic capacity of the Niger River and its tributaries is increasingly compromised by sedimentation and human-induced obstructions. Natural sediment transport processes are being accelerated by upstream soil erosion—driven by deforestation, mining activities, and poor land management—which deposits large volumes of silt and sand into riverbeds (Daniel, Gbuchie, Emeruwa, Ike, Udam, & Torubiri, 2023). Over time, this accumulation raises the riverbed, reducing the channel's ability to convey floodwaters and causing rivers to overflow earlier during heavy rain events. In parallel, urban drainage systems in many riparian towns and cities are frequently clogged by indiscriminate waste disposal, unregulated construction, and inadequate maintenance. When heavy rains occur, these blocked drains prevent efficient runoff evacuation, creating flash floods that merge with river overflows. Reports from Nigeria's 2012, 2018, and 2022 flood disasters consistently cite sedimentation and poor drainage as aggravating factors that extend flood duration, increase inundation depths, and delay post-flood recovery.

5. Aging or insufficient hydraulic infrastructure and missing buffer dams: The absence of robust and well-maintained hydraulic infrastructure significantly magnifies flood impacts along the River Niger. In several locations, proposed dams, retention basins, and embankments, intended to absorb or delay extreme inflows, were either never constructed or are operating far below design capacity due to structural deterioration (Fita, Chouto, Etienne, Félix, Daniel, & Auguste, 2025). This gap is critical because upstream releases and climate-driven intense rains often deliver large volumes of water in short periods, overwhelming unprotected downstream stretches. Even where infrastructure exists, inadequate maintenance can lead to failures during peak stress, nullifying their protective role. Analyses of past flood events reveal that well-planned storage dams and flood detention areas could have substantially reduced damage in high-risk zones. However, a combination of budgetary constraints, delayed project execution, and governance challenges continues to leave vulnerable communities exposed to predictable but unmanaged flood risks.

6. Rapid urbanization and unplanned development on floodplains: Urban expansion into natural floodplains has intensified the human and economic cost of flooding in the Niger Basin. Cities such as Lokoja, Onitsha, and Yenagoa have witnessed rapid population growth, often without corresponding improvements in land-use regulation or enforcement of zoning laws (Awode, Adewumi, Obiora-Okeke, & Komolafe, 2025). As a result, residential, commercial, and industrial developments are increasingly located in areas naturally designated for seasonal overflow. In many cases, these new settlements lack adequate stormwater drainage systems, flood-resilient construction designs, or elevated access roads. Consequently, when floods occur, not only is there greater direct exposure of people and property, but also the interruption of critical services such as healthcare, transportation,

and electricity. Furthermore, hard-surfaced urban areas accelerate runoff into rivers and drains, amplifying peak flows. The combination of increased exposure and increased hazard severity has made urban flood events more destructive and costly in both human and economic terms.

7. Weak early-warning systems, coordination, and preparedness: Effective flood risk reduction requires timely and reliable early-warning systems, coupled with coordinated emergency response. However, across much of the Niger Basin in Nigeria, these systems remain underdeveloped. While meteorological agencies and river basin authorities often detect and forecast heavy rains or dam releases, dissemination of warnings to at-risk communities is inconsistent, delayed, or limited in reach (Abu & Ibebuchi, 2025). Even when warnings are issued, weak inter-agency coordination between dam operators, emergency management agencies, and local governments can hinder rapid decision-making and evacuation planning. In some cases, socio-economic factors, such as mistrust of authorities or the absence of designated evacuation centers, further delay public response. Technical and humanitarian reports repeatedly call for integrated flood forecasting platforms, transboundary dam release agreements, and locally tailored preparedness campaigns to bridge these gaps. Without these improvements, communities remain vulnerable to preventable losses from predictable flood events.

The Need for Awareness and Preventive Action

Raising community awareness is most effective when messages are consistent, clear, and repeated across multiple platforms. Public campaigns can use radio broadcasts, social media updates, town hall meetings, and even traditional channels such as town criers to inform residents about expected flood seasons, designated evacuation routes, and safe areas for construction. These campaigns should be timed ahead of the rainy season and continue throughout peak flood periods to reinforce preparedness behaviors. Research shows that frequent exposure to targeted messaging increases public compliance with safety protocols, especially when the information is locally relevant and delivered in familiar languages.

Households should be equipped with basic knowledge and tools to respond quickly in the event of a flood. This includes creating and maintaining “grab-bags” with essential items such as identification documents, basic medical supplies, clean water, and non-perishable food. Families should also develop and rehearse emergency plans, identifying where to relocate livestock, how to reach higher ground, and how to safely shut off electricity and gas supplies to reduce hazards. Conducting community-level practice drills before the onset of the rainy season helps ensure that preparedness becomes second nature rather than a last-minute reaction.

Effective flood management at the community level requires proactive efforts to maintain clear drainage pathways. Organized clean-up campaigns, supported by local leadership and volunteers, can help remove waste and debris from drains, culverts, and water channels. At the same time, enforcing anti-dumping regulations is essential to prevent blockages that compromise drainage capacity. Combining community participation with municipal enforcement not only improves the effectiveness of local flood protection measures but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility for environmental stewardship.

An early warning is only as effective as the action it prompts. Early warning system (EWS) messages should be designed to go beyond weather forecasts by giving people explicit instructions on what to do, where to go, and what items to bring when evacuating. The use of trusted local messengers, such as religious leaders, community elders, and respected local officials, can help bridge gaps in trust and ensure compliance. Studies have shown that when warnings include actionable guidance and are delivered by credible sources, evacuation rates and safety outcomes improve significantly.

Sustainable flood risk reduction depends on integrating hazard information into local development planning. Municipal authorities can use scientific flood maps alongside local knowledge

to identify high-risk areas and discourage the construction of new housing or infrastructure in those zones. Community-based planning should involve participatory mapping exercises that reflect both technical flood risk data and residents' lived experiences. Simple, enforceable land-use regulations, such as setback requirements from riverbanks and limits on construction in known floodplains, can significantly reduce future exposure and damage.

DISCUSSION

The Diverse Role of the Church in Creating Awareness of Incessant River Niger Flooding

Flooding along the River Niger has become a recurring humanitarian and environmental crisis in Nigeria, with devastating consequences for affected populations. The river, which traverses multiple Nigerian states including Niger, Kogi, Anambra, Delta, and Bayelsa, frequently overflows during heavy rainfall seasons or following upstream dam releases, leading to widespread destruction. These floods often leave thousands of people displaced, farmlands submerged, and critical infrastructure—such as roads, bridges, schools, and healthcare facilities—destroyed. Beyond the immediate humanitarian toll, the economic implications are severe, as agricultural losses threaten food security while damaged infrastructure hampers trade and mobility. Recent events underscore the urgency for effective awareness creation and disaster preparedness. For instance, the 2025 Mokwa flooding in Niger State, which claimed over 200 lives and displaced thousands, was one of the deadliest in recent memory, drawing national attention to the need for proactive measures to protect vulnerable communities (Shibayan & Adebayo, 2025).

1. Dissemination of Information: In this context, churches, with their grassroots reach, high levels of trust within local communities, and strong moral authority, are uniquely positioned to support flood risk reduction efforts. They serve as both moral and social anchors, capable of mobilizing collective action in ways that governmental agencies or non-governmental organizations sometimes cannot achieve. One of the most important contributions churches can make is in the dissemination of timely and accurate information to communities at risk. Churches often serve as vital communication hubs, especially in rural and riverine areas where access to mainstream media or internet connectivity may be limited. Through sermons, bulletins, workshops, and community meetings, faith leaders can spread crucial flood alerts and safety guidance. This includes educating congregants on signs of rising water levels, sharing official early warnings, outlining safe evacuation routes, and promoting preventive measures such as relocating valuables to higher ground or strengthening household flood defenses. By incorporating these messages into regular church activities, leaders ensure that even the most marginalized groups—such as the elderly, women, and those without radios or smartphones—receive life-saving information. The effectiveness of this approach was evident during the 2022 and 2025 flood seasons, when faith leaders in several Niger River communities collaborated with local authorities to amplify government-issued flood warnings. In states like Kogi and Anambra, pastors and priests integrated public safety announcements into Sunday services, using local languages to ensure comprehension. In some cases, churches went beyond merely sharing information; they organized volunteer teams to help vulnerable households prepare for evacuation, demonstrating the role of faith-based institutions as active participants in disaster preparedness (Agbana, 2025).

2. Moral Framing of Environmental Stewardship: By integrating environmental ethics into religious teachings, churches can instill a strong sense of moral and spiritual responsibility toward protecting the environment. In Christian theology, the concept of stewardship—rooted in Genesis 2:15, where humanity is tasked to "work and take care" of the earth—offers a powerful framework for addressing environmental degradation. Churches can draw connections between biblical principles and everyday behaviours that either mitigate or worsen flooding. For example, sermons and Bible study sessions can highlight how actions such as indiscriminate dumping of waste into drainage systems, rivers, and streams, or the cutting down of trees without replanting, contradict the biblical call to care for creation. By framing environmental care as a God-given duty, congregations are more likely to

internalise and act upon these values. The World Council of Churches (2025) has emphasised this moral dimension in its calls for climate-resilient infrastructure and responsible environmental behaviour in Nigeria, noting that sustainable living is both a faith-based and civic obligation. In this way, the moral framing does not merely inform members, it transforms attitudes, fostering a culture of long-term environmental care as an expression of obedience to God.

3. Mobilisation of Community Action: Churches, due to their deep roots in local communities, possess a unique ability to mobilise collective action for environmental protection and flood risk reduction. Congregations can be organised to undertake practical interventions such as community clean-up drives, tree-planting campaigns, and riverbank restoration projects. These activities directly tackle environmental factors, like blocked waterways, soil erosion, and deforestation, which exacerbate flooding. For instance, after the devastating 2022 floods in Anambra State, Catholic parishes collaborated with Catholic Relief Services to clear debris and unclog blocked drainage systems, significantly reducing the risk of overflow during subsequent heavy rains (Benjamin, 2022). Such initiatives not only improve local infrastructure but also foster community solidarity, as members see tangible results from their collective efforts. Furthermore, public demonstrations of environmental action led by faith groups can inspire other community sectors to join in, multiplying the overall impact on flood prevention.

4. Partnership with Government and NGOs: Partnerships between churches, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serve as a vital bridge between policy development and grassroots action. While government agencies such as the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) create flood mitigation policies and response strategies, churches ensure these strategies are disseminated in ways the average community member can understand and apply. Faith leaders, due to their trust and influence, can translate technical disaster management guidelines into relatable language and actionable steps. For example, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has repeatedly committed to working alongside government authorities in the distribution of relief materials and the delivery of disaster preparedness training in flood-prone regions (Omokhunu, 2025). Collaborations with NGOs also provide access to technical expertise, early warning systems, and financial resources that churches may not have on their own. This cooperative model ensures that flood prevention and response efforts are not just policy statements but practical realities on the ground.

5. Integration into Youth and Women's Ministries: Youth fellowships and women's associations within churches are powerful and underutilised channels for strengthening community resilience to flooding. By integrating training programmes into these ministries, churches can equip members with practical skills such as disaster preparedness, first aid, and alternative livelihood strategies that help households recover more quickly after floods. Women's groups, often at the forefront of managing family welfare during crises, can be trained in safe water storage, hygiene practices, and food preservation to reduce post-flood health risks. Similarly, youth groups can take on active roles in community warning systems, emergency evacuations, and environmental monitoring. The advantage of using these ministries is that they already have established organisational structures, leadership, and meeting schedules, making training easier to implement and sustain. Grassroots capacity building through these channels ensures that flood awareness is not merely theoretical; it becomes embedded in the skills, habits, and readiness of the most active members of the community. When floods strike, these prepared individuals can act swiftly, mitigating damage and saving lives.

The Role of Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal Churches in Distributing Relief to River Niger Flood Victims

Faith-based organizations have historically played a central role in disaster response across Nigeria, particularly during the recurrent flooding of the River Niger, which often leaves communities displaced, livelihoods destroyed, and vulnerable groups exposed to hunger and poverty. Among these

religious institutions, the Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches have consistently demonstrated strong commitments to humanitarian outreach, leveraging their moral authority, grassroots structures, and extensive networks to provide both material and psychosocial support to flood victims. In the Catholic tradition, Bishop Stephen Dami Mamza exemplified this role through the Justice, Development, and Peace Commission (JDPC) of his Diocese. During recent flood disasters, he led the distribution of food items to widows whose farmlands had been devastated. The intervention deliberately prioritized the fifty most vulnerable women within affected communities, with clear instructions that the food be used for sustenance rather than sold for immediate cash needs (John, 2024). This highlights the Catholic Church's targeted, pastoral approach to relief distribution, ensuring that assistance reaches those who are most at risk of food insecurity.

The Catholic Church's interventions also extend beyond individual dioceses to broader collaborations with international partners. For example, in past flood crises along the Niger Delta, the Bomadi Diocese—through its JDPC—worked with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to distribute both food and non-food items to displaced households. Importantly, CRS's model emphasizes community-driven implementation, channeling resources through local parishes and diocesan structures to ensure effective and culturally sensitive delivery of aid (Benjamin, 2022). Similarly, the Archdiocese's JDPC partnered with CRS to mobilize resources and secured over ₦10.5 million ($23,800), which was deployed to assist victims across multiple dioceses. These interventions were carried out without discrimination based on religion or ethnicity, reflecting the universalist outlook of Catholic social teaching that prioritizes the dignity of every human being (Omotola, 2022)

The Anglican Church has also played a significant role in responding to the humanitarian needs created by River Niger flooding. According to the Anglican Alliance, local Anglican churches are often among the very first responders, mobilizing their own limited resources before outside agencies arrive (Anglican Alliance, 2025). Their established presence within local communities gives them a unique ability to act swiftly and effectively in emergencies. Beyond distributing food, clothing, and shelter, Anglican congregations also provide social, spiritual, and psychosocial support—such as creating safe spaces for displaced families, listening to traumatized individuals, and fostering reconciliation in communities fractured by disaster. These pastoral strengths, often unmatched by secular actors, demonstrate the Anglican Church's holistic approach to humanitarian care. Furthermore, through global networks like the Anglican Alliance, local churches are able to tap into wider support systems for prayer, solidarity, and practical resources, significantly enhancing their disaster response capacity.

Pentecostal churches, with their vast congregations and dynamic leadership, have emerged as key players in flood relief distribution across Nigeria. Over 1,000 households in Kogi State benefitted from relief materials donated by the Founder of Living Faith Church, Bishop David Oyedepo. Each household received food packs—including rice, beans, and garri—alongside ₦10,000 cash, with distribution extending to both members and non-members displaced by flooding (Jimoh, 2022). In Delta State, popular cleric and televangelist Prophet Jeremiah Fufeyin transformed his Christ MercyLand Deliverance Ministry worship centre in Effurun into an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, accommodating victims from flood-ravaged communities across Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Kogi, Anambra, and Imo States. He also donated ₦5 million to support their upkeep during their stay (Ogunyemi, 2022). At the organizational level, the Lagos State Chapter of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) disbursed over ₦46 million in relief to IDPs in Yelwata, Benue State, reaching approximately 1,000 displaced families. The effort was praised for its transparency and scale, with distribution documented through video verification (Ogunlade, 2025). Similarly, Dr. Paul and Dr. Becky Enenche of Dunamis International Gospel Centre extended their relief interventions to Maiduguri, where they not only distributed relief materials but also provided medical services, leveraging their professional expertise as medical doctors to assist flood-affected IDPs (David, 2024). These examples

reflect the Pentecostal emphasis on combining material relief with spiritual and holistic care, often mobilized through charismatic leadership and wide congregational participation.

CONCLUSION

The incessant flooding of the River Niger has transformed from a beneficial seasonal event into a recurring disaster, driven by climate change, human activities, and infrastructural shortcomings. Over the past two decades, floods have grown more frequent and severe, with major events in 2012, 2016, 2022, and 2024 causing widespread devastation, including loss of lives, displacement of millions, and significant economic losses. Climate change has intensified rainfall patterns, resulting in heavy, unpredictable downpours that overwhelm the river's capacity. Human factors, such as poor dam management, deforestation, sedimentation, unplanned urbanisation, and inadequate drainage systems, have amplified flood risks, turning the River Niger from a vital resource into a source of ongoing tragedy. The socio-economic impacts are profound, with agricultural losses leading to food insecurity, infrastructure damage disrupting essential services, and displacement deepening poverty and inequality in riverine communities.

Despite the severity of the crisis, awareness and preparedness among vulnerable populations remain insufficient, hindered by limited access to information, mistrust in official warnings, and weak early-warning systems. The Church, with its widespread presence, moral authority, and trust within communities, is uniquely positioned to bridge this gap and enhance flood risk awareness and preparedness. The findings highlight the Church's potential as a key player in disaster risk reduction through several interconnected roles. It serves as a communication hub, particularly in rural and underserved areas, where sermons, workshops, and community meetings can disseminate critical flood alerts, evacuation plans, and safety measures, ensuring even marginalised groups receive life-saving information. Examples from the 2022 and 2025 flood seasons in states like Kogi and Anambra show how churches amplified government warnings using local languages and volunteer networks to boost preparedness. By framing environmental stewardship as a theological imperative, rooted in biblical principles like caring for creation, churches can foster a culture of environmental responsibility, encouraging congregants to adopt practices that mitigate flood risks, such as proper waste disposal and reforestation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the problems discussed above, the researcher recommends the following measures:

1. Churches should incorporate flood awareness into sermons, workshops, and community programs, using biblical narratives to emphasize environmental stewardship and moral responsibility for protecting the environment.
2. Churches should partner with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and other relevant bodies to conduct joint sensitization campaigns in riverine and flood-prone communities.
3. Churches should provide training and simulations for community members on early warning systems, evacuation procedures, and emergency preparedness to enhance local resilience.
4. Government agencies should support church-led disaster risk management initiatives through funding, provision of timely data, and logistical assistance to strengthen community preparedness.
5. Researchers should explore the effectiveness of church-led disaster risk management programs to identify best practices and innovative approaches for reducing flood impacts in Nigeria.

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