



ISSUE BRIEF

April 2026

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management: A Legislative Agenda for Resilience in Nigeria

Authors:

Shafiu Yahaya Mikhail, Ph.D Hassan Yerima, Ph.D, & Shamshudeen Soliu

Department of Democracy and Governance

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)

Executive Summary

Nigeria is increasingly vulnerable to climate-related disasters, yet its disaster management system remains reactive due to fragmented laws, weak coordination, inadequate funding, and poor early warning systems. Despite existing frameworks such as the Climate Change Act (2021) and the Act establishing the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), gaps persist.

This policy brief argues for strengthening Nigeria's legal and institutional frameworks to enhance climate adaptation, mitigation, and disaster response. It recommends legislative reforms to improve funding, institutional coordination, early warning systems, and sub-national implementation. Strengthening these areas will enhance national resilience and reduce the socio-economic impacts of climate-related disasters.

This brief recommends a comprehensive legislative approach, including enacting a unified Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Act, amending the NEMA Act, establishing a Climate and Disaster Resilience Fund, and developing an integrated early warning system to enhance preparedness and resilience

Background

Nigeria is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including flooding, desert

encroachment, and extreme weather events. These hazards are increasing in frequency



and intensity, posing risks to national security and development.

Nigeria has made notable policy and legislative efforts, including:

- The Climate Change Act (2021), which provides a legal framework for achieving climate goals and net-zero emissions targets
- The National Climate Change Policy (2021–2030), which promotes adaptation and mitigation strategies
- The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Act, which governs disaster response coordination

Despite these efforts, Nigeria's disaster risk management remains largely reactive rather than preventive, with weak integration between climate policy and disaster management systems.

Issue

Nigeria currently lacks a comprehensive and unified legal framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), resulting in significant overlaps, fragmentation, and gaps in governance. Existing laws and policies operate in isolation, with no single legislation providing a coordinated approach to disaster prevention, response, and recovery. Although the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is mandated to coordinate disaster response at the national level, effective collaboration across federal, state, and local governments remains weak and inconsistent.

This institutional ineffectiveness is driven by several interrelated factors. First, inadequate

funding and poor implementation continue to undermine existing frameworks. Many disaster management institutions, particularly at the sub-national level, face severe resource constraints, which limit their operational capacity. In addition, weak enforcement mechanisms and insufficient technical expertise further reduce the effectiveness of policies and programmes.

Second, early warning and preparedness systems remain underdeveloped. The absence of robust, technology-driven early warning infrastructure and limited data-sharing mechanisms across agencies hinder timely responses to emerging risks. As a result, Nigeria's disaster management approach remains largely reactive, with limited capacity to anticipate, prevent, or mitigate disasters before they escalate.

Third, there is a weak integration between climate change policy and disaster risk management strategies. Climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts are often designed and implemented separately from disaster risk reduction initiatives, leading to inefficiencies. This disconnect reduces the overall effectiveness of national responses to climate-induced disasters, which are becoming increasingly frequent and severe.

Collectively, these challenges highlight the urgent need for a coordinated, well-funded, and legally integrated framework that aligns climate policy with disaster risk management and strengthens institutional capacity across all levels of government.



Recommendation for Legislative Intervention

□ The National Assembly should adopt a comprehensive and integrated legislative approach to strengthen Nigeria's disaster risk management and climate resilience architecture. This should begin with the enactment of a standalone Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Act that provides a unified legal framework for disaster prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and reconstruction. The proposed law should clearly delineate roles and responsibilities across federal, state, and local governments; provide legal backing for risk assessments and contingency planning; and mandate the integration of DRR into national, sectoral, and development planning processes.

□ In addition, the Act establishing the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) should be amended to strengthen institutional coordination by clearly defining collaboration mechanisms across all tiers of government, establishing enforceable inter-agency coordination protocols, and mandating regular joint planning, simulation exercises, and preparedness drills among relevant stakeholders.

□ To address persistent funding gaps, the National Assembly should legislate the establishment of a National Climate and Disaster Resilience Fund, dedicated to financing disaster preparedness and response, climate adaptation initiatives, and critical infrastructure development, as well as post-disaster recovery efforts. The Fund should be supported by transparent governance

structures and subject to legislative oversight to ensure accountability and efficiency.

□ Furthermore, legislation should mandate the development of an integrated, technology-driven early warning system to enhance disaster preparedness and risk mitigation. This system should provide for real-time data collection, analysis, and information sharing across relevant agencies, strengthen collaboration with meteorological and hydrological institutions, and ensure effective dissemination of early warnings to communities through accessible channels such as SMS alerts, local radio, and other communication platforms.

Conclusion

Nigeria's growing exposure to climate-related disasters demands a proactive legal and institutional response. While important frameworks such as the Climate Change Act (2021) and the Act establishing the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provide a foundation, persistent gaps in coordination, funding, preparedness, and implementation continue to limit effective disaster risk reduction and climate resilience.

Addressing these challenges requires deliberate legislative action that shifts the country from a reactive emergency response model to a preventive and resilience-based approach. Enacting a unified Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Act, amending the NEMA Act, establishing a dedicated Climate and



Disaster Resilience Fund, and strengthening integrated early warning systems are critical steps toward building a more responsive and sustainable disaster management framework.

A strengthened legal framework will not only improve national preparedness and response capacity but also protect lives, livelihoods, infrastructure, and economic stability. By prioritizing climate resilience through legislative reform, Nigeria can reduce the devastating socio-economic impacts of disasters and advance sustainable national development.

Contact

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies
National Assembly
NILDS Permanent Site, No.2 Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue, Piwoyi District, off Umaru Musa Yar`adua Expressway, Airport Road, Abuja.

E-mail: info@nils.gov.ng

Website: <http://nils.gov.ng>

NILDS Liaison Office

Suite 214 Senate Wing
National Assembly Complex
Mobile: +234 807 364 4822

COMMENTS

Brief well written and can be transmitted after minor corrections.

Prof. Nse Akpan

23/4/26

