Effects of the 2012 Flood on the Niger Delta

By

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Abstract

Many people have heard about flood. Even Christians and none-Christians know about the Noah's flood in the Bible. Contemporarily, some people also witnessed the 2012 flood but did not take cognizance of the effects of the flood. Hence the aim of this research is to examine the effects of the 2012 flood on the Niger Delta. The study depended on historical research methods and multi-disciplinary approach. The information was gotten through primary and secondary sources. In the findings, many effects ranging from social, economic, political and religious effects were recorded. Also the recent 2022 flood with its monumental effects to humanity especially on the Niger Delta was linked to the 2012 flood. However, the 2012 flood had little unidentified positive results on the Niger Delta. Due to the disaster that came along with the flood of 2012, the study gave some recommendations. A major one was the government in all levels to be serious in implementing agreed policies that would have positive impact on the people.

Key words: Flood, effects, disaster and humanity.

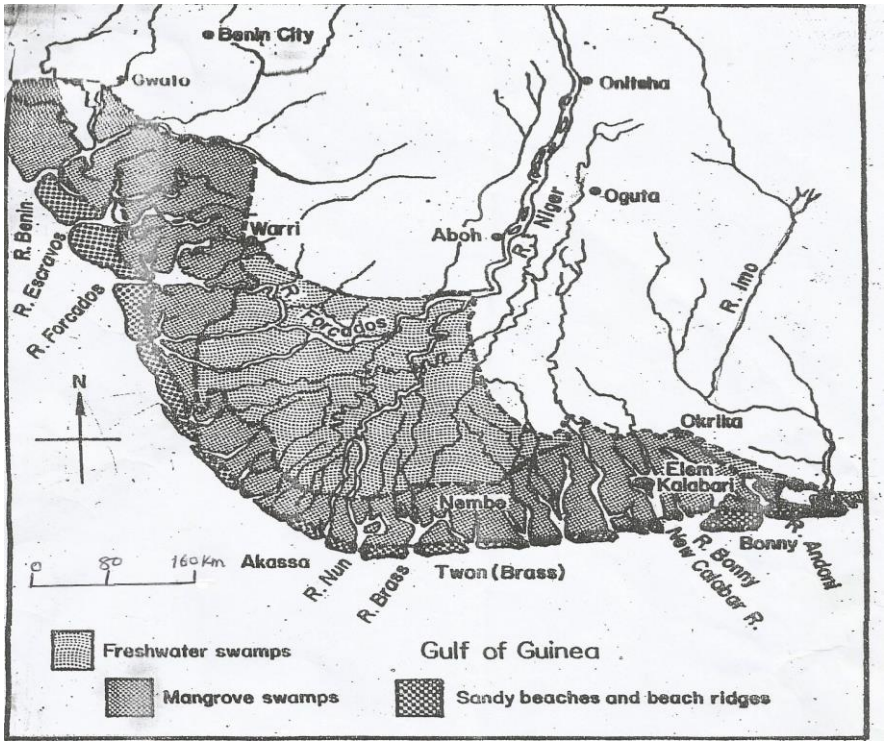
Introduction

Flood has been a recurrent decimal on the people of this world. In the Bible, specifically in Genesis 6:1-20, we heard how God instructed Noah to build an ark through which his people could be saved. Yet when Noah heard it and obeyed the voice of God, he implemented it, but the generality of the people refused to hear

him and even mocked at him. When the time came, nemesis caught up with them but Noah and his people including those creatures as instructed by God were saved. Then all others died [1].

In the period between September and October 2012, announcements were made through weather forecast by meteorologists. People ignored even in climate change, the government of Nigeria did little or no effect on that. Damages were seen in that year especially in the Niger Delta.

The year again 2022, between September and November, another disastrous flood occurred, that there were even more damages than that of 2012 (a decade ago). Before September 2012, Cameroonian Government was said of informing Nigeria to construct Shock Absorbing or the counterpart Dam called Hausa Damacin Dam in modern day Adamawa State. This Dam would have been done since after the agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon, signed in 1977 during the reign of Ahmadu Ahidjo. For since 1982 the construction of Cameroon dam called Ladjo Dam in River Benue was concluded. This dam was to enable them supply hydropower to the Northern Cameroon and for supporting growth of agricultural produce by supplying water to farms due to inadequate water supply before 1977. This Cameroon dam was completed in 1982 and in that same year, Paul Biya took over the government of Cameroon. Nigeria has not taken it seriously to construct the counterpart dam.[2] Even by June/July 2022, Cameroon informed Nigeria of their opening of the dam on the River Benue in Northern Cameroon, Nigerian government did not adhere to it. Hence history repeated itself even worse than the 2012 flood.[3]



The Niger Delta [4]

The Niger Delta is the delta of the River Niger. It is like a tree with its branches turned upside down.[5] The Niger Delta is from the Forcados River to the west, to the Imo River in the east with the Atlantic Ocean in the South. It also covers the "three former divisions (Ogoni, Degema and Brass) together with the Southern Ijaw. Today these divisions are to be found in the three natural Niger Delta States of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers.[6]

Recently, the Niger Delta is described as a triangle with its apex between Ndoni and Aboh, descending eastwards to the Qua Iboe at Eket and Benin Rivers in the East and West respectively along the Atlantic coast.[7]Again some people define the Niger Delta as "Core" and "Periphery" areas of the Niger Delta. While Delta State, Rivers State, Bayelsa State and to some extent, Akwa Ibom State are regarded as the core Niger Delta States, the Periphery States comprise; Ondo, Edo, Abia, Imo and Cross Rivers states. However, they are jointly called the Nine Niger Delta

States.[8] The peoples of the Niger Delta are mostly believed to have migrated to the East and West from the Central Niger Delta. They are fishermen with little farming due to the enormous rivers which include from Western Fringes of the Benin River, Escravos and Forcados. The Central Niger Delta is from the Pennington River to Nun River. Brass, Kalabari and Bonny are in the Eastern Niger Delta. Then from Andoni River to Imo River forms the Eastern Niger Delta fringes. The vegetation of the Niger Delta is fresh water swamp in the Central, then Mangrove swamps in the West and East. The rivers mentioned above run to the Atlantic Ocean. The area (Niger Delta) is endowed with enormous natural resources like palm trees with their economic advantages, timber, crude oil, sea foods, different species of animals, and so forth.

The peoples of the Niger Delta beginning from the West, we have the Itsekiri, Edo, Urhobo and part of Ijaw. In the Central Niger Delta, we have the Ijaw Yenagoa, Epie-Atisa, Ogbia, Engeni, Abua, Odual and the Kugbo. In the East we have the Nembe, Kalabari, Ibani, Opobo and Wakirike. On the Eastern fringes, we have the Obolo, Ibibio, Efik, Ogoni and some Ndi- Igbo. All the peoples of the Niger Delta interrelated among themselves through trade, wars, festivals and even to the outside world like Europeans from the Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial periods.[9]

Causes of the 2012 Flood on the Niger Delta.

Different questions have been asked about the causes of the flood of 2012 which took place before 2022. A major cause of the rainfall that caused the flood was climate change.[10]

This climate change was as a result of the activities of man. It was a human – induced climate change. The global climate change crisis has been linked to the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation by Western states. This climate change caused high rainfall. The high rainfall from late August to late October 2012 increased the volume of water that was available to be drained to the Rivers Niger and Benue. [11] Since water must find its level, this volume was in turn drained to the Niger Delta estuaries. Hence, the Niger Delta was flooded. The Central and Western Niger Delta were flooded exempting only the Eastern Niger Delta due to the ocean current that normally and easily draws heavy volume of water out from

the zone. This made people who were situated on the Rivers Forcados, Orashi, and Nun like Sagbama, Patani, Ekpetiama among others to be flooded while people on the Bonny, Sombriero, New Calabar Rivers among others in the mangrove forest were not flooded.[12]

Secondly was the failure of Nigerian Government to construct a counterpart dam from 1977 that would have taken care of the excess water released from the Ladjo Dam constructed by the Cameroonian Government as agreed by both countries. The water from the Ladjo Dam became full in 2012 and demanded to be released. Cameroonian Government started to build the Dam in 1977 and completed in 1982. It then became full in 2012 due to the high rainfall. When Cameroon released the water from their dam, no Counterpart dam from Nigeria to receive the water released from the Cameroonian Ladjo dam hence it then moved and flooded the Niger Delta in Nigeria. [13]

Thirdly was the blocking of natural waterways by man in course of construction of their buildings. Builders of houses do not normally obey the adage that water must find its level. Hence, when it rained heavily and the water wants to pass, and such waterways have been blocked and there was no place to pass, it would settle and flood the place. That was one of the experiences of the 2012 flood on the Niger Delta.[14]

Closely related to the above was the throwing of used and unwanted things in the water ways like gutters. By this, they block the water ways and when there is no place for the water to pass, there would be flood. Hence some places flooded on, as a result of human beings' poor attitude to sanitation or disposal of the unwanted things. [15]

Still, a cause of the flooding of 2012 on the Niger Delta was improper planning of some of the villages and communities in the Niger Delta. This made drainage of water difficult due to blockage of natural water ways. Since there was no place for them to pass, flood became inevitable

Effects of the 2012 Flood on the Niger Delta

This section of the work would delve into the subject matter which talked about the various effects of the 2012 flood on the Niger Delta. It would be done separately on social, economic, political and religious effects.

Social Effects

Socially, there was a great shock to people. People suffered from psychological effect by ordinarily seeing the incoming water in the form of flood to their homes. As the water was coming and rising, nothing could stop it than for the person to pack her or his valuables to safer upper grounds. Fear even to consume them became glaring.[16] Still, people were seen sleeping on the road because their houses were flooded. They had to face the harsh weather under rain or sun.

Thirdly, some died of reptile bite like snakes. Due to the volume of water (flood) creatures were left to wander around looking for dry grounds since the whole environment was covered with water. People moving in the forest looking for fruits or palm cutters, or who went to farm and for other economic activities were beaten by these wandering animals. There was competition between wild animals and human beings for means of livelihood on the flooded zones.[17]

Fourthly, people suffered seriously during that period. Many extended family members from villages went to the township to live with loved ones during the period of the disaster. We saw up to fifteen persons squatting with the real owners of the houses. Contagious diseases like tuberculosis spread to others. Due to the small space and the high population, including poor ventilation, people suffocated and contacted contagious diseases.[18]

Close to the above, people spent money to help their relations who were displaced due to the ravaging flood. You would surprise to see a single person struggling even going to borrow in the town with meagre salaries who would be managing to cater for a battalion from home due to the flood that has displaced the relations. Also was the emergence of water borne diseases like malaria from mosquitoes, cholera and yellow fever. People died due to the flood and its complications. This happened due to the contaminated water which people still managed to use

including drinking. Hence, infection came and they suffered example from cholera. Some even died from the diseases.[19]

Still, people who ran from their devastated homes were sent to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) in the various selected safer places especially on Local Government head-quarters to get better treatment from the government. However, contagious diseases were contacted amongst them due to congestion. [20] Also, some sicknesses were witnessed due to the flood. Since there was flood and no place for rodents to stay, they entered into peoples' homes and houses and had to share kitchen utensils with the owners of the houses. In course of that, these rodents spread diseases like laser fever. This fever came along with the 2012 flood."[21]

Socially, still was Government Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps created became corrupt practices centers. Different bad characters were observed. The real victims were also deprived of the government intervention facilities.

Still unwanted pregnancies occurred. From them, abortions were secretly done even in hidden and remote places outside hospitals and maternity homes or health centers. Hence, some even died in the process. That was due to rape, forceful conditional practices took place. Some parents especially mothers even compromised by allowing their daughters to have unholy sexual relationship with family helpers in other to meet up the challenges of the period. Internally Displaced Persons Camps were even already submerged. No way to defecate due to the water everywhere. The condition of the people in the IDPs camps were worse than in warring situations. [22]

Still, social effect, it was gathered that some families lost their ancestral homes. This was due to the flood that was caring people to unknown destinations, people had to run with their loved ones. By the time they came back after the flood, their traditional homes and their cultural artefacts and heritage from their forefathers have been ravaged by the flood.

Economic Effects

The Niger Delta people and its environment were economically affected by the 2012 flood in various capacities.

Firstly, Hunger was witnessed heavily in the Niger Delta due to the 2012 flood. This was because, a lot of farms were devastated. Many farms were flooded and the crops became rotten in the soil since they could not be harvested pre- matured. The cassava that were uprooted were not even matured hence the output as per gari processing became poor. [23]

Poor harvest brought about poor market. Since the crops were not matured, the harvest was poor hence those taken to market became small even not matured. Hence the exchange also became poor. Farmers who normally depended on the exchanged of their crops or bought food items from the sale of their crops became disappointed due to poor yield, hence hunger.

Still economic challenge was ponds on lakes and rivers were flooded and fishes swam away. Hence protein intake was drastically reduced. Very few people were able to purchase fish and the rest depended on improvise for protein supplement. Different types of diseases occurred due to lack of protein intake.

No scheduled markets again to buy food items. In some parts of African societies, markets were observed rotationally. Some were observed on every four days or on weekly bases. Different food crops and fishes were brought for exchange in barter form. With the introduction of currency, money became the means of exchange whether for food crops of for fishes or other sources of protein was done in the markets. When the flood came as a result of the heavy down pour, markets were flooded and markets were closed.[24]

Properties worth millions of Naira were lost by Niger Delta people. It can never be over emphasized the amount and value of property lost by the Niger Delta people due to the 2012 flood. The number of hectares of land and farms destroyed including the crops in them waiting to be harvested. Other crops yet to be matured before harvest were also destroyed. Still fishponds that the flood water drained the fishes away were all lost. The production and construction cost of some farms

and fish ponds were exorbitantly high hence to go back to re-establish such facilities would not be easy. It is a very big economic loss.

Still under economic was, stores and table markets belonging to Bayelsa State indigenes in the Niger Delta were all destroyed due to the flood. An experience at hand was a business woman named Madam Obeya Bonus from Amurukeni in Ogbia Local Government Area in Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta. She lost almost the whole items that she was selling. The whole store was flooded that all her clothes she had in her store got submerged. They were brought out to the sun to be dried, could not be dried due to the raining season. Thousands of Naira worth of goods were destroyed beyond sale.[25]

Religious Effect.

Religiously, the people of the Niger Delta were also affected in one way or the other. This was because churches and worship centers were all submerged by the flood. How can a church hold while covered by water? Hence church services were suspended. The religious activities of the people of the Niger Delta became weak and some of the religious leaders were seen in their homes worshiping. The famous saying that encourages brethren to gather together to worship God was kept aside due to the flood.

Close to the above some clergymen and religious leaders were seen engaged in other activities even on Sundays. That was because there were no places for them to worship God since the churches or worship centers were flooded.[26]

However, during the flood, the people of the Niger Delta became more aware of the existence of God the supreme being. They saw the power and authority of the creator of the universe. The flood came as a result of rain that was in intensified in a short number of days at Oruma community, Ogbia in Bayelsa State in the Central Niger Delta on the 29th of September 2012, a marriage ceremony was performed and well celebrated on a dry ground though rained gradually in the midst of struggling sun. Immediately, after the ceremony was concluded at Oruma Otuku's family the rain increased and interval of one to two days, the town and its environs have been flooded. The road that led to the community was flooded. Included was the bridge entering the town. When people of Oruma saw the flood

in that short time of two days raining, the people intensified their worship, reverence and seriousness in the service of God. More converts were made by the various dominations. [27]

Some people were even afraid if it was the flood of the time of Noah in the Bible that God had wanted to finish the world with. However, the conviction was that God had decided He would never finish human race with flood again. Until the time of writing this work, the people of Oruma in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State had increased their awareness of the existence of a supreme being that that could change the world at any given time with little or no stress.

Socially, the flood of 2012 added number of broken homes and marriages in the Niger Delta. This was due to the economic losses that the people of the Niger Delta incurred; from loss of farm produce, fishes from fish ponds, devastation of other economic activities, the men and husbands could no more stand gallantly to take care of their family members and loved ones. What then happened was that wives who could not bear their burdens or sufferings had to leave their husbands for a person they suspected could take care of them better. Hence marriages and homes were shattered. In 2012, Orashi River and its zone, the Engene River and environs also became flooded. Food items were devastated and destroyed. They therefore used canoes as means of transportation.[28]

Politically, the 2012 flood exposed the negligence on the part of the Federal Government in implementing policies agreed upon. It showed our leaders had not been implementing agreed policies. The Federal Government and the Cameroon Government had an arrangement in 1977 concerning dams construction. In 1982, Cameroon completed theirs while the Federal Government of Nigeria failed to do the counterpart dam or Shock Absorber dam called Damacing Dam. When Cameroon opened the dam to release their excess water, the excess of the shock absorber dam made Niger Delta to suffer due to the excess water from the Niger and Benue Rivers that was not stopped.[29]

In conclusion, all calamities that followed floods were witnessed by the people of the Niger Delta. Hence it was negative to development. Secondly, as if we did not learn from the 2012 flood, till 2022, the counterpart dam has not been constructed

that the 2022 flood came even worse than the previous floods close to Noah's flood in the Biblical record. Lives were lost, property devastated, academic activities halted, medical facilities destroyed then life became rude as reptiles and human beings struggled for occupation of space. The IDPs management added more sorrows to the flood victims as corruption spoke loudly in the camps. Politically, the 2012 flood readily exposed the ineffectiveness of our leaders and therefore pointed fingers on the people to look for corrective and more pro-active governments.

The work recommended that government in all levels should be serious in implementing agreed policies that would have positive impact on the people. This is because if Nigerian Government had constructed the Damacing Dam, the 2012 flood could have been averted.

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