



Clean Technology Hub
Energy Innovation Centre

Feature Article

The Cost of Silence After the Storm" Climate Warnings and the Fragility They Fail to Stop

Climate Outlook - October 2025

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Climate extremes intensify across Nigeria's fragile zones. [Historical climate data from 1900 to 2020](#) highlights the increasing severity of droughts in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions. These droughts have led to significant agricultural challenges and water scarcity. In 2020, flood incidents affected about [40% of Nigeria's local government areas](#) and 97% of the states, displacing over 120,000 persons and causing significant property and farmland destruction. Nigeria also suffered the [largest flood displacement events](#) between 2018 and 2023. Desertification has rendered up to [60% of Nigeria's land barren](#), pushing cattle herders southward and leading to conflicts over land use.

These figures highlight the significant impact of these disasters on livelihoods, sustenance and the overall peace and security in Nigeria. In response, federal agencies issue forecasts and disseminate early warnings, while state authorities mobilize resources and make preparations. Past efforts to mitigate flood risks in Nigeria have often been [hampered by poor coordination and inadequate dissemination](#) of early warnings to vulnerable communities. The critical question remains: how prepared are the communities at the end of the chain—the last-mile villages where resilience is not just a concept, [but a necessity for survival?](#)



A view of damaged area following the floods caused by heavy rains in Nigeria on Saturday. Stringer / Anadolu via Getty Images

In [recent years, climate-induced disasters](#) have evolved into significant multipliers of conflict, displacement, and livelihood collapse, particularly in Northern Nigeria. [Communities already grappling](#) with insecurity now face compounded threats: failed rains that devastate crops, floods that inundate Internally [Displaced Persons \(IDP\) camps](#), and [rising temperatures that deplete water sources](#). While the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) have enhanced forecasting capabilities, [the absence of a robust, community-integrated early warning–early response \(EWER\) system undermines national efforts](#).

Science is not the problem. The breakdown lies in the relay, for example, between data centers in Abuja and farmers in Zamfara and between state flood alerts and displaced families in Adamawa. In 2022, severe floods affected over 4.4 million people in Nigeria and displaced more than 2.4 million and killed over 660. [Among the worst affected were Internally Displaced Persons \(IDPs\)](#); six camps housing nearly 16,000 individuals in Borno State alone were destroyed by flooding.

Across Nigeria, [hundreds of communities are navigating climate risks without adequate support](#). In Benue State, herder-farmer tensions escalate as droughts force pastoralists southward in search of grazing land, [leading to violent conflicts and displacement](#). In Bayelsa, the 2022 floods displaced approximately 700,000 people across 300 communities and villages, with many [lacking long-term resettlement plans](#). In Borno, thousands of displaced persons reside in [informal camps](#) vulnerable to both floodwaters and violent raids. A [rapid flood hazard assessment](#) revealed that most camps lack effective drainage, leaving them highly susceptible to flooding. These overlapping crises necessitate more than hazard maps—they require a [rethinking of climate resilience as both a security and development imperative](#).

Some progress is emerging. Local organizations, [faith leaders](#), and health workers are stepping in as informal first responders. In certain flood-prone communities, training in community-based surveillance and disaster preparedness [has begun to reduce loss](#). In Kaduna, studies have assessed and compared the [level of community flood disaster preparedness in rural and urban communities](#), highlighting the need for localized strategies. However, these remain isolated successes, not institutionalized norms.

What is missing is a national framework that recognizes resilience as a right, not a reaction. A system where data meets dialogue—where alerts are translated into not just local languages but early warnings and evacuation plans, and forecasts into school-safe zones. Implemented by Oxfam, the Strengthening Early Warning Systems (SEWaRM) project exemplifies this approach by providing anticipatory humanitarian action for floods in Adamawa and droughts in Katsina, aiming to [bridge the gap between forecasts and community action](#).

Nigeria needs to move from viewing floods and droughts as seasonal aberrations to understanding them as structural threats—on par with insecurity and poverty. This shift demands that early warning systems are not just technologically sophisticated but socially embedded. Resilience should not only be planned in technical board rooms, donor and partnership meetings but also co-created in community town halls.

“ Because while the climate may be changing, the true danger is that our response is not ”.



Greta Thunberg