



My Story of Loss, Pain, and Survival Due To Climate Change

By Mercy Moinan Nyerere

It was in early April 2024. That night, I experienced something I will never forget. I received a call from my father, and the moment I saw his name on my phone, my whole body started shaking. My father had never called me in the middle of the night, especially around 1 a.m. I took a deep breath and answered. His voice was shaking and very low. I could hear fear in it. He told me it was raining heavily at home and the floods had begun. The water had filled the whole compound and was starting to tear through the house.



“Can you leave the house and move somewhere safer?” I asked, “We are surrounded by water. On both sides, the rivers had overflowed. The only place we can stay is inside the house.” He said

“Don’t worry, we will be careful, we will wait until morning to see if we can find a safe way to cross to the other side,” said my father and then hung up.

I couldn’t stop crying because I knew my parents were in danger. The fact that my father, who rarely shows fear, had called me in the middle of the night, told me how serious it was. I called my elder brother and told him what had happened. He tried calling our parents, but there was no clear connection. I was left wondering, Is this really happening, or am I dreaming? Is my family safe? Are they going to be okay?

I went back to bed, but I couldn’t sleep. All I could do was pray that God would protect my parents and keep them safe. At around 2 a.m., my dad called again. His voice trembling, he told me, *“Things are bad. The rain is too heavy. The water is coming in strong.”*

The flood had entered the house and swept away everything we had stored: our cereals, maize, beans, and other food supplies. The water had risen so high that they couldn’t stay inside anymore.

Then he said something that broke me completely: *“Pray for us.”* That was my breaking point. I tried to stay strong, but I couldn’t hold back my tears. I forced my voice to stay calm so he wouldn’t worry even more.



I told my father to ask my mother to video call me. Moments later, my mother called. The water levels were high, swirling fast, and the sound it made was terrifying. She told me that the flood had swept away one of our houses. She said, *"We've lost all our food."* Our outside kitchen had been completely destroyed, and even the chicken house was gone, along with all our chickens.

She then showed me the water level inside the house. It was rising fast. I was crying silently as I watched. My family trapped, my home drowning before my eyes, and I helpless on the other side of the phone.

We talked for a few minutes, but it felt like the longest and toughest call of my life. I kept telling my parents that everything would be all right, but deep down, I knew that was a lie. Still, it was the only hope I could give them at that moment. When my mother hung up, I broke down completely. I felt powerless. I woke up my friend and told her what was happening at home. She was shocked but tried to comfort me. She told me that things would be all right and encouraged me to have faith. Then we prayed together, because at that moment, prayer was the only thing we had, the only thing that could hold us together.

My friend later called her sister and her nephew to come and pray with me. Their voices gave me a bit of strength. Together, we cried and prayed for my family's safety. I was also in constant communication with my brother. We kept updating each other, but there was nothing we could do. We were both far from home.

The distance made everything even harder. Every time my parents called, the situation seemed worse. The rain was still falling, the water rising higher. It was the middle of the night, and we tried to reach out to other relatives or neighbors back home, but the network was poor, and most people were unreachable. That night in Nguruman, everything was chaotic. The floods had taken over, and we could only wait and pray that our family would survive until morning. At around 4 a.m. or 5 a.m., things had become unbearable.

The situation was worse than ever. My parents were now in great danger because the entire house was flooding. My father called again, his voice was weak and filled with fear. He said, "Things are bad." The way he spoke felt like he was saying goodbye. It sounded like the last call, as if he was talking to me for the last time.



I couldn't take it anymore. My heart was heavy, my mind numb. I felt completely helpless. It was as if time had stopped, and I was just listening to the last words of the people I loved most. My father and mother had lost hope. The whole family was terrified. I called my cousin and anyone else I could think of, asking for help, but there was nothing anyone could do. The place was flooded, unreachable. At that moment, all I could do was pray. I needed a miracle. I begged God to intervene, to calm the storm, to save my family.

It was the hardest night of my life, a night filled with fear, tears, and prayer. Yet, even in that darkness, we didn't stop fighting. We didn't stop talking to each other. We didn't stop praying.



After realizing how bad things were, I called one of my friends from home, Mr Leonard. I told him about the situation and explained that my parents needed help urgently. I told him the only possible way to save them was by helicopter; there was no other way to reach them. Thank God, Mr Leonard was very understanding and kind. He listened carefully and then guided me in the right direction. That early morning, I also called one of our local stakeholders, the owner of Lentore Lodge in Olkiramatian, Mr Rajah. When he picked up, he asked me, "Why are you calling this early?" I explained everything about the flooding, my family trapped at home, and the fact that the situation was getting worse by the minute. I told him that I was asking for help. If there was any way, he could assist with a helicopter rescue for my family of four: my parents, my cousin, and one of our farm employees. His response gave me hope. He didn't hesitate. He said, "Let me make some calls, and I'll get back to you."

Hearing that made me feel, for the first time that night, that maybe help was on the way. I started thanking God immediately. By that time, my parents had already climbed onto the roof of the house to stay safe. The water had covered everything else: the compound, the rooms, and the land around the house. The roof was the only dry surface left. They helped each other climb up and held on tightly, praying the house wouldn't collapse. As I waited for feedback from Mr Rajah, I decided to call our Deputy Governor of Kajiado County, Mr Martin Moshisho. He picked up my call. When I explained what was happening, he told me that he was aware of the situation in our area and that they were trying to find a way to rescue the people trapped by the floods. That gave me some hope knowing that even the county government was doing its best to help the community.

A little later, Mr Rajah called me back. He said they were working on arranging a helicopter to come and rescue my family. But because of the heavy rain and thick fog, the helicopter couldn't take off. It had rained the whole night, and the weather was still too dangerous for flying. He told me we would have to wait for the clouds to clear before the helicopter could leave. That moment broke me completely. My mind couldn't take it anymore. My parents were stranded on the roof, the water still rising, and all I could do was wait. My friends tried to comfort me, but at that moment, I couldn't believe anything. I felt empty inside. I was sure this was the end for my parents. The hardest thing was calling them to share the news. I called and told my father that the helicopter couldn't come yet because of the weather. I could hear the little hope left in his voice fade away.



Still, I tried to sound strong for them. I told him that the helicopter would take off soon and that everything would be okay. I knew it was a lie, but I had to say it. I had to give them something to hold onto. But deep down, I didn't know how long we would have to wait for the fog to lift. My brother was also trying everything possible, calling the National Rescue Centre, pleading for help. But it was all in vain because of the fog. My cousin Peter was also reaching out to contacts, trying to get another helicopter, but every response was the same: *the fog is too thick to fly*. Still, all we could do was wait.

We waited and waited until around 10 a.m., when Mr Rajah finally called. He said, "*The skies have cleared. The helicopter is coming.*" At that moment, I was overwhelmed with joy. The tears that came were no longer from pain or fear; they were tears of hope. I cried, thanking God that my family would finally be rescued.

The helicopter arrived and flew to our home to rescue my parents, who were still on top of the roof. But then, another problem, our home was surrounded by trees. The branches made it impossible for the helicopter to land or lift anyone from the rooftop. I remember thinking, "We are the people who care for the environment, who plant trees to protect life, but now, these same trees have become a danger to my family."

We kept communicating with the rescue team, trying to figure out what could be done. Eventually, the rescuers instructed my parents to move from the roof of the house and find an open space without trees, where the helicopter could reach them. But that meant going back into the floodwaters, which had risen even higher. They didn't know how much damage the floods had done, but they had no choice; they had to take the risk.

Carefully, they climbed down from the roof, using sticks to measure the depth of the water as they walked. Step by step, they made their way through the water until they reached a part of our farm near the banana plants, the only safe ground where the helicopter could land. Finally, they were rescued. The helicopter lifted them to safety. When I got the news that they had reached a safe place, I could finally breathe. From 1 a.m. to 10 a.m., I hadn't taken a single calm breath. My body was tense, my mind blank, my heart shattered. But when I heard they were safe, I felt life return to me. I cried tears of joy, tears of gratitude to God.

The people who prayed for my parents, who stayed with me through those hours I will never forget them. My friend stood by me, her sister and her niece prayed with me, thanking God for saving my parents. I am deeply grateful to them for holding me up when I was falling apart.

This was the hardest part, the most painful season for my parents. They were people who loved farming and keeping animals, but now they had lost everything. Their animals were gone, their crops were gone, and their house was gone. My parents had become internally displaced people within their own community. It was heartbreaking. They were affected physically, mentally, and emotionally. The loss was so deep that it couldn't be measured. We could count the things they lost: the crops, the animals, the house, but the emotional damage, the pain, the mental strain, those couldn't be quantified.

My parents were once respected members of the community, but suddenly, they had nothing left. My siblings couldn't believe it. We kept asking ourselves: *How are we going to survive? Where will we live? How will we go back to school? How will the fees be paid?*

My parents tried to be strong for us, but it showed on their faces. They had lost weight; their smiles had faded. The joy that once filled our family had turned into sadness. The loss changed everything, and it affected each one of us deeply. My siblings kept asking, are we going to live at our cousin's place forever? Will we stay with Mercy forever? We were used to eating food and fruits from our farm, fresh maize, beans, and fruits that we had grown ourselves. Now, there was nothing. We had to buy food or depend on friends' kindness. It was hard, painfully hard. My parents depended on the food that was being given to people affected by the floods. It was one of the hardest things to accept to see people who once had everything now depending on relief food and the mercy of others.





Every evening before going to bed, I would cry silently. I kept asking God so many questions: Why my family? Did we ever do something wrong to deserve this? Did we offend anyone?

I knew deep down that all this was because of climate change, yet it hurt even more because we have always been the ones protecting the environment, planting trees, taking care of nature, and making sure the land is safe for everyone. And yet, we are the ones most affected.

Who will answer me? Who can I ask why the innocent suffer while those who cause the damage live comfortably, enjoying their lives, with everything they could ever want? We have never polluted the environment. We have always preserved it. So why us? These questions still echo in my heart. I may not have the answers now, but I will not give up until I find the right person to ask and the right answer to this injustice. Things were extremely hard for my family,

but we kept persevering, believing that at the end of every dark tunnel, there is always light. Starting from zero was not easy. Losing everything broke us emotionally, mentally, and financially. Our mental health has never fully recovered. We try to be strong, but deep inside, we are still scared. We may smile, but things are not okay.

All of this happened not because of anything we did but because of climate change. I wish I could quantify the loss, but I can't. You can count the destroyed houses and crops, but you can't measure the pain, the fear, or the trauma. There was no psychological help, no counseling. We were left to find our own way to survive. How can you quantify emotional, physical, and mental pain?

I can estimate the material loss of my parents' lost property worth millions but I can't measure what the flood did to our hearts and minds. Thankfully, organizations like Spring of the Arid and Semi Arid Lands, SOLARO, and the Red Cross stood with the community. They provided food, clothes, and other essentials to help people survive after the floods, and my family was among those who received their support.

As a climate activist, I have been doing this work since 2022. But this was the hardest part of all, giving relief food to my own family. I work with Spring of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (SASAL), an organization that has always stood by the community in times of need. When we were distributing food donations to families affected by the floods, I found myself donating food to my own parents and my own family.

Many nights, I cried silently, but through that pain, I found strength. And even as the tears still fall today, I know they are part of my healing. One day, I will be okay. One day, I will not give up.

I will keep fighting not just for my family, but for my community, for all the people who have been affected. I will keep fighting for climate justice. This is my fight, my mission, my purpose. Because I know my community's future lies in my hands, and I will not let go. I will fight until the end. I'm not giving up.

I know it's not easy, but I will keep fighting. Even though the scars remain, I have learned that strength is not about never falling, it's about standing up every time life knocks you down.

The floods may have washed away our home, our land, and everything my parents worked for, but they did not wash away our spirit. We are still here. We are still breathing. And as long as we are alive, there is still hope. My story is not just about loss, it's about survival. It's about courage. It's about finding light even when everything feels dark. Climate change is not just a statistic or a policy topic, it's our lived reality. It affects real people, real families, and real dreams. I want my story to be a voice for those who cannot speak. For the mothers who cry silently at night. For the fathers who pretend to be strong while they are breaking inside. For the children who still believe tomorrow will be better. I will keep telling this story until the world listens. I will keep fighting until climate justice is not just a word but a lived reality for my community. My name is **Mercy Moinan Nyerere**, and this is my fight for climate justice for my family, for my community, and for all those who have lost everything but still choose to stand.



A story collected by Mercy Moinan Nyerere

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