

Christian community in Nigeria counts losses after flood incident

by [Ekpali Saint](#) in the [February 23, 2022](#) issue



High tide in Lagos, Nigeria, in 2010. (Photo by ISeeAfrica, used via Creative Commons License)

When Emmanuel Nkwea left his house for his farm on a Saturday morning in September 2021, he was hoping to return with food items for his family. But disaster struck in Aponmu—a small, mostly Christian community in Nigeria’s southwestern state of Ondo—and Nkwea’s house was destroyed in a flood.

“The disaster of that morning shattered me. I was left with nothing after the incident,” Nkwea said. “The water swept away my properties and also destroyed the house where I have been staying for over 20 years.”

Every year, thousands of Nigerians, especially those living in riverine areas, are affected by flooding. Flooding in Nigeria has been associated with climate change,

which contributes to extreme rainfall. In addition, improper waste disposal hinders the free flow of rainwater and often results in flooding when drainage systems overflow.

It's a perennial challenge with increasing intensity every year. In 2020 alone, at least 68 people died and 129,000 more were somehow affected by floods.

Floods in Nigeria have also resulted in damage to farmlands, which threatens food security. In 2020, for instance, severe flooding in Northern Nigeria submerged rice farms, washing away at least 2 million tons of rice. Meanwhile, rice is one of the major imports Nigeria barred in an effort to boost domestic production in order to attain self-sufficiency in food production.

The situation is similar in Aponmu, where farming is the primary livelihood for residents. Now, people in the community are complaining of hunger and food shortages because their farmland was destroyed.

"I witnessed what I have never seen for over 15 years I have been staying in Aponmu," said Christopher Ushie, an Aponmu resident. "It was a disaster. We lost our farmlands. The flood cleared everything. Now, there is no property, no house, and no food for us. It was a disaster."

Emmanuel Thomas said the flood incident still feels unreal to him.

"You cannot even distinguish between a bridge and the road because the water covered everywhere," the father of two said. "It was just like a dream to me. We watched for over five hours how houses were falling."

While the survivors are still waiting for support from the government, Nkwea said he has already received financial support from St. Augustine Catholic Church in a neighboring community. He said it helped him rebuild his life after the disaster.

"I am grateful to the people of St. Augustine Catholic Church," he said. "They supported me with N 20,000 (\$48.76). I have rented another house elsewhere where I am managing with my family till I am able to fix my house."

Samuel Ayelabola, general-secretary of St. Augustine Church, said it made sense to help Nkwea because Christians are one in Christ.

"I believe that if any of us has a problem, we should gather together and support him or her."