

# Assessing the Socio-Economic Impacts of the 2022 Cameroon Dam Water Releases on Nigeria through an Ecolinguistic Lens

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## Abstract

This study examines the impacts of flooding and the role of language and communication in managing climate-induced disasters, focusing on the 2022 floods along the Cameroon-Nigeria border. Climate change continues to drive crises such as floods, droughts, storms, and wildfires, with profound human and socio-economic consequences. A notable case is the flooding caused by the release of excess water from Cameroon's Lagdo Dam, which resulted in widespread destruction across Nigerian states. Using an ecolinguistic framework, this research investigates the causes and socio-economic effects of the 2022 floods. It adopts an investigative and descriptive approach, drawing on government reports, scholarly publications, and media sources. Findings reveal extensive casualties, displacement, loss of infrastructure, food shortages, disease outbreaks, and economic decline in affected communities. Central to the analysis is the role of language in crisis communication. In a multilingual setting such as the Cameroon-Nigeria border, English, French, and indigenous languages are essential for the timely diffusion of lifesaving information, coordination of relief efforts, and promotion of interethnic cooperation. The study emphasizes that effective communication not only mitigates immediate risks but also strengthens long-term resilience. The paper concludes that both governments and the general public must adopt proactive strategies to prevent similar disasters. It recommends cross-border collaboration, improved early warning systems, and inclusive communication strategies that leverage local languages. These measures are critical for safeguarding lives and property in the face of climate change and for advancing sustainable socio-economic stability in West Africa.

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## Keywords

Climate Change, Flooding, Communication Crisis, Ecolinguistics, Disaster Management

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## 1. Introduction

The term climate, which originated from the Latin word *Clima*, is the long-term manifestation of weather and other atmospheric conditions of a region within a particular time, generally 30 years. The idea of 30 years was to have a period long enough to accurately evaluate the representations of the atmospheric values of a place.

Climate study is very important because living beings and the climate system both have significant effects on each other. The lives of all living organisms affect the composition of the atmosphere and the climate because they produce and use gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and oxygen at different rates, which all form part of climate. In return, climate dictates where, when, and how species can exist and survive.

According to the United Nations Organization, climate change refers to long-term shifts in the temperature and weather patterns of a place, and the shifts in question can be natural. Though often natural, researchers have shown that humans have greatly contributed to climate and global heating in several ways. Climate scientists have shown that humans are responsible for virtually all global heating over the last 200 years (UNO, 2024). Sometimes, activities such as bush burning, drilling, mining, large-scale farming, uncontrolled land occupation, environmental abuse, and poor infrastructure can provoke a climate crisis at the slightest unexpected changes. The consequences of climate change can vary from intense drought, water scarcity, severe fires, erosion, rising sea levels, flooding, storms, food crises, health challenges, economic slow-down, housing issues, and even fatalities.

Climate actions and adaptations involve preparing ahead of climate crises to ensure safety. Early warning systems can save lives and properties as well as deliver maximum benefits. This is where communication and language education are needed to ease the diffusion of needed information to the people in affected areas and in any language they understand. Climate action requires significant financial investments by governments... we either pay the bill now or pay in the future (UNO, 2024). Paying in the future has always been more expensive and regrettable. Climate issues could be avoided where there are better preparations born out of respect for lives, property, and the environment.

## 2. Research Questions

The research questions set for this study are as follows:

- 1) What socio-economic impacts did the 2022 Lagdo Dam flooding have on border communities in Cameroon and Nigeria?
- 2) How does language function as a tool for crisis communication and resilience in multilingual, disaster-prone environments?
- 3) In what ways can an ecolinguistic approach inform more effective communication strategies for climate change adaptation and disaster management?

### 3. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To examine the socio-economic impacts of the 2022 Lagdo Dam flooding on communities along the Cameroon-Nigeria border.
- 2) To analyze the role of language in crisis communication and resilience within multilingual disaster-prone environments.
- 3) To apply an ecolinguistic perspective in proposing communication strategies that enhance climate change adaptation and disaster management.

### 4. Limitations to the Study

Owing to the qualitative nature of this study, it relied primarily on secondary data sources such as institutional records, scholarly publications, and media reports. While these sources evidently provided valuable insights, the absence of primary field data may limit the depth of community-level perspectives and the reliability of some accounts. Media reports, in particular, may contain biases or inconsistencies depending on their driving objectives, which could affect the precision of the findings. However, for the sake of objectivity and research fairness, triangulation of multiple sources was employed to enhance credibility and minimize possible distortions.

### 5. Methodology

In line with the nature and interest of this study, a qualitative descriptive approach was employed. This approach is appropriate for exploring the socio-economic and communicative dimensions of the 2022 Cameroon-Nigeria floods. In other words, the aim is not to quantify impacts but to provide an in-depth understanding of how language, communication, and ecolinguistic factors intersect with the disaster experiences of the citizens. As a matter of necessity, secondary data used included government records, published scholarly works, textbooks, and news reports from the media. These sources provided accounts of the flooding event, its causes, and its consequences. These data were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency, with priority given to publications and reports mainly addressing the 2022 Lagdo Dam flooding, its socio-economic impacts, and communication strategies used in the affected regions. Thus, the analysis covered reports and materials published between 2022 and 2024 to ensure contemporaneity and to capture both immediate and ongoing responses to the flooding.

## 6. Methodology Justification

The qualitative descriptive approach adopted for this study is considered to be the most suitable because it allows for the interpretation of narratives, discourses, and reports in context. This approach also highlights people's experiences, communication practices, and socio-cultural dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through statistical methods known with the quantitative method.

## 7. Theoretical Support

Ecolinguistics was adopted to support this research. It is a branch of linguistics developed in the 1990s. It attempts to establish the relationship between the languages of a community and the ecosystems within which the community lives and thrives. The term ecosystem refers to the natural and cultural practices of a community. Ecolinguistics is therefore the science of language and ecology. Ecology, a branch of biology, is the science of the relationship between living organisms and their environment. Alexander Von Humboldt has been recognized as the father of ecology, being the first intellectual to embark on the study of the relationship between organisms and their environment (Eurotrad, 2021). Ecolinguistics studies the impact of language on life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms, and their physical environment. Ecolinguistics has, since the early 1990s, been driven by a concern for life on earth and so sets out to look into the linguistic study of the current ecological crisis (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014: p. 105).

The theory highlights the development of the physical, natural, cultural, and linguistic aspects of man's societies for better living. Neglecting any aspect of this development undermines the society's security. Adequate language education, essential environmental services, and quality infrastructure are factors in managing the environment for greater productivity and better living. "Ecolinguistics sees human beings, animals, and other living organisms as part of society and the larger ecosystems that life depends on" (Stanlaw, 2020). According to Stibbe, ecolinguistics can play a role in the reinvention of society along more ecological lines by revealing and challenging the stories we live by.

## 8. History: Cameroon-Nigeria Borders

European explorers and missionaries such as Henry Stanley began mapping the interior of Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and eventually discovered that the continent was rich in diverse raw and mineral materials. Seeing this natural endowment as a good exploit to fuel the Industrial Revolution, they came to Africa to invest for economic reasons. According to history, Britain had administered Southern and Northern Nigeria from 1861 up until 1914, when the two Protectorates were amalgamated as the country that is Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2022).

The Scramble for Africa is the mission under which European countries brought the entire African continent, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, under their control as part of their empires. This mission took off in the 1880s, and con-

sequently, “Kamerun”, known today as Cameroon, came under the control of Germany up till 1884.

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 was the meeting at which the major European powers negotiated formal claims to territories in Africa. This conference officially paved the way for European nations to claim almost the entire continent, including its resources and people. Britain and Germany therefore signed a treaty outlining a border in the southern areas of Nigeria and Cameroon using the Rio del Rey and the Cross River. In July 1886, the boundary was extended northwards as far as Yola. In 1893, the extension continued northwards to Lake Chad, and the system continued by mutual agreement between Germany and Britain until April 1913 (Brownlie, 1979).

Upon the breakout of the First World War in 1914, Britain and France gained the upper hand in the struggle for Africa; they eventually succeeded in seizing Cameroon from the Germans in 1916. Thus, from July 1922, Cameroon became a League of Nations mandate, with the larger region of the colony coming under France and smaller areas in the North and South falling within Nigerian borders. This order remained in place until the 1940s, when the movement for decolonization commenced following the Second World War between 1945 and 1949. Over time, Britain and France gradually granted more social rights and liberty to their African colonies, and eventually, Cameroon gained full independence in January 1960 and Nigeria in October 1960. According to Brownlie (1979), the plebiscite held in February 1961 was on the future of Cameroon and its relations with Nigeria, a British colony. Following this, Northern Cameroon voted to join Nigeria while the southern region opted to join Cameroon; this position has remained to date.

The Bakassi Movement for Self-Determination (BAMOSD), a Cameroonian militant organization, began seeking the independence of Bakassi, a territory of Cameroon, even while Nigeria was still claiming ownership of the region. This group was particularly focused on the formation of the Democratic Republic of Bakassi. This dispute has provoked many economic challenges and even fatalities at different times.

The Bakassi conflict was a dispute over the Peninsula, an oil-rich region between Nigeria and Cameroon from 2006 to 2008. The dispute was later hijacked by insurgencies waged by local separatists, that is, the BAMOSD, against the Cameroonian government (Wikipedia: Bakassi Conflict). According to Brownlie (1979), this long-term tussle between Nigeria, Cameroon, and even the insurgents over the ownership of this oil-rich territory was, in 1994, handled by the International Court of Justice, which eventually ruled that the territory belonged to Cameroon in 2002 and eventually handed the Peninsula over to Cameroon in 2008.

The British Broadcasting Corporation reported that Cameroon and Nigeria finally reached an agreement during the 20<sup>th</sup> session of their commission, which was occasioned by regular inter-communal conflicts. The governments of the two nations eventually agreed to resolve all border issues amicably to save the people in the affected areas from further misunderstandings; so Nigeria agreed to con-

cede the Bakassi to Cameroon, a sister nation, in order to achieve sustainable peaceful co-existence.

## 9. Cameroon-Nigerian Borders: The Socio-Linguistic Situation

Kindzeka in Voice of Africa reported that the area is about 2100 km (1300 miles), running from Lake Chad in the north of the Gulf of Guinea to the Atlantic Ocean coast. Another report says it is around 1975 km (1277 miles) in length and runs from the tripoint with Chad in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south (Wikipedia, 2022). In summary, the borders cover approximately 2000 km (1300 miles), with their environs extending towards Lake Chad in the north and the Atlantic Ocean in the south.

Cameroon is a Central African country situated on the Gulf of Guinea. There are two major cities, namely Yaounde, the capital, and Douala, the largest city and the seaport. On the whole, there are seventy-one cities located in the ten major regions of Cameroon, and they are politically semi-autonomous. As of 2023, the country has a record of well over 29.3 million people (World Population Review, 2022). As of now, the president of the country is Paul Biya.

Nigeria, a multinational West African state, is equally located on the Gulf of Guinea. The federal capital city, Abuja, is located in the north, while Lagos, a southern city, remains the seaport and the commercial capital. Nigeria comprises 36 states apart from Abuja. The country is inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups identifying with a wide variety of cultures. Lately, the country has a record of approximately 228,181,000 million population (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024).

In Nigeria, six states share borders with Cameroon. They are Adamawa, Benue, Borno, and Taraba in the North and Akwa-Ibom along with Cross River in the south. Fifty-five communities altogether make up the population of the region, 27 in Cameroon and 28 in Nigeria. They range from Adere, Afade, Banki, Beka, Diba, Dode, Essengi, Maga, Ndoughouia to Obonye and the rest in Cameroon, and Bel-el, Buli, Djwe, Esuokon, Ikang, Kachi, Konkul, Madagali, Okuri to Rann and others in Nigeria (International Boundary Study, 1969). If, since 1969, a total of 55 communities occupied the borders, by the year 2022, which is 51 years later, with the expansion of businesses, increased inter-ethnic marriages, migration, and technology, the populations in these communities are expected to have increased maximally.

Linguistically, more than 500 languages are spoken in Nigeria. English is the official language and is widely spoken. Pidgin, an English-based grassroots language, is also widely spoken, especially in the eastern part of the country, among students and the general public. French is spoken by a few, being the second official language and the official language of some neighboring countries; it is also taught and spoken by teachers and students who engage in French education in Nigerian secondary and tertiary institutions. Aside from these, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are the three foremost Nigerian local languages, widely spoken and rec-

ognized as national languages. In the communities of the different minority ethnic groups, over 500 local languages are spoken, among which are Ibibio, Efik, Isoko, Edo, Tiv, Fulani, Idoma, Igala, Ijaw, Egun, Kanuri, Kamwe, Urhobo, Nupe, and Ishan, among several others.

Cameroon, on the other hand, is home to over 240 languages, which include 53 Afro-Asiatic languages, 2 Nilo-Saharan languages, 4 Ubangian languages, and 169 Niger-Congo languages, which include Catala, Deutsch, Espanol, Euskara, English, French, Arabic, Italiano, and Portuguese, amongst others. It is no news that French and English are recognized as the first and second official languages in Cameroon. Like Nigeria, a Pidgin language popularly known as *franglais* is also commonly spoken, especially at the grassroots.

## 10. Year 2022 Releases of Water from Cameroon Dam: Causes and Effects

Authorities in Nigeria have warned of the potential for flooding in eleven states after neighbouring Cameroon said it would start regulated releases from its Lagdo Dam following recent heavy rainfall in West Central Africa (Egbejule, 2024). According to this report, Umar Mohammed, the Director General of the Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency (NHSA), posited that the water discharges would be gradual to avoid substantial flooding in Nigeria, and thus there would be no need for alarm. According to Egbejule, the water discharge is anticipated to progressively escalate to 1000 m<sup>3</sup>/s over the next seven days based on the inflow from the upstream Garoua River, which is the primary source into the reservoir and a significant tributary to the Benue River [ph1] [ph2]. The Garoua River in Cameroon's North region runs along the bank of the larger Benue River, which flows through neighbouring countries, including Nigeria.

Kindzeka (2022) reported that Cameroon's National Observatory on Climate Change had predicted in July that floods and landslides would hit many Cameroonian towns and villages alongside their environs, especially Nigerian neighbours, should precautions fail. This is not the first time releases of waters from Cameroon Lagdo Dam have caused casualties in Nigerian states that are situated around Cameroon borders; for some years, the reservoir's releases have been a source of headache for its larger neighbours. BBC revealed that in 2012, nine Nigerian states were affected during which over 500 people were injured, over 100,000 were displaced, and over 300 casualties were recorded. According to Adesola, Okeke, and Chris (2024), since 2012, Nigeria has been experiencing one of the biggest floods in a very long time in 2022. Flooding is a climate situation related to the rising and overflowing of a body of water into normally dry lands and with a magnitude of destruction and effects on areas affected.

## 11. Causes

The following natural and human factors were identified:

- Prolonged torrential rains in different regions of the country.

- Collapse of Lagdo and Alau major dams in the countries due to uncontrollable flooding.
- Dilapidated dams and major bridges, which had been calling for attention.
- Wrongful occupation of risk areas by unsuspecting residents and farmers.
- Wrongful and excessive mining of sand and gravel in the swampy areas eventually promoted threatening erosion.
- Belated information, this had in no small measure affected precautions.
- Poor communication and linguistic barriers, in Nigeria for instance, meant that there were no records of reaching out to the various communities in various languages. This implies that residents who may only understand Pidgin, Franglais, or their local languages were only being informed in English.

## 12. Effects

The following empirical evidence consists of reports of the damages in Cameroun, Chad, and Nigeria. The article, however, acknowledges that precisely sourced statistics for casualties, displacement, and economic losses vary from one reporter to another, hence the use of approximation.

### **Cameroun:**

- Over 236,000 people were affected (Diallo, 2024; Gnagny, 2024).
- Over 30,000 hectares of crops were destroyed (Diallo, 2024; Gnagny, 2024).
- Several public infrastructures such as bridges, roads, buildings, dykes, and others collapsed (Diallo, 2024; Gnagny, 2024).
- 36-meter-long bridge on the River Momo collapsed (Kindzeka, 2022; Maillard, 2024; Gnagny, 2024).
- Several homes built on flood risk areas were submerged, with a high threat to lives and properties (Kindzeka, 2022; Maillard, 2024; Gnagny, 2024).
- Momo International Business Center, situated between Nigeria and Cameroun, was submerged, with goods worth millions of naira destroyed (Kindzeka, 2022; Maillard, 2024; Gnagny, 2024).

### **Chad:**

- Over 5 million out of a population of 17 million were affected (Gnagny, 2024).
- Over 500 fatalities were recorded (Gnagny, 2024).
- Over 210,000 buildings collapsed (Gnagny, 2024).
- Over 880,000 areas of farmland were destroyed (Gnagny, 2024).
- About 7000 cattle were affected (Gnagny, 2024).
- Economic activities were grounded for weeks (Gnagny, 2024).

### **Nigeria:**

- Thirty-one states were affected (NEMA, 2022).
- Over 600 casualties reported (NEMA, 2022).
- Over 673,000 persons were displaced (NEMA, 2022).
- Critical infrastructures ranging from dams, reservoirs, roads, bridges, prisons, correctional centers, refugee camps, to residences were destroyed (NEMA, 2022).
- An estimated 850,000 tons of crops, enough to feed 8.5 million people for six

- months, were destroyed (NEMA, 2022).
- Schools in the areas were temporarily closed down for two weeks (NEMA, 2022).
  - Movement and economic activities were grounded for weeks (National Emergency Management Agency: NEMA, 2022).
  - Over 300,000 hectares of farmland were destroyed (Diallo, 2024).
  - Over 1 million livestock were destroyed (Diallo, 2024).
  - Innumerable fish and fish ponds were washed away (Diallo, 2024).
  - Over 2 million people experienced displacement, injuries, and losses (Diallo, 2024).
  - Jail collapses led to the escape of 281 inmates, with seven recaptured and 274 remaining at large (Umar, 2022).
  - There were records of reptiles, lions, crocodiles, and other wildlife from Sanela Kyarimi Zoo in Borno State and from various forests being washed into residential neighbourhoods (Umar, 2022).
  - Movement of vehicles and, consequently, economic activities were disrupted for months (Umar, 2022).
  - Over 31.8 million Nigerians are already at risk of acute food insecurity.
  - The regions are now on high alert for outbreaks of cholera, malaria, typhoid, as well as animal and zoonotic diseases (United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization).
  - Dangerous floodings may extend until November 2022 (Schmale, 2022).

### 13. Precautions: Actions, Language, and Communication

Cameroon's National Observatory on climate change had earlier discovered and warned as early as July 2022 that floods and landslides would hit many Cameroonian cities and villages. Warnings and signals from the government thereafter were sent to citizens, especially the inhabitants of the flood risk regions and even neighbouring countries. The Deputy Director of the Observatory confirmed that the Cameroonian government had already begun educating people to beware of risk zones.

The warnings and notices came from Cameroon to Nigeria as of July 2022. The torrential rains and flooding happened between September and October 2022, as reported by Simple English Wikipedia (2022). Consequently, Cameroonians and Nigerians had between July and September to alert the citizens and prepare for eventualities.

During the rains, Cameroon Utility Authorities in charge of the Ladgo Dam also sent notices to Nigeria concerning their plans for controlled water releases from the Dam, which was already overflowing, as confirmed by the Director General of the Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency, Umar Mohammed (2024), in the Guardian. For instance, warnings from the Republic of Cameroon were officially confirmed by Nigerian authorities; for instance, Nigerian Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq, said there was enough warning and information about the 2022 floodings.

Nigerian officials actually took the warnings seriously, and concerned agencies conveyed the messages to the different States in Nigeria. Egbejule (2024) confirmed that the Nigerian government sent warnings concerning probable flooding in eleven states following Cameroon's decision to embark on regulated releases of water from its Lagdo Dam. According to Egbejule, at least eleven Nigerian states from North to South along the River Benue's flow are expected to be affected to some degree. To ensure that the information reached the grassroots, the BBC Pidgin News also passed the information to at least eleven states, asking their government at all levels as well as the people to be on guard. Following this warning, BBC Pidgin News confirmed that states like Kwara and Edo took their turn to diffuse the warnings through radio jingles, news, and various social gatherings to place their people on red alert.

Despite the warnings from the two countries, the level of damages recorded is evidence that precautions were actually not adequate. Sadiya Umar Farouq adjudged that though enough and early warnings were sent out, local, state, and community leaders are still to blame for not acting promptly.

In the midst of these challenges, the affected West African countries, in particular Nigeria, made efforts to invite international humanitarian agencies as well as local bodies to alleviate the problems. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Voice of Africa (VOA), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in collaboration with the International Rapid Response Fund, the United States of America, Action Against Hunger (AAH, USA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Information Humanitarian Worldwide (IHW), and Cameroon's Energy System, that is ENEO, which is the country's national electricity utility body, are examples of international agencies with records of playing different roles in salvaging the victims of the floodings and the environment.

Some local agencies also played vital roles in alleviating and managing casualties. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Nigerian Red Cross, the National Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), the Nigerian Correctional Services (NCS), and the Nigerian Hydrological Service Agency (NHSA) were all recorded to have played different roles to save lives and properties. Their efforts include rescuing victims, relocating displaced persons, controlling and draining waters, helping victims to hospitals, distributing food, money, and daily essentials to various camps, disseminating news and information to update the public, guarding against electrical complexities, extending medical care to homes and camps, rehabilitating the homeless, and providing help to relatives of the deceased, among others. Though this step is laudable, the study emphasizes better precautionary arrangements.

## **14. The Role of Language and Communication**

There is no doubt that effective precautions against this incident had been hampered by poor communication and a language barrier to a very great extent. Alt-

though the Nigerian Humanitarian Services Agency authorities confirmed that the Cameroonian government had duly notified Nigerian officials beforehand, the flood alert came a week after thousands in the North-Eastern hub of Maiduguri were displaced by torrential rains following the collapse of Alau Dam, which had been neglected for years (*The Guardian*, 2024). According to *Adesola et al. (2024)*, professionals have so far made little or no effort to enlighten the masses about some of the causes, consequences, and ways to better cope with the situation.

Precaution is simply previous cautions employed to prevent misfortunes; it is a measure taken beforehand to avert unfortunate incidents, most especially to safeguard lives and belongings. Such cautions may involve warnings, information educating the masses through signposts, daily news from newspapers, radio programs, television announcements, and house-to-house, school-to-school, and village-to-village enlightenment.

In the case of climate change, appropriate authorities are least expected to take information from weather forecasters, geographers, and health and sanitation agencies with a light hand. Precautions such as educating the masses, placing red alerts on danger zones involving law enforcement agents to ensure that people respect such alerts, especially in African countries, evacuating people from danger zones, and repairing and building new infrastructures to cope with the probable challenges are all necessary. Putting up relevant measures for improved traffic access, land occupation control, food security, health, sanitation, and environmental basic needs could be part of the precautions, especially with regard to climatic challenges.

This degree of precaution could be unrealistic where language and communication barriers are not given proper attention, especially in a multilingual environment. The attention in this case must go beyond city people, educated folks, the elites, and the leaders. The need to reach the grassroots, that is, the relevant local communities, cannot be compromised in this case. Language plays an integrative role in society by uniting different ethnic groups and thus paves the way for personal, societal, national, and international relations. According to *Amadi and Emeka-Eze (2012)*, language is a vehicle of communication often taken for granted by human beings, whereas it is the very essence of human existence.

Language, a tool for communication, paves the way for sustainable social relationships in a multilingual global world. According to *Amadi and Emeka-Eze (2012: p. 74)*, man needs language not only for expression but also to maneuver situations. Nigeria, a multilingual nation, has the English language as its lingua franca and as a cord that binds the different ethnic groups together. Being surrounded by Francophone neighbors like Cameroonians means that knowledge of French is a way towards international cordial relations. According to *Amadi and Emeka-Eze (2012: p. 71)*, the challenge of development is to improve people's quality of life through worthy incomes, better language education, good standards of health, a safe environment, and a rich cultural life. For better national and international peaceful coexistence, Nigeria must invest in both English and French language education. According to *Amadi et al.*, language needs a crucial invest-

ment to sustain the development process of every nation or organization.

Seidlhofer said that today, rational interaction is experienced the world over, as language is a mark of identity; speaking a language is identifying with other users, and associations are only possible through language and communication. According to Amadi & Emeka-Eze (2012: p. 76), “in an ethnically mixed setting, the linking of socio-economic and language processes at both the micro and the macro levels is expressed in the mutual acceptance of different groups. To guard against social challenges requires the cooperation of neighbours, far or near, who should first and foremost communicate together effectively on issues that concern them.” Precautions of any form against any type of challenge may not be very effective where a lack of adequate language education has given rise to linguistic barriers.

Language planning and policies should therefore serve as tools to direct society towards better comprehension and productivity. The march towards globalization can only be made possible by language. The international position of English and French as languages of technology, commerce, and education should now give birth to a new set of learners who need language for socio-economic actualizations. Business men and women, journalists, newscasters, doctors, lawyers, pastors, roadside mechanics, shoe repairers, drivers, politicians, teachers, and students all need language to realize effective communication and better social rapport in society. In a nutshell, to an extent, the babelic linguistic situation must have hampered the forewarnings and the precautions taken by Nigeria and her neighbours to avert the 2022 fatal floodings.

## 15. Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

Life itself is about challenges, changes, demands, struggles, battles, and sometimes encouragement. Life is so dynamic that no one should expect stagnation in any area of life. Climate is part of what makes life for man. It is not static; it changes from time to time and from region to region. Climate change, alongside casualties, does occur in diverse places through no fault of the leaders; most often, it is natural and unprecedented. The 2022 floodings that ravaged several Nigerian states following torrential rains in both Cameroon and Nigeria were a natural occurrence; it was an unfortunate situation that affected several families adversely. The significance of this study is directing African governments’ attention, especially the Nigerian government, to social issues like climate, natural disasters, linguistic barriers, and their consequences.

François-Xavier (2024) has warned that the flooding situation is still evolving. According to him, although the waters have receded in some areas, the peak of the flooding season is still on the horizon. The Nigerian Hydrological Agency, in April 2024, during the launch of the Annual Flood Outlook in Abuja, warned of more national disasters as it announced the forecast of other floods in as many as 29 Nigerian states (*The Guardian*, 2024).

The Nigerian government needs to take this warning very seriously. If flooding in 11 states claimed over 600 lives and damaged properties worth billions of naira,

allowing flooding to sweep across 29 states would spell unimaginable doom for the nation. Governments of all neighboring African countries and humanitarian caregivers from the Western world could be contacted for various positive actions ahead to avert the occurrence. At the national level, all the relevant stakeholders should be duly informed and given enough manpower and financial resources to tackle the situation.

The recommendations of this study will not exclude the roles of people at the grassroots. Apart from the government and various organizations, the people, rich or poor, elites or illiterates, all have roles to play to achieve a sustainably safe society. A lot needs to be done before, during, and after climate changes to prevent casualties, minimize effects, and rehabilitate affected persons.

A country where facilities like bridges, waterways, gutters, culverts, and other drainage systems receive regular attention may not experience untold destruction during unexpected situations like floods. The situation where torrential rains occur consistently will lead to the overflowing of waters from dams, rivers, and seas. Where good waterways are not available, the waters will definitely flow everywhere trying to find their level, and this will lead to erosion and unnecessary flooding. The Nigerian government needs to attend to the provision and regular repair of relevant infrastructure. The Ministry of Works would do well to rise up to this responsibility.

The Nigerian government could revisit the 2021-2025 Peer Reviewed Studies on Benue Basin and flooding, which laid emphasis on issues ranging from improper land usage, such as indiscriminate sand mining along the flood plains of the River Benue in Makurdi, to the occupation of flood risk areas by citizens.

Forecasting weather changes and informing the public, as well as educating them on necessary precautions to be taken, would be appreciated annually in Nigeria. Activities like planting vegetation and trees around houses would later reduce the effects of heavy winds. Discouraging and banning the occupation of swampy and riverine areas, as well as other dangerous environments, is very necessary. Timely evacuation of families from dangerous zones during a climate crisis would be necessary. The Ministry of Environmental Affairs may need to employ the services of law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance in Nigeria.

Weather-related problems can be sudden and very devastating at times. Environmentalists need to involve journalists, television and radio broadcasters, and even non-governmental agencies without any delay. Society needs to be well informed far ahead of time in matters relating to natural crises. Educating people on the different steps to take through newspapers, electronic news, radio jingles, television programs, advertisements, house-to-house orientations, social gatherings, schools, markets, billboards, and even handbills would all go a long way in minimizing casualties.

Today, language education has gone beyond learning to pass examinations. The knowledge of any language, whether local, official, or international, is very pertinent. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with language policymakers,

needs to give more attention to language education in Nigeria. Foremost international languages like English and French, national languages, the official languages of neighboring countries, and even immediate neighbors' local languages could all come to the rescue of lives and belongings in trying times. Languages are grasped during childhood. Language education in different regions of the country would therefore need more attention at both the primary and secondary school levels.

The popular habit of emptying wastes indiscriminately needs to be seriously checked. This has, in times past, led to blockages of gutters and other waterways, and the consequences have been hazardous. The environmental sanitation agencies, such as the defunct War Against Indiscipline (WAI), would be needed. Nigeria is old enough to have environmental engineers for waste recycling services. A population of over 250 million people would stand to benefit economically from recycled wastes. Nylons, tins, leathers, plastics, clothing, bottles, ceramics, and papers form part of the waste items which end up as blockages.

Many residences are constructed around high voltage electric facilities. Such citizens may face danger during heavy rains and thunderstorms. The electricity institutions would do well in educating the masses regarding the risks. These officials would do society a lot of favor by being available during weather challenges to switch off or turn on central electric power as the case may demand.

Since weather crises are most often natural, all hands should be on deck for rescue missions whenever and wherever they happen. Humanitarian agencies and health workers from both local and international levels would do well to be available.

Finally, the worst-hit individuals are ordinary persons in society who, under various pretexts, are caught unawares by the tides of climate changes. Warnings concerning the safety of lives and the environment are better taken seriously and honored adequately and promptly by all and sundry.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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