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Challenges Bedeviling State Welfare Services and Rehabilitation Programmes for Flood Victims in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: Flooding is a recurrent environmental disaster with substantial consequences for human life, infrastructure, health, and social wellbeing. The Niger Delta, including Bayelsa State, is particularly vulnerable due to its geographical characteristics.

Objectives: This study examined state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes for flood victims in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, focusing on available services, operational challenges, and strategies for improvement.

Methods: Adopting a descriptive survey design, the study drew a Taro Yamane-derived sample of 400 respondents from ten flood-affected communities, of whom 394 returned usable questionnaires (98.5% retrieval), alongside 29 key-informant interviews. Survey items addressed service availability, operational barriers and improvement measures specifically, and were analyzed descriptively (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations); interview transcripts were coded thematically. Internal consistency of the instrument was strong (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$).

Results: Available interventions included emergency shelters ($M = 3.73$), mosquito nets ($M = 3.61$), clothing, bedding, and healthcare support, with an overall availability grand mean of 3.44. Major operational challenges identified included infrastructure damage ($M = 3.80$), political/administrative constraints ($M = 3.65$), poor transportation ($M = 3.61$), and economic impacts ($M = 3.54$). Overall challenge grand mean was 3.13. Key recommendations emphasized transparent fund management, integration of professional social workers, systematic displacement tracking, and sustainable livelihood support.

Conclusion: Effective flood recovery requires transitioning from short-term relief toward coordinated, needs-based, and sustainable rehabilitation through government-social worker-community synergy.

Keywords: state welfare services; rehabilitation; flood victims; social work; disaster management; Yenagoa; Bayelsa State; Nigeria

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Flooding is among the most frequent and devastating natural hazards globally, causing loss of life, property destruction, population displacement, and severe livelihood disruption. In developing nations such as Nigeria, the impacts are exacerbated by high poverty rates, inadequate infrastructure, weak institutions, and limited emergency response capacity. Displaced households frequently suffer prolonged disruptions to housing, employment, healthcare, and social networks that extend well beyond the immediate inundation period.

The Niger Delta region features low-lying terrain, extensive riverine networks, and high seasonal rainfall, rendering it highly vulnerable to severe flooding. Bayelsa State—and specifically its capital, Yenagoa Metropolis—experiences recurrent flood disasters that submerge residential areas, destroy public infrastructure, disrupt trade, and undermine community health.

State welfare interventions and rehabilitation initiatives represent crucial institutional mechanisms for mitigating disaster impacts. However, emergency relief (e.g., food and temporary shelter) must be distinguished from comprehensive rehabilitation, which aims to restore optimal functioning and long-term socioeconomic wellbeing. Professional social workers play a vital role in disaster settings through needs assessment, case management, psychosocial support, advocacy, and community reintegration. Despite existing studies on flood risk, limited empirical research addresses the operational challenges confronting state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes in Yenagoa Metropolis.

This article is distinct from a companion analysis of the same doctoral dataset that examines flood-related public health vulnerability, including healthcare access, water, sanitation and hygiene, and displacement-related health risks (Efere & Eke, forthcoming). Whereas that companion paper draws on the public-health-relevant items of the original instrument, the present manuscript analyses a separate, non-overlapping set of variables concerned with the institutional delivery of welfare services, the operational and administrative barriers confronting service providers, and the policy and social work measures needed to strengthen rehabilitation programming.

1.2 Statement of the problem

While state governments and non-governmental entities regularly distribute emergency relief to flood victims in Bayelsa State, significant gaps remain between temporary relief delivery and sustainable post-disaster rehabilitation. Emergency relief materials are frequently distributed without systematic needs assessments, leaving populations outside formal camps neglected and vulnerable sub-groups unassisted. Structural challenges—including the absence of professional social workers in camps, lack of community development committee involvement, absent displacement tracking mechanisms, hoarding of relief items, and severe transportation barriers—raise fundamental questions regarding the capacity of current welfare systems to support long-term recovery.

1.3 Research objectives

The study sought to:

- i. Examine the state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes available to flood victims in Yenagoa Metropolis.
- ii. Identify the operational challenges facing the provision of state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes.

- iii. Determine appropriate measures to address the challenges bedevilling welfare and rehabilitation service delivery.

1.4 Research questions

- i. What state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes are available to flood victims in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State?
- ii. What challenges face the provision of state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes in Yenagoa Metropolis?
- iii. What measures should be adopted to address the challenges bedevilling state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Social welfare theory

This study is primarily grounded in Social Welfare Theory (Stoesz, 1989; Jensen, 2011), which posits that political, administrative, and economic forces shape the structural institutions responsible for organizing and delivering social services. Applied to flood management, the theory explains how resource allocation, government policies, bureaucratic efficiency, and institutional integrity directly dictate the quality, equity, and accessibility of welfare services available to disaster victims.

2.2 Prevention–preparedness–response–recovery (pprr) model

The PPRR Model emphasizes that disaster management functions as an integrated, continuous cycle. Mitigation and preparedness minimize initial impact; emergency response addresses immediate survival needs; and recovery/rehabilitation facilitates long-term restoration. The framework underscores that state welfare interventions cannot terminate at emergency food distribution, but must extend into post-disaster socioeconomic rehabilitation.

In the face of scientific uncertainty, this paradigm of action posits that prevention in public administration will necessitate a government taking a precautionary stance. This means that the government must assess the dangers to people's lives and well-being against the risk of catastrophic collective harm, such as a large number of people dying all at once or an existential threat to the entire population (McLean, 2020 in Sokari & Ojo, 2022). In terms of preparedness, the government is supposed to develop a public-governance strategy that includes the means to adopt an evidence-based, rigorous regulation to regulate public behaviour in the event of an environmental disaster.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and study area

This study employed a descriptive survey design situated in Yenagoa Metropolis, the administrative capital of Bayelsa State, within Nigeria's low-lying, flood-prone Niger Delta region.

3.2 Population and sampling procedure

Drawing on a target population of 385,442 residents, application of the Taro Yamane formula yielded a required sample of 400 respondents. Ten flood-affected communities — Igbogene, Yenegue, Akenfa, Agudama, Edepie, Okutukutu, Swali, Opolo, Amarata and Onopa — were selected, with quota sampling used to allocate 40 respondents to each community. A further 29 key informants were recruited through accidental sampling for the qualitative interview component.

3.3 Data collection instruments

Two complementary instruments were used: a self-structured quantitative questionnaire and a semi-structured qualitative interview guide. The questionnaire was organised into four sections:

- Section A:** Sociodemographic characteristics.
- Section B:** Availability of state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes.
- Section C:** Operational challenges affecting service provision.
- Section D:** Recommended measures for addressing identified challenges.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Instrument validity was confirmed through expert review by academic supervisors and subject-matter panelists. A reliability pilot conducted among 40 respondents in a community outside the main

sample returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating strong internal consistency.

3.5 Data analysis

Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 394 were completed and returned, a retrieval rate of 98.5%. Quantitative responses were processed statistically to generate frequencies, percentages, means (M) and standard deviations (SD), with item-level decisions based on mean cut-off scores. Qualitative interview transcripts were analysed thematically to triangulate and contextualised the survey findings.

4. Results

4.1 Research question one: availability of state welfare services

Respondents evaluated ten items regarding welfare interventions provided during flood disasters.

Table 1. State Welfare Services and Rehabilitation Programmes Available to Flood Victims

Item No.	Welfare Service / Rehabilitation Programme	M	SD	Decision
1	Provision of emergency shelter	3.73	0.44	Agreed
2	Provision of emergency mosquito nets	3.61	0.64	Agreed
3	Distribution of children's wear	3.41	0.53	Agreed
4	Distribution of women's wear	3.58	0.53	Agreed
5	Provision of nylon mats	3.38	0.52	Agreed
6	Supply of guinea brocade clothing materials	3.55	0.54	Agreed
7	Distribution of foam mattresses	3.45	0.53	Agreed
8	Supply of roofing sheets	3.10	0.81	Agreed
9	Supply of bags of cement	3.02	1.82	Agreed
10	Healthcare support services	3.54	1.59	Agreed
Overall Grand Mean		3.44	0.80	Agreed

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2023)

As presented in Table 1, respondents agreed that emergency welfare services were available (Grand M = 3.44). Emergency shelter (M = 3.73) and mosquito nets (M = 3.61) recorded the highest scores, while building materials such as cement (M = 3.02) recorded lower agreement scores.

4.2 Research question two: challenges facing service provision

Seventeen variables were assessed to identify operational, structural, and logistical barriers.

Table 2. Challenges Affecting Welfare Service Provision and Rehabilitation Programmes

Item No.	Identified Challenge	M	SD	Decision
1	Absence of professional social workers in camps	2.79	0.91	Agreed
2	Absence of active Community Development Committees	2.65	0.75	Agreed
3	Absence of a functional Displacement Tracking Matrix	2.71	0.80	Agreed
4	Poor overall camp coordination	2.86	0.78	Agreed
5	Hoarding of relief materials away from victims	3.27	1.32	Agreed
6	Concentration of materials in official government camps only	2.90	0.71	Agreed
7	Poor transportation network to affected camps	3.61	1.30	Agreed
8	Inadequate assessment of victims' actual needs	2.55	0.90	Agreed
9	Political and administrative challenges	3.65	1.76	Agreed
10	Severe infrastructure damage	3.80	0.98	Agreed

11	Limited financial and material resources	3.11	0.62	Agreed
12	Environmental degradation	3.00	0.71	Agreed
13	Post-flood health concerns and disease outbreaks	3.08	0.81	Agreed
14	Severe displacement challenges	3.32	0.90	Agreed
15	Inadequate structural flood-mitigation measures	3.22	0.54	Agreed
16	Breakdown in coordination and communication	3.14	0.54	Agreed
17	Severe economic impact and loss of livelihood	3.54	0.60	Agreed
Overall Grand Mean		3.13	1.05	Agreed

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2023)

Data in Table 2 confirm that all seventeen items were affirmed as significant challenges (Grand M = 3.13). Infrastructure damage recorded the highest score (M = 3.80, SD = 0.98), followed by political/administrative constraints (M = 3.65), transportation deficits (M = 3.61), and economic disruption (M = 3.54).

4.3 Research question three: measures for addressing identified challenges

Nine key policy and operational interventions were evaluated to establish priorities for system improvement.

Table 3. Measures for Improving Welfare Service Delivery and Rehabilitation

Item No.	Proposed Strategy / Measure	M	SD	Decision
1	Provision of essential equipment and appliances in camps	2.73	0.77	Agreed
2	Establishment of a cadre of trained preparedness officials	2.94	0.79	Agreed
3	Comprehensive damage assessment of infrastructure & households	3.17	0.70	Agreed
4	Capacity building and support for Local Emergency Committees	2.60	0.76	Agreed
5	Transparent management and reporting of donated funds	3.20	0.86	Agreed
6	Formal involvement of qualified social workers	3.31	0.58	Agreed
7	Strong legal and institutional action against official corruption	3.32	0.67	Agreed
8	Adequate government funding of state welfare services	3.72	0.41	Agreed
9	Employment of qualified and trained disaster personnel	2.76	0.90	Agreed
Overall Grand Mean		3.08	0.90	Agreed

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2023)

As shown in Table 3, respondents strongly supported all proposed measures (Grand M = 3.08). Adequate government funding ranked highest (M = 3.72), followed by anti-corruption measures (M = 3.32), social worker integration (M = 3.31), fund transparency (M = 3.20), and structured post-disaster assessments (M = 3.17).

4.4 Summary of qualitative findings

Qualitative interview data complemented the survey results. Key informants confirmed that while state relief packages were provided (e.g., emergency shelter, clothing, food, basic medical care), assistance was frequently short-term, uncoordinated, and mismatched to household needs. Participants emphasized severe deficiencies in camp sanitation, lack of clean drinking water, absence of counseling services, and complete exclusion of informal displacement sites. Interviewees strongly advocated for formal social work deployment, community-based monitoring, and sustainable livelihood restoration programs.

5. Discussion

5.1 Service availability versus adequacy

The findings indicate that government welfare interventions were active during flood events (M = 3.44). However, empirical and qualitative data reveal a clear divergence between material

availability and overall service adequacy. Providing basic survival items without continuous needs assessments fails to facilitate long-term socioeconomic recovery.

5.2 Physical and administrative constraints

Infrastructure damage was identified as the premier barrier (M = 3.80), as destroyed roads, submerged medical centers, and damaged utility networks hamper logistics and isolate victims. Political and administrative bottlenecks (M = 3.65), paired with transportation deficits (M = 3.61), severely exacerbate distribution inequality, often limiting assistance exclusively to centralized government camps while ignoring informal settlements.

5.3 Institutional gaps and professional social work

The research highlights critical structural omissions, notably the absence of professional social workers (M = 2.79) and displacement tracking systems (M = 2.71). Professional social workers possess specialized skills in trauma counseling, vulnerability assessment, resource linkage, and case management. Omitting social workers converts disaster response into a purely material distribution exercise, neglecting psychosocial, health, and long-term reintegration needs.

6. Implications of the study

6.1 Implications for social work practice

- a) **Multidisciplinary Integration:** Social workers must be formally integrated into national and state emergency structures to execute rapid needs assessments, psychosocial interventions, and vulnerable population registration.
- b) **Continuum of Care:** Practice must extend from emergency crisis management to post-disaster case management, trauma therapy, family reintegration, and community advocacy.

6.2 Implications for policy and disaster governance

- a) **Policy Shift:** Policy frameworks in Bayelsa State must shift from reactive, emergency relief models to an integrated framework: Risk Reduction → Preparedness → Response → Rehabilitation → Livelihood Resilience.
- b) **Institutional Accountability:** Disaster agencies must implement open-access Displacement Tracking Matrices (DTM) and transparent financial reporting systems to mitigate diversion and corruption.

7. Recommendations

Based on the study's empirical findings, the following recommendations are submitted:

1. **Statutory Funding:** Bayelsa State Government should enact dedicated statutory funding streams to guarantee adequate budgetary allocations for post-disaster rehabilitation.
2. **Professional Deployment:** Qualified social workers should be statutorily recruited and deployed across all displacement camps and local disaster management committees.
3. **Displacement Tracking:** State disaster management agencies (SEMA/NEMA) should establish a standardized, digital Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to monitor displaced households and track relief equity.
4. **Pre- and Post-Disaster Needs Assessments:** Comprehensive structural and socioeconomic needs assessments should precede and follow all welfare distributions.
5. **Anti-Corruption Mechanisms:** Independent monitoring committees—including civil society and community leaders—should oversee relief material distribution and fund management.
6. **Livelihood Rehabilitation:** Post-flood programs must incorporate micro-grants, vocational training, and agricultural input replacement to restore economic independence.
7. **Infrastructure & Health Support:** State authorities must prioritize flood-resilient infrastructure, drainage expansion, and integrated health/sanitation support in vulnerable zones.

8. Conclusion

This study evaluated the state welfare services and rehabilitation programmes for flood victims in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State. Findings confirm that while emergency relief materials are provided, service delivery is constrained by infrastructure destruction, administrative inefficiencies, transportation bottlenecks, lack of displacement tracking, and the exclusion of professional social workers. Achieving sustainable disaster recovery in Yenagoa

requires moving beyond short-term material relief toward a professionally managed, transparent, and resilience-focused rehabilitation framework grounded in government–social worker–community synergy.

Declarations

Relationship to related publications

This manuscript and a companion article examining flood-related public health vulnerability are both derived from the same doctoral dataset on flood victims in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State.

Informed consent

Written and verbal informed consent was obtained from all survey respondents and interview participants prior to data collection.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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Data availability statement

Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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