



AN APPRAISAL OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY ON DISASTER CONTROL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Human miseries have escalated in recent years as the prevalence of natural and man-made disasters has increased around the world. These calamities have catastrophic consequences on human lives, property, and infrastructure and above all have posed major hurdles to long-term national development. This prompts governments the world over to introduce series of institutions to manage these debacles with a view to assure prompt and appropriate assistance to the victims. In order to address natural and man-made disaster, Nigerian government established National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). This paper examined the roles of the Agency on disaster management or control in Nigeria. The study adopts qualitative method using secondary data and content analysis. The findings indicate that NEMA has functioned effectively in enhancing flood disaster management despite the myriad of challenges such as corruption, paucity of fund, blatant disregard of institutional law and unlawful liberty or arrogance of power coupled with perpetual evasion of justice. The paper therefore recommend for provision of sufficient funds as well as transformation and reinforcement of the judicial institutions to restore the lost virtues visis-a-v enhance the war against flood disaster in Nigeria.

Keyword: *National, emergency, management, agency, flood, disaster*

Introduction

Globally, nations are becoming more vulnerable to environmental threats posed by climate change and human activities. One of such threat is flood which is a disaster that endangers the well-being of citizens. Floods lead to tremendous losses of property, infrastructure, business and increased risk of diseases. Floods are also the most frequent natural disasters, affecting over 2.8 billion people in the world and causing over 200 000 deaths over the past three decades. The World Health Organization categorized the 2012 flood disaster in Nigeria as the worst flood to have hit the country in the past 50 years (Louw, Olanrewaju, Olanrewaju, & Chitakira 2019). Flooding always damage properties, disrupt economic, social and environmental activities and prevent agricultural productivity. It also generates Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), spread water borne diseases such as cholera and



typhoid, and ultimately lead to loss of lives. In order to protect citizens from the consequences of flood, governments develop Flood Disaster Management (FDM) mechanisms to preserve their territories.

Nigeria is a disaster-prone country where the frequency and intensity of both natural and human induced disasters have increased significantly in recent years. This is because previous disasters and the likelihood of potential ones were not factored into development programs. In Nigeria, flood disasters are a recurring phenomenon that has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property and disruption of economic activities with its attendant consequences on its territory. The frequent occurrence of natural disasters in Nigeria has prompted the establishment of agencies to disembark disaster management in the country. The police fire brigade (now Federal Fire Services) was established in 1906 to perform functions other than firefighting, such as saving lives, property, and providing humanitarian assistance in emergencies (National Emergency Management Agency, 2011).

The lead agency for managing disasters is the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) which was established through Decree No 12 of 1999. The mission of NEMA include disaster preparedness and mitigation activities; notify, activate, mobilize and deploy staff as well as set up all necessary facilities for response; evaluation and assessment of disaster damages; management of funds for disaster; inform and enlighten the public; formulation of DM policies and guidelines in the country and distribution of relief materials to disaster victims by liaising with SEMAs, NGOs, regional and international bodies (Shakeri, et al, 2021). Every year, NEMA gets rainfall predictions and flood possibilities in the country from the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET). The objective is to allow NEMA and its partners, plan and prepare towards the effective implementation of FDM in order to ensure low casualty rate and minimum destruction of properties, infrastructure and farmlands. In addition, the FGN and state government spend 15 per cent of their annual budget on NEMA and SEMA operations. Similarly, NEMA is into partnership with the EU on FDM and the development of strategic national disaster management framework to address FDM. For instance, the 2012 Nigeria floods began in early July 2012, and killed 363 people and displaced over million people as of 5 November 2012 (Ayuba;2013). About 30 of Nigeria's 36 states were 2 affected by the floods (Ayuba, 2013). The floods were termed as the worst in 40 years and affected an estimated total of seven million people. The estimated damages and losses caused by the floods were worth N2.6 trillion (NEMA, 2017). In 2017, flood disasters affected 34 of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and this caused over 141 deaths and 265 injuries in the country. (NEMA, 2017).

About 1.4 million people were affected by flood disaster in Nigeria (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2018). Hence, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been making efforts towards addressing the above phenomenon through FDM in Nigeria. Against this background the paper examined the role of NEMA in FDM in Nigeria (Olugbenro et al, 2012). This paper focuses on the activities of NEMA in flood prone states of the Rivers Niger and Benue axis in Nigeria. These are Kebbi, Niger, Kwara, Kogi, Anambra, Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States which are on the River Niger axis and Adamawa, Taraba and Benue States on the River Benue axis. The structural functionalist theory was adopted for the paper,

the relationship between NEMA and FDM in Nigeria was presented. The impact, challenges and the ways for improving NEMA in FDM were also presented and recommendations made on how to make NEMA more effective in flood disaster management in Nigeria.

Conceptual Discourse

Concept of Disaster

Disaster management is defined by the Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations as the organization and administration of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of catastrophes in order to minimize the impact of disasters on people and the environment (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, 2017). Preparation, relief, and recovery are all aspects of disaster management.

Disaster prevention, often known as disaster mitigation, is a set of activities aimed at providing long-term disaster protection. Not all disasters, particularly natural disasters, can be avoided, but good evacuation preparations, environmental planning, and design standards can reduce the danger of death and harm. It provides guiding principles, action priorities, and practical solutions for disaster resilience in vulnerable areas.

According to Adebimpe (2011), the disasters that frequently result in environmental emergencies in Nigeria are often exacerbated by the degradation of the country's environment and natural resources. Adebimpe (2011) concluded that the growing trend of disaster in Nigeria has implications for national sustainability; as a result, there is a need to focus on reducing vulnerability, achieving equitable growth, and improving the governance and institutional context in which people live. All disasters, according to Wisner (2004), are caused by human inability to implement effective disaster management procedures. Natural disaster, according to Louis (2008), occurs when a natural hazard (such as a volcanic eruption or earthquake) affects humans and/or the built environment. An emergency is a scenario that necessitates quick and decisive action to deal with dangerous problems (Afolabi, 2011).

Disaster Management Agency

The Disaster Management Agency is in charge of coordinating and integrating all actions required establishing, maintaining, and improving the capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover from natural or human-caused disasters. It involves several jurisdictions, sectors, disciplines, and resources. By coordinating the efforts of multiple agencies, NEMA has the responsibility and capability to manage all types of crises and disasters (Center for Policy Research, 1979). This comprises the mitigation, readiness, response, and recovery phases of a disaster or emergency. In a federal-state-local relationship, it cuts across all risks: assault, human-induced and natural (Center for Policy Research 1979). For example, Ojo (2004) divided these phases into two parts: the Pre-Catastrophe phase (which includes prevention, mitigation, readiness, and early warning) and the Post-Disaster Recovery Phase (which includes disaster impact, response, which includes search and rescue, recovery, and development). The presence of a coordination and collaboration system is required for the involvement of various actors and stakeholders in disaster management. This method is provided by



the Nigerian National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), which acts as a regulatory framework for effective and efficient disaster management. The Agency establishes measurable, flexible, and adaptable coordination structures, as well as assigning essential roles and responsibilities to disaster management partners across the country. It establishes particular authority and disaster management best practices. It represents a paradigm shift in disaster management that extends beyond just response and recovery. It also provides a comprehensive approach to disaster management and a consistent, transparent, and inclusive disaster management policy in Nigeria (NEMA, 2014).

Flood Disaster Management (FDM)

FDM is a broad concept which has been defined by different scholars in various ways. However, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, (2017) views FDM as the organization and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular: preparedness, response and recovery in order to lessen the impact of disasters. Adedayo, (2015) sees FDM as a range of activities designed to manage or maintain control over disaster or any emergency situations and provide helps for those at risk to avoid or recover from effects of disaster. It deals with the emergency situation before, during and after disaster occurrence. The UNISDR (2017) defines FDM as the systematic process of using administrative, directive, organizational and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies and improve coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster.

Pluvial floods are common in Nigeria during the rainy season, between July and October, and primarily damage metropolitan areas. More frequent and heavy rainfall overwhelms the efficiency of drainage systems and soil infiltration capacity, resulting in floods that are arguably unparalleled in recent times. Given that much impervious surface, increase surface water runoffs, and reduce soil infiltration capacity, the role of urban areas in Nigeria's economic and political development is widely acknowledged; however, their enhancement is a critical anthropogenic influence on climate change and the hydrological cycle in the country. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) recently issued a flood warning for the states of Anambra, Abia, Delta, and Bayelsa. The warning came just 24 hours after the Niger Basin Authority issued it (Houston et al, 2011).

National Emergency Management Agency and Flood Disaster Management in Nigeria

Human miseries have escalated in recent years as the prevalence of natural and man-made disasters has increased around the world. These calamities have catastrophic consequences on human lives, property, and infrastructure and above all have posed major hurdles to long-term national development. This prompts governments the world over to introduce series of institutions to manage these debacles with a view to assure prompt and appropriate assistance to the victims. In order to address natural and man-made disaster, Nigerian government established National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).



Flood Disaster Management in Nigeria has a long history dating back to the colonial period. During emergencies, it was tasked with protecting people and property as well as providing humanitarian aid. This was as a result of years of flooding in the country, which resulted in the loss of lives and property costing millions of Naira, as well as negative economic and environmental consequences. Following the magnitude of the 1975 flood disaster, the government felt compelled to form a response organization to deal with disaster-related issues in order to lessen the consequences and prevent a repeat. By Decree 48 of 1976, the government formed the National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA). After recognizing the flaws in FDM, the Nigerian government revised the order that established NERA in 1997, renaming it the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). As a result of Act 12 as amended by Act 50 of 1999, NEMA was founded to oversee all disaster-related concerns in Nigeria. NEMA's creation signaled a shift in FDM's relief distribution approach, which had previously been limited. In order to meet the challenges of its missions, constant efforts were made to put in place the appropriate structures and to continue refocusing programs on efficient and effective FDM. NEMA's focus has evolved from disaster response to disaster prevention and risk control, resulting in more effective FDM (NEMA, 2016).

NEMA has struggled to attain its basic aims of guaranteeing a dynamic, effective, and efficient disaster management system in Nigeria two decades after its establishment. Instead, the Agency has had less of an influence on Nigeria's complex policy environment, which is riddled with inter-governmental/inter-agency rivalry, a lack of political will, institutional underfunding, a lack of administrative ability, and bureaucratic corruption, among other maladies (Adefisoye, 2019).

To protect lives and property at the local level in Nigeria, local governments should develop and adopt emergency management plans based on a 'all hazards' approach, conduct risk assessments to identify areas where hazards can be eliminated or negated in local council areas, incorporate strategic plans into aspects of contemporary emergency management, and provide funding options. Local governments should design and adopt emergency management plans based on a 'all hazards' approach, conduct risk assessments to identify locations where hazards can be removed or reduced, and establish emergency management agencies at the local level in Nigeria (Okoli, 2014).

Methodology

This paper is positioned on the qualitative method using secondary sources of data drawn from libraries and archives in Nigeria and oversea academic resources internet sources, local publications such as newspapers, magazines to provide detailed accounts for the effect of National Emergency management Agency on flood disaster management.

Theoretical Framework

The Structural Functionalism Theory was utilized to guide this study because the theory seeks to explain the interaction between components of a society and the mechanism to address any deviation and restore normalcy. The Theory was propounded by Talcott Parsons and it views society as a system of functional and interconnected units or structures that work together in harmony to produce a state of



stability and order for the whole (Parsons, 1975). The Theory emphasizes that each institution has a vital function to perform to ensure system survival, overall and survival of the organization. Every structure or component in a system must work optimally for the good of the organization. It shows the inter-relationships that exist among the different organizations and institutions in the society. These relationships are aimed at ensuring that stability is maintained and that equilibrium is restored even after the system has been disrupted. When one institution in the society change, other institution accommodate changes. Notwithstanding the views of the critics, this study draws relevance from the structural functionalism theory (Parsons, 1975). Efficient FDM requires an analysis of the entire system. Risk assessment lies on the human activities and on the environment in order to optimize the protection of lives and property. The structural functionalism theory thus presents a means for studying NEMA in FDM in Nigeria.

Challenges of National Emergency Management Agency in Nigeria

The effectiveness of National Emergency management Agency in flood Disaster management in Nigeria is hampered by Nigerians' lack of knowledge about emergency preparedness and reaction. Disasters are seen as "the wrath of the gods" due to intense cultural beliefs and primordial sentiments, corruption, injustice, sacrilege, and taboo. This is in contrast to the situation in advanced countries such as the United States and other developed countries, where emergency response is frequently and adequately provided by the concerted efforts of residents of such emergency locations even before the arrival of emergency authorities/agencies (National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA, 2013). Furthermore, paucity of funds is considered as a serious difficulty for the agency in carrying out its responsibilities. The organization must also be appropriately funded and equipped with contemporary search and rescue equipment, effective communication devices, and dependable transportation facilities, as the number of fire stations in each community is considerably below the recommended number. Poor finance has been a major stumbling block in the agency's advancement and has hampered its success.

Another difficulty for an effective and efficient FDM in Nigeria is a lack of human development. According to the UN Assessment Report on NEMA in Nigeria (2017), just a few employees are knowledgeable in the right procedures of monitoring urban expansion, data analysis, ICT, flood gauge reading, and technical engineering specifics in FDM, (John, 2019). There is also a scarcity of manpower to do post-disaster damage and needs assessments. The available manpower at the state level is woefully inadequate.

In the same vein, man's unwholesome activities pose a problem to NEMA in FDM in Nigeria. According to Ajani (2012), Nigeria has a thriving market for commercial activities such as visible product display, buying and selling in metropolitan areas, many of which are indiscriminate. As a result, unwholesome human activities spanning from social to economic interactions can be seen in commercial, industrial, and business settings. These behaviors result in poisonous gas emissions that have a severe influence on the environment, undermining NEMA's efforts in FDM in Nigeria.



According to studies, institutional issues affect NEMA. For instance, lack of proper infrastructure and equipment maintenance as well as inadequate and ineffective legislative and regulatory framework cum incorrect risk assessment of possible catastrophe areas. Moreover, a lack of adequate mobilization of the population, as well as overall casual attitudinal dispositions, depression, cynicism, mistrust, and despair among Nigerians towards government entities, particularly in emergency situations, is concerning.

Finally, the issues of disaster management in Nigeria are a challenge for everyone, particularly the media, which can utilize their platforms to educate the general public about looming epidemics, natural and man-made disasters that can now be easily foreseen thanks to sophisticated technology. While the media has the right to focus on breaking news about disasters, they should also be fair in informing and teaching the public about disaster management, which is a relatively inexpensive way to preserve lives and property.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Generally, the paper evaluates the contribution of NEMA on disaster control with a view to establishing its success and efficiency in dealing with disasters in the country. The paper reveals that NEMA has functioned effectively in enhancing flood disaster management despite the myriad of challenges such as corruption, paucity of fund, blatant disregard of institutional law and unlawful liberty or arrogance of power coupled with perpetual evasion of justice. The paper therefore recommend for provision of sufficient funds as well as transformation and reinforcement of the judicial institutions to restore the lost virtues vis-a-vis enhance the war against flood disaster in Nigeria.

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