

IN FOCUS

Disaster response in Nigeria: Managing the largest displacement of 2012

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In 2012, Nigeria experienced massive rainfall from July to November. The unexpected floods killed hundreds, injured and displaced millions. Even if this accident needed prompt actions to deal with the emergency, the government failed to respond effectively because they were unprepared -lacked the data and plans- for the large number of displaced.

Inundation starting from July brought about release water from four major dams in the Niger and Benue Rivers. Floods resumed in September and further hampered relief work and the rehabilitation process. At the end of September, most states reported receding water levels whereas delta and Bayelsa states had no signs of decreasing water. It took much more time for water to recede given that water corridors were larger than any other year and drainage channels were not working properly. Heavier seasonal rains coupled with a poor drainage have threatened 19 states out of 38 mostly in the southern region of the country. Unexpected water run-off was not timely managed with contingency measures and severe rain storm caused the overflow of water reservoirs.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has prioritized data collection and provision of relief supplies in cooperation with the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS). NRCS is working jointly with the Nigerian Government urging better trained responders to manage emergency response. Mainly, the Nigerian government provided the contingency plan in response to sudden onset natural disasters including camp management, emergency shelter and non-food items. Moreover, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and IOM

agreed on training 21 national migration officials with the goal of creating the National Intelligence Unit (NIU). In 2011, IOM launched two-week training, Promoting Better Management of Migration in Nigeria, providing interview techniques, data collection and management. Also, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is helping the NRCS distribute aid more effectively by providing health care, water, sanitation and hygiene of makeshift camps and distributing non-food. (Sep, 2012).

The government needs to address several challenges such as the lack of data and the shortage of camp management capacity. Setting up an accurate terminology for the displaced people and providing legal support are essential. In addition, the government should train officials to carry out timely interviews of the displaced people, gather information, and manage the aftermath of a disaster. International cooperation between NGOs, UN Agencies and the private sector is key to react properly and effectively to disasters.

References

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