Social Work and Flood Disaster Management in Coastal Communities in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria

By

Bello Omoruyi Martins (PhD)
Department of Social Work
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin
Email:martins.bello@uniben.edu
Phone Number: 08074009087

Abstract

Flood disasters continue to pose significant social, economic, and psychological challenges to communities in Nigeria. This study examined the roles and challenges of social workers in flood disaster management in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State. The objectives were to identify the challenges affecting the effectiveness of social workers and to explore the specific roles they play in mitigating the impacts of flooding. A cross-sectional research design was employed, with data collected from 500 residents using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and tabulations, while qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. Findings revealed that social workers play critical roles in providing psychosocial support, coordinating relief materials, mobilizing communities, advocating for vulnerable populations, and promoting disaster preparedness and long-term rehabilitation. Residents overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of these roles. However, several challenges were identified, including inadequate funding, limited specialized training, weak institutional recognition, poor coordination with agencies, high community vulnerability, limited use of technology, and policy implementation gaps, which constrain the effectiveness of social work interventions. The study concludes that while social workers are indispensable in flood disaster management, their impact is limited by structural and institutional barriers. Recommendations include enhancing funding and resources, providing specialized disaster training, integrating social workers into formal disaster frameworks, strengthening community mobilization, improving coordination, and promoting the use of technology and environmental awareness programs. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, social work practitioners, and disaster management agencies seeking to improve the efficiency and sustainability of flood disaster interventions in Ovia South West Local Government Area.

Keywords: Community resilience, disaster response, flood disaster management, Ovia South West LGA, Social Work,

Introduction

Flooding has emerged as one of the most frequent and devastating environmental hazards affecting communities across the globe, particularly in developing countries where vulnerability is heightened by weak infrastructure and limited adaptive capacity. In Nigeria, flood disasters have become increasingly recurrent due to a combination of factors such as climate change, rapid urbanization, poor drainage systems, and ineffective environmental management practices (Adelekan, 2010; Olanrewaju., Chitakira., Olanrewaju, & Louw, 2019).

Coastal and low-lying areas are especially prone to flooding, resulting in significant socio-economic disruptions, including displacement of populations, destruction of livelihoods, and increased health risks.

Some part of Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State is a coastal region, experiences recurrent flooding due to heavy rainfall, blocked drainage systems, unplanned urban development and so on. These flooding events have had serious consequences on households and communities, leading to property damage, loss of income, disruption of social services, loss of life and increased vulnerability among already marginalized populations. The persistence of such environmental challenges highlights the urgent need for effective disaster management strategies that go beyond immediate relief efforts to include long-term social support and resilience-building (Nikolić, Galjak, & Taradi, 2020).

Disaster management is a complex and multi-dimensional process that involves disaster preparedness, emergency response, recovery, rehabilitation, and mitigation measures aimed at reducing the impact of disasters on individuals and communities (Agholor & Essien, 2021). In many societies, disaster management is often associated with the activities of government agencies, emergency responders, and humanitarian organizations that provide relief materials, rescue operations, and temporary shelter for affected populations. However, beyond the physical and material damages caused by disasters, there are also serious social, emotional, psychological, and economic consequences that require professional intervention and long-term support (Dominelli, 2012).

In this regard, the role of social workers in disaster management has become increasingly important. Social workers are uniquely equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to address the human and social dimensions of disasters. Their professional training enables them to provide psychosocial support to victims who may experience trauma, grief, anxiety, displacement, and emotional instability as a result of disaster situations. Through counseling, emotional support, and crisis intervention services, social workers help affected individuals and families cope with stress and adjust to post-disaster realities (Gray & Coates, 2015).

Social workers play significant roles in linking disaster victims to essential social services and resources. They assist vulnerable individuals and communities in accessing relief materials, healthcare services, housing support, educational assistance, and other welfare programmes necessary for recovery and rehabilitation. In many disaster situations, social workers also serve as advocates for marginalized and vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities who are often disproportionately affected during emergencies (Zakour & Gillespie, 2013).

Another important role of social workers in disaster management is community mobilization and empowerment. Social workers help strengthen community resilience by organizing awareness programmes, promoting community participation, and educating people on disaster preparedness and risk reduction strategies. Their person-in-environment perspective enables them to understand the interaction between individuals and their social and physical environments, thereby making them effective in identifying social vulnerabilities and developing intervention strategies that enhance community coping mechanisms (Alston,

Hazeleger, Hargreaves, & Western, 2019). In addition, social workers collaborate with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, healthcare professionals, and community leaders in planning and implementing disaster intervention programmes. Their involvement contributes to more inclusive and people-centered disaster management approaches that prioritize not only physical recovery but also the restoration of social wellbeing and community stability (Dominelli, 2018).

Therefore, the contribution of social workers to disaster management extends beyond emergency relief operations to include psychosocial care, advocacy, community development, social support services, and long-term rehabilitation efforts. This makes social workers critical stakeholders in disaster prevention, response, and recovery processes within contemporary societies. In the context of flood disasters, social workers engage in a wide range of activities, including needs assessment, crisis intervention, community mobilization, and rehabilitation support. They also play an important role in promoting environmental awareness and advocating for sustainable development practices that can reduce the impact of future disasters. Despite these contributions, social work involvement in disaster management in Nigeria remains underdevelope and underutilized with challenges such as limited institutional recognition, inadequate training, and insufficient collaboration with emergency management agencies (Nwafor, 2021).

Furthermore, the concept of environmental justice has gained prominence in social work discourse emphasizing the need to address the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on vulnerable and low-income populations. Flood disasters often exacerbate existing inequalities, as poorer communities tend to reside in high-risk areas with inadequate infrastructure. Social workers, therefore, have a critical role to play in advocating for equitable policies and inclusive disaster management frameworks that prioritize the needs of marginalized groups (Besthorn, 2012).

Given the increasing frequency of flood disasters and their far-reaching social implications, there is a growing need to critically examine the role of social workers in disaster management, particularly at the community level. This study, therefore, seeks to explore social work involvement in flood disaster management in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. By focusing on a specific local context, the study aims to provide empirical insights into the roles, challenges, and contributions of social workers in managing flood-related crises, as well as to propose strategies for enhancing their effectiveness in disaster response and recovery efforts.

Research Questions

1. What challenges affect the effectiveness of social workers in responding to flood disasters in Ovia South West Local Government Area?
2. What roles do social workers play in flood disaster management in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Flood disasters have increasingly become a major environmental and social concern worldwide, particularly in developing countries where structural vulnerabilities heighten exposure and limit adaptive capacity. Flooding is regarded as one of the most destructive natural disasters because of its widespread effects on human lives, economic activities, infrastructure, agriculture, and the environment. Across many parts of the world, the frequency and intensity of flood disasters have continued to increase due to climate change, rising sea levels, excessive rainfall, environmental degradation, and poor urban planning systems (Adelekan, 2010). These disasters often result in displacement of populations, destruction of homes and properties, disruption of livelihoods, food insecurity, health challenges, and increased poverty among affected populations. In developing countries, the impact of flooding is usually more severe because many communities lack adequate disaster preparedness mechanisms, effective drainage systems, and resilient infrastructure. Rapid urbanization and population growth have further increased pressure on urban facilities and contributed to the emergence of informal settlements in flood-prone areas. In many cases, poor urban planning and weak enforcement of environmental laws expose vulnerable populations to recurring flood disasters and limit their ability to recover effectively after such incidents (Nkwunonwo, Whitworth, & Baily, 2016).

In Nigeria, flooding remains one of the most recurrent and devastating environmental hazards affecting both urban and rural communities. Over the years, several states across the country have experienced severe flooding that has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of residents, and disruption of socio-economic activities. The causes of flooding in Nigeria are multidimensional and include climate change, heavy rainfall, rising water levels, poor drainage systems, indiscriminate dumping of refuse in waterways, deforestation, and uncontrolled urban development (Olanrewaju, Chitakira, Olanrewaju, & Louw, 2019). The inability of drainage channels to effectively accommodate heavy rainfall often leads to overflow, thereby increasing the vulnerability of residential communities and public infrastructure. The effects of flood disasters in Nigeria are enormous and far-reaching. Flooding destroys roads, bridges, schools, healthcare facilities, electricity infrastructure, and farmlands, thereby negatively affecting economic growth and community development. Agricultural production is often severely disrupted as farmlands are submerged and crops destroyed, leading to food shortages and increased poverty levels among rural dwellers. Flood disasters also expose affected populations to various health risks, including waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, malaria, and skin infections due to poor sanitation and contaminated water sources. In addition, victims frequently experience emotional trauma, anxiety, psychological stress, and social dislocation as a result of losing loved ones, homes, and means of livelihood (Olanrewaju et al., 2019).

The social implications of flooding are equally significant, especially among vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, and persons living with disabilities. These groups often face greater difficulties in accessing relief materials, healthcare services, shelter, and social support during and after disasters. In many flood-prone communities, inadequate government intervention and poor disaster response systems further worsen the conditions of affected populations. This has raised serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of disaster management strategies and environmental governance in Nigeria (Etuonovbe, 2011).

The increasing intensity and frequency of flood disasters in recent years further underscore the urgent need for effective and sustainable disaster management strategies capable of reducing the adverse consequences associated with flooding. Disaster management involves a coordinated process of disaster preparedness, prevention, mitigation, emergency response, recovery, and rehabilitation aimed at minimizing disaster risks and promoting community resilience. Effective flood disaster management requires collaborative efforts among government agencies, environmental experts, social workers, humanitarian organizations, and local communities (Agholor & Essien, 2021).

Furthermore, environmental management practices play a crucial role in reducing flood risks and promoting sustainable development. Proper urban planning, construction of effective drainage systems, regular environmental sanitation exercises, afforestation programmes, and public awareness campaigns are essential strategies for flood prevention and control. There is also a need for stronger policy implementation, improved early warning systems, and increased community participation in disaster preparedness activities (UNDRR, 2022). The persistent occurrence of flooding in Nigeria highlights the importance of social intervention and community support systems in disaster management. Beyond physical destruction, flood disasters create social and psychological problems that require professional support services. Victims often require counseling, rehabilitation assistance, emotional support, and social welfare services to help them recover and reintegrate into normal life. This makes social workers and community development professionals important stakeholders in flood disaster management and recovery efforts (Dominelli, 2012).

Therefore, addressing flood disasters in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and people-centered approach that combines environmental management, disaster preparedness, policy implementation, community participation, and social support systems. Sustainable disaster management strategies are essential not only for reducing the impact of flooding but also for protecting human lives, promoting environmental sustainability, and enhancing the overall wellbeing of affected populations. Beyond their physical impacts, flood disasters have profound social consequences. They disrupt livelihoods, displace populations, loss of life and exacerbate poverty and inequality, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women, children, minority ethnic group and low-income households. These effects highlight the complex and multidimensional nature of disasters, which extend beyond environmental phenomena to encompass social, economic, and psychological dimensions. As such, disaster management requires a holistic approach that integrates both technical and social interventions. Within this context, social work has emerged as a critical profession in addressing the human dimensions of environmental crises. Grounded in the person-in-environment perspective, social work emphasizes the interaction between individuals and their surroundings, making it particularly relevant in disaster situations. Social workers play key roles in disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation by providing psychosocial support, facilitating access to resources, advocating for vulnerable populations, and strengthening community resilience (Dominelli, 2012; Gray & Coates, 2015). Their involvement ensures that disaster management efforts are not limited to material relief but also address the social, psychological and emotional needs of affected populations.

The emergence of *green social work* has further expanded the scope of the profession to include environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and ecological systems and calls for greater involvement of social workers in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development (Dominelli, 2012). In line with this perspective, contemporary discourse in social work increasingly recognizes the need for professionals to engage with climate change, environmental degradation, and disaster management as core areas of practice. The concept of environmental justice provides an important framework for understanding the unequal distribution of environmental risks and their impacts. Flood disasters often disproportionately affect marginalized communities who reside in high-risk areas due to socio-economic constraints. Social workers, therefore, have a vital role to play in advocating for equitable policies, promoting social inclusion, and ensuring that the needs of vulnerable populations are prioritized in disaster management processes (Besthorn, 2012). Despite the growing recognition of the importance of social work in disaster contexts, the profession's role in flood disaster management in Nigeria remains underdeveloped and insufficiently documented. Challenges such as limited institutional support, inadequate training, and weak integration into formal disaster management frameworks continue to constrain the effectiveness of social work interventions (Mridha, 2025). Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on broader national or regional analyses, with limited attention to specific local contexts (Frazier, 2024). Given these gaps, there is a need for context-specific studies that examine the role of social workers in managing flood disasters at the community level. This study addresses this gap by focusing on Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, with the aim of providing insights into social work practice in flood disaster management and contributing to the development of more effective and inclusive intervention strategies.

Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of Social Workers in Responding to Flood Disasters

The effectiveness of social workers in responding to flood disasters in Nigeria is significantly constrained by a range of structural, institutional, and professional challenges. These challenges limit the capacity of social workers to deliver timely, coordinated, and sustainable interventions in disaster-affected communities. One major challenge is inadequate funding and resource constraints. Social work practice in Nigeria often suffers from limited financial support, which affects the availability of essential resources such as transportation, relief materials, and logistical support during disaster response. Without adequate funding, social workers are unable to effectively reach affected populations or provide comprehensive services, particularly in large-scale flood situations (Nwafor, 2021).

Another critical issue is the lack of specialized training in disaster management. Although social workers are trained to address social and psychological issues, many lack specific competencies in disaster risk reduction, emergency response coordination, and crisis intervention. This gap reduces their preparedness and effectiveness in handling complex disaster scenarios, where rapid decision-making and technical knowledge are required (Dominelli, 2012).

Weak institutional recognition and integration of social work into formal disaster management frameworks also poses a significant challenge. In many cases, disaster response

efforts in Nigeria are dominated by government agencies and humanitarian organizations, with limited involvement of professional social workers. This lack of recognition reduces the visibility of social work contributions and limits opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement (Gray & Coates, 2015).

Poor coordination among stakeholders undermines effective disaster response. Disaster management typically involves multiple actors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and international bodies. However, the absence of clear coordination mechanisms and role definitions often leads to duplication of efforts, gaps in service delivery, and inefficiencies in resource utilization. Social workers, who are well-positioned to facilitate coordination and community engagement, are frequently underutilized in this regard (Olanrewaju et al., 2019).

Another challenge is the high level of community vulnerability and poverty, which complicates intervention efforts. Many flood-prone communities in Nigeria lack basic infrastructure and social services, making them more susceptible to disaster impacts. Social workers operating in such contexts face difficulties in addressing deeply rooted socio-economic issues that are exacerbated by flooding, including displacement, food insecurity, and health risks (Odubo, 2023).

Limited use of technology and information systems affects the efficiency of social work interventions in disaster situations. In an era where digital tools and communication platforms are increasingly used for disaster response and coordination, many social workers in Nigeria lack access to or training in such technologies. This limits their ability to disseminate information, track affected populations, and coordinate relief efforts effectively (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2024).

Policy and implementation gaps remain a significant barrier. Although Nigeria has disaster management policies and frameworks, their implementation is often weak due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and lack of political will. These gaps hinder the integration of social work services into disaster management systems and reduce the overall effectiveness of intervention strategies.

Roles of Social Workers in Flood Disaster Management

Social workers occupy a critical position in flood disaster management due to their holistic approach to human and community well-being. The profession's person-in-environment perspective makes social workers uniquely equipped to address both the immediate and long-term needs of populations affected by flooding (Dominelli, 2012). Their involvement extends across all phases of disaster management, including preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, ensuring that interventions encompass both material and psychosocial support. One of the most essential roles social workers perform in flood disasters is the provision of psychosocial support and counseling. Flooding often results in displacement, loss of property, disruption of livelihoods, and psychological trauma, leaving victims vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and grief. Social workers intervene by providing emotional support, crisis counseling, and mental health assistance, which helps individuals and families cope with the traumatic effects of disasters and facilitates their reintegration into normal life (Gray & Coates, 2015).

This psychosocial dimension is vital, as disaster response that ignores emotional and psychological needs risks long-term social and health consequences.

Social workers also play a critical role in resource mobilization and coordination. They collaborate with governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to ensure that relief materials and services reach those most in need. Their advocacy skills and knowledge of vulnerable populations allow social workers to prioritize equitable resource allocation, ensuring that marginalized groups, such as children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, are not overlooked during disaster interventions (Olanrewaju et al., 2019).

Community mobilization and empowerment constitute another significant aspect of social work in flood disaster management. By organizing local groups, raising awareness, and fostering participatory engagement, social workers enhance the capacity of communities to respond collectively to disasters. Such initiatives strengthen community resilience, promote local ownership of disaster preparedness efforts, and reduce dependence on external aid (Dominelli, 2012). This approach not only addresses immediate needs but also lays the groundwork for long-term sustainability in disaster-prone areas.

Furthermore, social workers serve as advocates for vulnerable populations and agents of social justice. Flood disasters frequently exacerbate existing inequalities, with poorer communities bearing the greatest burden of environmental hazards. Social workers ensure that disaster response efforts consider these inequalities, lobbying for inclusive policies and interventions that protect the rights and welfare of marginalized groups (Besthorn, 2012). This advocacy role reinforces the ethical and professional mandate of social work to promote fairness, equity, and social inclusion in disaster management.

Social workers are also engaged in rehabilitation and long-term recovery initiatives. Beyond immediate relief, they provide support in rebuilding livelihoods, reintegrating displaced families, and facilitating access to social welfare programs. This long-term engagement ensures sustainable recovery and reduces the vulnerability of communities to future flooding events (Nwafor, 2021). In recent years, social workers have also embraced environmental education and disaster preparedness, promoting awareness about flood risks, early warning systems, and adaptive measures to mitigate the impact of future disasters (Gray & Coates, 2015).

Empirical Review

Empirical studies have increasingly highlighted the indispensable role of social workers in flood disaster management, emphasizing both their immediate interventions and long-term contributions to community resilience. Globally, research underscores that social work professionals play critical roles in addressing the psychosocial, economic, and social dimensions of disasters, complementing infrastructural and technical measures (Dominelli, 2012).

Nwafor (2021) notes that social workers provide psychosocial support, coordinate relief materials, and link affected populations to social welfare services. However, the study also

identifies constraints, such as inadequate funding, limited specialized training, and weak institutional recognition, which hinder the effectiveness of interventions.

Similarly, Olanrewaju et al. (2019) highlight that flood victims require both material and social support, indicating that social work practice is central to comprehensive disaster response. These findings underscore the critical role of social work in ensuring that interventions go beyond immediate relief to address social and psychological needs.

Odubo (2023) examined flooding in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, and found that social workers were instrumental in supporting vulnerable populations, including women and children, through both relief distribution and psychosocial interventions. Similarly,

Atie and Sibiri (2024) explored flood preparedness in Bayelsa State, demonstrating that social workers contribute significantly to community mobilization, risk communication, and awareness-raising efforts. These studies suggest that social workers enhance both individual and community resilience by promoting proactive coping strategies alongside reactive relief measures.

Ogunleye and Adebayo (2024) observed that social workers increasingly employ digital tools and social media platforms to coordinate relief, disseminate information, and monitor ongoing needs of flood-affected populations. This approach not only expands the reach of interventions but also facilitates more timely and coordinated responses.

Furthermore, Umar et al. (2025) found that targeted interventions addressing vulnerable groups, such as children and women, significantly improve recovery outcomes, emphasizing the need for social workers to tailor their efforts to specific community needs.

Betebekeh and Atuaka (2025) reported that social workers often face poor collaboration with governmental and non-governmental agencies, inadequate staffing, and insufficient recognition in disaster management policies. These gaps limit the efficiency and sustainability of interventions and highlight the need for stronger institutional support.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored on Eco-Social Theory and Systems Theory, both of which provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between social work practice, human populations, and environmental disasters such as flooding.

Eco-Social Theory

The Eco-Social Theory, as conceptualized by Dominelli (2012), emphasizes the interconnectedness of social, environmental, and ecological systems. It posits that human well-being cannot be fully understood without considering the relationship between individuals, communities, and their physical environment. In the context of flood disaster management, this theory highlights how environmental hazards, such as flooding, interact with social vulnerabilities poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and marginalization—to

produce disproportionate impacts on certain populations. For social workers, the Eco-Social Theory provides a framework to integrate environmental awareness, community engagement, and social justice into their practice, ensuring that interventions are both socially responsive and environmentally conscious. Applying Eco-Social Theory to Ovia South West Local Government Area, it becomes evident that urbanization, poor drainage systems, and densely populated neighborhoods increase flood vulnerability. Social workers, guided by this theoretical lens, are positioned to address both the environmental and social dimensions of flooding, including psychosocial support, community mobilization, and advocacy for equitable resource distribution. This approach encourages proactive measures, such as risk awareness programs and disaster preparedness initiatives, in addition to reactive relief efforts.

Systems Theory

Systems Theory, rooted in the work of Bertalanffy (1968), views communities as complex, interrelated systems in which changes in one component affect the entire system. Within disaster management, Systems Theory facilitates understanding of how social, institutional, and environmental subsystems interact before, during, and after flood events. Social workers operate within this framework by coordinating with multiple stakeholders government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and affected families to ensure integrated disaster response and recovery. For Ovia South West Local Government Area, the Systems Theory perspective underscores the need for multi-level coordination, where social workers act as connectors between formal disaster management structures and community networks. This theoretical lens also supports the identification of gaps in service delivery, institutional weaknesses, and community vulnerabilities, thereby informing strategies for improving social work effectiveness in flood disaster management.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the roles and challenges of social workers in flood disaster management in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria a region characterized by riverine and estuarine environments shaped by the Ovia River (Osse River), extensive wetlands, and parts of Okomu National Park, which increase its vulnerability to flooding. The study population comprised residents affected by flooding, who were selected using purposive and stratified sampling. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 500 respondents was determined. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, capturing both demographic information and residents' perceptions of social work interventions. Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequency distributions, and tabulations) summarized quantitative data, while content analysis was used to identify themes in qualitative responses. Ethical considerations were observed, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, with approvals obtained from relevant local authorities.

Result and discussion

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	370	74.0
	Male	130	26.0
	Total	500	100
Religion	Christian	378	75.6
	Muslim	29	5.8
	African Tradition	74	14.8
	Others	19	3.8
	Total	500	100
Educational Qualification	Primary Education	166	33.2
	SSCE	213	43.6
	HND/BSc	91	18.2
	Total	500	100

Table 1 is concerned with the demographic characteristics of respondents and it revealed that 370 respondents which constitute 74.0% were female while 130 respondents which constitute 26.0% were male. The result on the educational level of respondents shows that the 166 respondents which constitute 33.2% had primary education, 213 respondents representing 43.6% had SSCE, 91 respondents which represents 18.2% possess HND and B.Sc degree respectively. Furthermore, the table shows that 378 respondents representing 75.6% were Christians, 29 respondents representing 5.8% were Muslims, 74 respondents representing 14.8% were worshippers of African Traditions while 19 respondents representing 3.8% worship other religion.

Table 2: Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of Social Workers in Responding to Flood Disasters

Varieties	Agreed (A)	Disagreed (D)
Inadequate funding and resource constraints	360 (72%)	140 (28%)
Lack of specialized training in disaster management	325 (65%)	175 (35%)
Weak institutional recognition and integration	300 (60%)	200 (40%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The above table shows that majority of the respondents representing 360 (72%) opined that inadequate funding and resource constraints are some of the challenges faced while 140 (28%) do not. Similarly, respondents representing 325 (65%) states lack of specialized training in disaster management is a big challenge while 175 (35%) think otherwise. In the same manner respondents representing 300 (60%) were of the view that weak institutional recognition and integration is a big challenge while 200 (40%) believes it is not.

Some of the respondents interviewed expressed themselves this way:

> Sometimes the social workers come late or do not have enough materials to help us. Even when they try, the lack of coordination between them and

government agencies makes it difficult for relief to reach everyone on time. (IDI/M/ Ovia South West LGA/2026)

The social workers do their best, but many of them are not trained specifically for disaster management. They know how to counsel people, but when it comes to logistics, mobilizing relief, or using digital tools, there is a gap. (IDI/F/ Ovia South West LGA/2026)

Table 3: Roles of Social Workers in Flood Disaster Management

Varieties	Agreed (A)	Disagreed (D)
Provision of psychosocial support and counseling to flood victims	468 (93.6%)	32 (6.4%)
Resource mobilization and coordination of relief materials	484 (96.8%)	16 (3.2%)
Rehabilitation and long-term recovery support	492 (98.4%)	8 (1.6%)

Source: Fieldwork 2026

The above table shows that majority of the respondents representing 468 (93.6%) opined that social workers provision of psychosocial support and counseling to flood victims while 32 (6.4%) do not. Similarly, respondents representing 484 (96.8%) acknowledge that social worker mobilise resource and coordinate relief materials to victims while 16 (3.2%) think otherwise. In the same manner respondents representing 492 (98.4%) were of the view that social worker provide long term support and rehabilitation to victims while 8 (1.6%) don't believe.

Some of the respondents interviewed expressed themselves this way:

The social workers were very helpful during the last flood. They gave us counseling when we were stressed, helped us access relief items, and organized community meetings to plan for the next flood. (IDI/F/ Ovia South West LGA/2026)

I noticed that social workers also educate us about flood risks and how to prepare. They make sure that vulnerable people, like the elderly and children, are included in every plan. Their work goes beyond giving relief; it is about building resilience. (IDI/M/ Ovia South West LGA/202)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the roles and challenges of social workers in flood disaster management in Ovia South West Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that social workers play critical roles in providing psychosocial support, coordinating relief resources, mobilizing communities, advocating for vulnerable populations, and facilitating long-term rehabilitation and disaster preparedness. Residents overwhelmingly recognized these contributions, emphasizing that social workers help mitigate the social and psychological impacts of flooding while enhancing community resilience. However, the study also identified several challenges affecting the effectiveness of social work interventions. Key constraints include inadequate funding, limited specialized training, weak institutional

recognition, poor coordination with governmental and non-governmental agencies, high community vulnerability, limited use of technology, and gaps in policy implementation. These challenges limit the capacity of social workers to deliver timely, coordinated, and sustainable interventions in flood-affected communities.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing submission, the paper recommends that:

1. Government agencies and stakeholders should increase funding and provide adequate resources for social work interventions during floods.
2. Policies should formally integrate social workers into disaster management frameworks to ensure institutional recognition and coordinated action.
3. Social workers should be supported to expand community mobilization and awareness programs, including education on flood risks, early warning systems, and adaptive coping strategies.
4. Collaboration between social workers, community leaders, NGOs, and government agencies should be enhanced to ensure efficient resource allocation and equitable delivery of relief services.

References

Adelekan, I. O. (2010). Vulnerability of poor urban coastal communities to flooding in Lagos, Nigeria. *Environment and Urbanization, 22*(2), 433–450.

Agholor, S. O., & Essien, M. A. (2021). Disaster management and social welfare services in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Development Studies, 8*(2), 45–58.

Alston, M., Hazeleger, T., Hargreaves, D., & Western, D. (2019). *Social work and disasters: A handbook for practice*. Routledge.

Atie, F. E., & Sibiri, E. A. (2024). Flood warnings and preparedness uptake of flood-risk households in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*.

Besthorn, F. H. (2012). Deep ecology's contributions to social work: A ten-year retrospective. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 21*(3), 248–259.

Betebekeh, K. A., & Atuaka, E. B. (2025). Social work services and flood disaster victims' recovery in Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*.

Dominelli, L. (2012). *Green social work: From environmental crises to environmental justice*. Polity Press.

Dominelli, L. (2018). Environmental justice at the heart of social work practice: Greening the profession. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 27*(1), 7–16.

Etuonovbe, A. K. (2011). The devastating effect of flooding in Nigeria. *FIG Working Week, Marrakech, Morocco*.

Frazier, E. (2024). Unsettling resettlement: Examining local dynamics of refugee integration in the United States amid national policy change. Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 1-14.

Gray, M., & Coates, J. (2015). Changing values and valuing change: Toward an eco-social work. *International Social Work, 58*(5), 687–698.

Mridha, R. (2025). Community Social Work Practices in Mitigating Natural Disasters in Bangladesh: Identifying Interventions, Working Organizations and Challenges. Social work and education, 12(4), 613-633.

Nikolić, V., Galjak, M., & Taradi, J. (2020). Disaster risk management and community resilience. Sigurnost: časopis za sigurnost u radnoj i životnoj okolini, 62(2), 0-0.

Nkwunonwo, U. C., Whitworth, M., & Baily, B. (2016). A review of flood risk in developing countries. *Scientific African, 7*(2), 1–12.

Nwafor, J. C. (2021). Social work practice in disaster management in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *African Journal of Social Work, 11*(1), 45–54.

Odubo, T. R. (2023). Livelihood devastation and the most vulnerable group during flooding in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. *Humanities and Social Sciences, 11*(4), 127–132. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.hss.20231104.12

Ogunleye, T., & Adebayo, S. (2024). Understanding the role of digital storytelling in help-seeking among flood disaster victims in Nigeria. *Computers in Human Behavior*.

Olanrewaju, C. C., Chitakira, M., Olanrewaju, O. A., & Louw, E. (2019). Impacts of flood disasters in Nigeria: A critical evaluation of health implications and management. *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies, 11*(1), 1–9.

Umar, I. A., Bukar, W. M., Mustapha, A., Kyari, A., Bukar, M. A., Ibrahim, H. H., Jimme, M. A., & Kachalla, U. (2025). Flood risk and resilience: Evidence from the 2024 flood in Maiduguri, Nigeria. *International Journal of Environment and Climate Change, 15*(1), 490–505.

UNDRR. (2022). *Global assessment report on disaster risk reduction*. United Nations.

Zakour, M. J., & Gillespie, D. F. (2013). *Community disaster vulnerability: Theory, research, and practice*. Springer.