An Analysis of State of Emergency Preparedness and Response of Government to Disaster Risk Management in Nigeria

Ruth O. Adio-Moses[1] and Patricia A. Taiwo[2]

[1]*Humanitarian and disaster risk management, Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ibadan*
[2]*Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Science, University of Ibadan*

Abstract: Nigeria has experienced and is still experiencing varying degrees of both natural and man-made disasters with their adverse effects overtime exceeding the ability of affected societies to cope in the midst of available resources especially in the face of insurgency and terrorism. While intellectual discourses have focused on the effect and consequences of disaster, dearth of information exist on government's response and level of preparedness for disaster risk management especially from the analytical point of view. The paper focused on the nature and consequences of disaster, role of government in disaster risk management and problems affecting emergency preparedness and response from government. Disasters were seen to be sudden, calamitous and deadly in nature. Its types included natural disasters (e.g wild fire, floods, landslides, hurricanes, drought, damaging winds, tsunami, debris flow, hurricanes and volcanic eruption) and man-made disasters (economic collapse, terrorist attacks, chemical threat, biological threat, nuclear accidents, wars, explosions, oil and chemical spillage, fire, flood etc). Government role in disaster risk management included education, monitoring, coordination, data collation, research activities, policy making and prompt responses to prevent and control disaster at all levels. However, the hindrances included inadequacy in funding, education, coordination, research and planning. It is recommended that individual and collective effort be geared at improving education, funding and research coupled with governmental preparedness and prompt response towards the prevention and control of all forms of disaster in Nigeria.
Keywords: Natural disaster, Preparedness, Response of Government, State of Emergency

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I.   BACKGROUND /STATE OF PROBLEM

Major shifts have occurred in the way in which disasters are considered, resulting from an increasing awareness of problems internationally along with an identified need for solutions. A disaster can be defined as any event, typically occurring suddenly, that causes damage, loss of human life, deterioration of health and health services, and which exceeds the capacity of the affected community on a scale sufficient to require outside assistance (Landsman, 2001). Nigeria has experienced varying degrees of both natural and man-made disasters leading to a serious disruption of the functioning of the society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources, most recently the insurgency and act of terrorism in some parts of the Northern Nigeria. What characterizes a disaster is that the even overwhelms the capacity for response within the area in which the disaster occurred. Our government more or less incubates disaster pending when they explode. Its management is usually fire brigade approach to fighting a systematic failure. For example the Fulani herdsmen, many Nigerians believe the government has deliberately shied away from the crisis and has failed to square up to Fulani terror attack.

Experience from history has demonstrated the value of planning to meet the exigencies of disaster to Nigeria can be dated back to 1906, when the fire brigade was established with function that meant beyond fire fighting to the services during emergencies. The arrangement continued until 1972/1973 when the country experienced a devastating drought. The drought had negative socio-economic consequences and cost the Nation the loss of many lives and properties a development that led to the establishment of the National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA) in 1979. NERA was charged with the responsibility of collecting and distributing relief materials to disaster victims. Considering the limited scope of the Agency, the government in 1993 decided to expand its scope to include all areas of disaster. NERA later became NEMA with a new vision to build culture of preparedness, prevention, and response and community resilience to disaster in Nigeria. However, this approach alone does not address the need to reduce the human and environmental impact of disaster. There is a need for new approaches that focuses on reducing the risk of disaster, taking measures to prevent disasters and managing it when it occurs.

In recent times however, disaster has occurred in many states in Nigeria. This has resulted in the loss of life of many people, stampeded political, economic and social activities in the nation. This therefore became a challenge to the government and the public. Studies have been carried out on disaster and management of disaster, causes and effects of disaster in Nigeria. However not much is done on mitigation, preparedness and response or problems that affect emergency response. It is against this backdrop that this study tends to examine the state of emergency preparedness and response in Nigeria with a view to examining the nature and consequences of disaster, discussing the efforts or actions taken by government after disaster occurs, and exploring the problems that hinders or affects effective emergency response.

II. NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF DISASTERS

Disasters come in various forms and can be sudden, calamitous and most times negatively overwhelming in their impact. Disasters can occur from handling of our domestic and official proprieties and perhaps our approach in handling the conflicts among us. It is very common that many times, domestic negligence had led to wanton destruction of properties and lives in various families through wide inferno. One of the biggest disasters facing Nigeria is Flood. In reality, no place is safe on this planet, but flood is one of the biggest threat confronting mankind across the world but this work will focus on flood disasters in Nigeria. This year alone, constant rainfalls witnessed across the country left so many families in pains of loss of their dear ones and also destruction of their valuables. Sometimes, it might not be possible to prevent flood even if there was prior alert that it's about to get flooded. There are however certain actions that could be taken to reduce the possibility of flooding. There are however certain actions that could be taken to reduce the possibility of flooding. Floods are therefore better prevented and/or prepared for in advance if they are inevitable in the community. Up till now, flooding is an annual disaster in several parts of Nigeria (Thisday, Sept. 2017). Flood disaster across Nigeria in 2012 could be better examined here to appreciate the real force and rage of nature against lives and properties of members of the public in Nigeria. As chronicled by Jide Ajani of vanguard newspaper in October 2012, the flood which ravaged Lokoja and many parts of Kogi State made the headline of many newspapers in Nigeria. Then reports from other parts of Nigeria which hither to never imagine would be flooded started experiencing same in its most destructive form. Some of the states affected are Anambra, Bayelsa, Delta, Benue, Cross River, Kogi, Kwara, Kaduna and Niger State. Destruction of properties and loss of lives as human evacuation from the flooded areas became the primary concern of the various emergency agencies (Jide Ajani, Oct. 2012). An estimated 110,000 people were reportedly left homeless while some people were confirmed dead by flood that sacked some communities in Benue State few years ago. Camps were set up in Markurdi to accommodate those rendered homeless. On the state of emergency preparedness and response, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) an agency created by the federal government with the mandate to respond speedily in times of emergency was slow in response because they were waiting for directives from the presidency before performing its duties (Thisday, Sept. 2017).

Another disaster experienced in Nigeria is fire disaster. Fire disasers are not restricted to private homes alone but include public houses, government buildings, warehouses, sawmills, market places, filling stations, schools, road fire and incidences involving cars and trucks along the road. Usually many fire incidences in Nigeria leave similitude of disastrous impacts on their victims and organizations. Fire incidents have brought so much untold hardship, pains and deaths to many residents in Nigeria. Recent reports from federal fire service journal showed that millions of Nigerians have lost their lives in various infernos in the country. In recent years there have been cases of fire disasters leaving behind irreparable loses of lives and property. The result of most fire disasters leave behind unforgettable experiences in the minds of victims. Sometimes when fire occurred, it leads to death of hundreds of persons and sometimes up to thousands. Atimes a whole life time investment in property or humans could be razed down in a moment by fire. The complexity about fire is that the occurrence is most of the time inevitable due to inherent human complexities especially is attitude to handling things. Also fire disaster like every other disaster is complex. An example of fire disaster in Nigeria is the Kano market fire on 28th March, 2016. About 2 trillion worth of goods were destroyed in Kano market fire outbreak (Daily Trust, March 2016). NEMA reported that over 3,000 shops were burnt in the inferno which it described as the worst market fire disaster in Nigeria. Many traders lost both goods and cash in the fire. Many fire disasters in Nigeria usually end up in systematic failure.

III. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Disaster Risk Management describes the actions that aim to achieve the objective of reducing risk. It aims to avoid, lessen or transfer the adverse effects of hazards through activities and measures for prevention, mitigation and preparedness (UNISDR, 2009). Disaster Risk Management requires a people centered and multi-sector approach, building resilience consequently. Disaster Risk Management includes strategies designed to avoid the construction of new risks and also address pre-existing risks. Although Disaster Risk Management includes disaster preparedness and response activities, it is about much more than managing disasters.

Successful Disaster Risk Management results from the combination of top-down, institutional changes and strategies, with bottom-up, local and community based approaches. Disaster Risk Management programs should not be stand alone but instead be integrated within development planning and practice. There is no one size fits all approach to Disaster Risk Management, but there exist a number of approaches and frameworks, which have been effectively implemented to reduce risk. Disaster Risk Management involves activities related to prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery

1.1.   Prevention: Prevention is defined as those activities taken to prevent a natural phenomenon or potential hazard from having harmful effects on either people or economic assets. Delayed actions drain the economy and the resources for emergency response within a region. For developing nations, prevention is perhaps the most critical components in managing disasters, however, it is clearly one of the most difficult to promote. Prevention planning is based on two issues: hazard identification (identifying the actual threats facing a community) and vulnerability assessment (evaluating the risk and capacity of a community to handle the consequences of the disaster). Once these issues put in order of priority, emergency managers can determine the appropriate prevention strategies. Disaster prevention refers to measures taken to eliminate the root causes that make people vulnerable to disaster (Prevention Web).

1.2.   Mitigation: This is lessening or limitation of the adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters. Mitigation measures include building codes, vulnerability analyses updates, zoning and land use management, building use regulations and safety codes, preventive health care and public education. Mitigation will depend on the incorporation of appropriate measures in national and regional development planning. Its effectiveness will also depend on the availability of information on hazards, emergency risks and the countermeasures to be taken. The mitigation phase and indeed the whole disaster management cycle, includes the shaping of public policies and plans that either modify the causes of disaster or mitigate their effects on people, property and infrastructure. Mitigation activities actually eliminate or reduce the probability of disaster occurrence, or reduce the effects or unavoidable disasters. Mitigation measures include building codes; vulnerability analyses updates; zoning and land use management; building use regulations and safety codes, preventive health care; and public education. Mitigation will depend on the incorporation of appropriate measures in national and regional development planning. Its effectiveness will also depend on the availability of information on hazards, emergency risks, and the countermeasures to be taken. The mitigation phase, and indeed the whole disaster management cycle, includes the shaping of public policies and plans that either modify the causes of disasters or mitigate their effects on people, property, and infrastructure.

1.3.   Preparedness: The knowledge and capacity of governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazards event or conditions. For instance, installing early warning systems, identifying evacuation routes and preparing emergency supplies. The goal of emergency preparedness programs is to achieve a satisfactory level of readiness to respond to any emergency situation through programs that strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of governments, organizations and communities. These measures can be described as logistical readiness to deal with disasters and can be enhanced by having response mechanisms and procedures, rehearsals, developing long term and short term strategies and public education. Preparedness can also take the form of ensuring that strategic reserves of food, equipment, water, medicines and other essentials are maintained in cases of national or local catastrophes. During the preparedness phase, government, organizations and individual develop plans to save lives, minimize disaster damage and enhance disaster response operations. Preparedness measures include preparedness plans, emergency exercise/training, warning systems, emergency communication systems, evacuation plans and training and public information/education. The effectiveness depends on the availability of information on hazards, emergency risks and the counter measures to be taken and on the degree to which government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the general public are able to make use of this information. The goal of emergency preparedness through appropriate programs is to achieve a satisfactory level of readiness that strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of governments, organizations, and communities. These measures can be described as logistical readiness to deal with disasters and can be enhanced by having response mechanisms and procedures, rehearsals, developing long-term and short-term strategies, public education and building early warning systems. Preparedness can also take the form of ensuring that strategic reserves of food, equipment, water, medicines and other essentials are maintained in cases of national or local catastrophes. During the preparedness phase, governments, organizations, and individual develop plans to save lives, minimize disaster damage, and enhance disaster response operations. Preparedness measures include preparedness plans; emergency exercises/training; warning systems; emergency communications systems; evacuations plans and training; resource inventories; emergency personnel/contact lists; preparedness actions depend on the incorporation of appropriate measures in national and regional development plans. In addition, their

effectiveness depends on the availability of information on hazards, emergency risks and the countermeasures to be taken, and on the degree to which government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the general public are able to make use of this information.

1.4.   Response: The aim of emergency response is to provide immediate assistance to maintain life, improve health and support the morale of the affected population. Such assistance may range from providing specific but limited aid, such as assisting refugees with transport, temporary shelter, and food, to establishing semi-permanent settlement in camps and other locations. It also may involve initial repairs to damaged infrastructure. The focus in the response phase is on meeting the basic needs of the people until more permanent and sustainable solutions can be found. Humanitarian organizations are often strongly present in this phase of the disaster management cycle.

1.5.   Recovery: As the emergency is brought under control, the affected population is capable of undertaking a growing number of activities aimed at restoring their lives and the infrastructure that supports them. There is no distinct point at which immediate relief changes into recovery and then into long-term sustainable development. There will be many opportunities during the recovery period to enhance prevention and increase preparedness, thus reducing vulnerability. Ideally, there should be a smooth transition from recovery to on-going development. Recovery activities continue until all systems return to normal or better. Recovery measures, both short and long term, include returning vital life support systems to minimum operating standards; temporary housing; public information; health and safety education; reconstruction; counseling programmes; and economic impact studies. Information resources and services include data collection related to rebuilding, and documentation of lessons learned.

IV. ROLES OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Government Agencies play a critical role during times of disaster both an-made and natural. Each country has the sovereign responsibility to protect its people, infrastructure and economic and social assets from disasters. The government has the responsibilities to ensure the safety and welfare of its citizens, their livelihoods and natural resources. The responsibilities for disaster management in Nigeria are shared among the three tiers of government (federal, state and local government). Even more difficult to decipher are the complex relationships between various government programs, from local to national levels.

Realizing disaster as a fact of life and the need to prepare for its eventuality, led the federal government to formulate a National policy on disaster management, which is meant to carter for required responsibilities of the federal, state and local government respectively when disaster occur. Government at all levels, NGOs and civil society organizations, the private sector, international partners and United Nations. Agencies have pursued a wide range of strategies and programs to prevent and respond to disaster situations. However, these initiatives have been undertaken in a less consistent and harmonious manner and remained reactive and uncoordinated outside a coherent policy frame work. Disaster Risk Management encompasses a body of policies, regulations and operational activities, which exist for dealing with disaster. These include planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling it. The search for a public disaster management system was necessitated by the need to safeguard Nigeria from the devastating impact of natural and manmade disasters. This made the federal government to establish the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) as a coordinating agency. Since its creation NEMA has been the principal disaster management organization in Nigeria, whose main function is to coordinate relevant stake holders towards efficient disaster control. The stake holders of Nigeria's emergency management can be categorized into three broad groups, namely primary, secondary and tertiary responders. Primary responders are community – based institutions or groups, such as community associations, vigilante groups, and Faith Based (FBOs), grass-root volunteers. On the other hand secondary responders include the military, the police, the fire service, the Para-military organizations, the Red Cross and NEMA. The tertiary include humanitarian and development agencies (local or international) which may intervene in disaster situations in order to assist the affected population in coping with and recovery from the disaster impacts. Under this arrangement NEMA is the lead agency for managing disasters at the federal level. Through its six zonal offices spread across the six geo-political zones of the country, NEMA coordinates activities of relevant stakeholders towards effective management of disasters in the country.

V.   THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN MANAGING DISASTER IN NIGERIA

According to (Abubakar, 2013 and Tiamiyu, 2013), the responsibilities of disaster management are shared among the three tiers of government. They are federal, state and local. The federal government through the national emergency management agency coordinates and promotes research activities relating to disaster management at the national level, monitors the state of preparedness of all organizations or agencies which may contribute to disaster management in Nigeria, educates and informs the public on disaster prevention and control measures, distributes emergency relief materials to victims of natural other disaster including internally

displaced persons and assist in the rehabilitation of the victims, liaises with state or local government emergency management agencies to assess and monitor where necessary the distribution of relief materials to disaster victims, collates data from relevant agencies so as to enhance forecasting, planning and field operations of disaster management.

At the state level, there is State level; there is State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), They respond to any disaster within the state and may seek assistance from the National Emergency Management agency when damage need assessment are considered beyond the state's capacity of response, collect and collate data on disaster in their respective states, carry out disaster management activities in the State and ensure that all local governments in the state set up agencies with similar functions. Finally, the local government represents the third tier of government in the country. The local government agency is expected to respond to any disaster within the local government and may seek assistance from the state emergency management agency if it deems fit in each circumstance, collect and collate data in their respective local government and carry out disaster management activities in the local government.

VI. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN NIGERIA

The kind of relief needed in an emergency depends very much on the immediate goal of the affected people. There most immediate needs during or soon after the event are food, medical assistance, rescue, shelter etc after the direct dangers of the disaster have passed, the focus of victims shifts to rebuilding. Response begins as soon as a disaster is detected or begins to threaten an area. Response involves mobilizing and positioning emergency equipment, getting people out of danger, providing need food, water, shelter and medical services. Local responders Government agencies and private organizations also take action. When destruction goes beyond local and state capabilities, federal help is needed. The question is, are the agencies prepared? Preparedness process includes planning, emergency personnel training, resource inventories, emergency personal contact list and public information. With NEMA in the forefront, emergency management has been flourishing amidst challenges and prospects but their best is not enough. Their emergency preparedness and response is a disaster itself. In emergency times, time is of essence.

Using the flood in Benue which happened this year, which left thousands of people homeless as an example, the state of emergency response is nothing to write home about. It took the agency five days and an executive directive from the presidency to acknowledge the devastation in Benue. So judging by NEMA'S lethargic response to the flooding in Benue, there will be very little left to salvage if a hurricane of Irma's scale was to drop by the coast of Nigeria. In the aftermath of Benue flood, the agency is required to provide first response services, distribute emergency relief materials to victims and assist in rehabilitation of the victims where necessary. Instead, local groups and individuals had to rise up to circumstance and respond to victims of flood. The victims scavenged to create emergency sheds for shelter until relief organizations, on the strength of contributions from sympathetic Nigerians, provided mosquito nets and mattresses. Natural disasters are near impossible to prevent, so how a community or country prepares and responds usually determine the gravity of the damage. Even though it's NEMA's duty to inform the public, more often than not, that never happens. The agency has a geographic information system, along with a mission control centre that collects and analyses data to aid its early warning and response to disaster. NEMA's lack of urgency does not inspire any confidence on this front, especially as evacuating and relocating thousands of people takes organization and capable personnel.

Although NEMA's impact is strictly limited, some other government agencies like the Nigerian Civil Defense, federal and state fire service and the engineering units of the Nigerian Armed forces, among a few others seem to have gone to sleep and are often found wanting whenever the need for their rescue/disaster management services are needed by citizens. At the state level, there is almost total absence of functional disaster management infrastructure at the state and local council level. The total absence of disaster management and response initiative in the country is worst at the local level as local governments have become dysfunctional because of the undemocratic tendencies of state governors that have largely failed. It is only when the local councils are democratically administered that the council officials with the mandate of the electorate can put workable disaster management infrastructure into proper use for the benefit of the people.

VII. PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES AFFECTING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN NIGERIA

National preparedness to disaster must include individual preparedness, family preparedness and community preparedness. For national disaster preparedness to be meaningful, states, local governments and all stakeholders among the three tiers of governments, NGOs and private sector must be actively involved. There must be political will at the state and local government levels to establish functional institutions with legal framework. It is important to note that only about 53 out of 774 local governments in Nigeria have some semblance of emergency management. At the state level, SEMA where it exists are not well funded and have

low capacities in terms of human and material resources. Most of them have not made a significant impact which raises concerns.

Another challenge is inadequate funding and equipment. Inadequate funding and equipments for stakeholders for effective preparedness and response is a major challenge. The agency also need to be adequately funded and equipped with modern search and rescue paraphernalia, efficient communications gadgets and reliable transport facilities e.g. fire service stations are far below the recommended numbers per communities. Many local governments are without fire service stations and where they exist, are not well funded and equipped. More so, for an emergency management agency, a huge financial support is needed for the acquisition of up-to-date equipment and technologies to predict detect and mitigate disasters especially natural ones. Also, for the building human capacity, good funding is needed. But in Nigeria, it is rather unfortunate that the government does not place premium on these. In the case of NEMA, poor funding has been a major cog in the wheel of progress, and has hindered its performance is poor funding. For instance, in 2012, the budgetary allocation for the agencies was 1,463,138,127 naira, which was the highest in 12 years (2000-2012) (FGN, Budget, 2012:11). This figure cuts across the length and breadth of capital, re-occuring, and emergency response expeditions. At the States and Local levels, the situation is worse. Good, prompt and adequate funding are essential factors that would determine the effectiveness and efficiency of any organization.

Another challenge is inadequate education and awareness at the community level. There is need for sensitization and to enhance public enlightenment on emergency preparedness and response at grass root. Aside the structure dimensions to Nigeria's problem in DM, the poor attitudinal disposition of Nigerian's towards emergency situations is another serious problem. The general attitudinal dispositions of nonchalance, despondency, cynicism, mistrust and despair by Nigerians towards the government establishments, and in particular, emergency situations are worrisome. Majority of the people at emergency sites/scenes only go there to catch a glimpse of the event and even in some cases, they go there to loot and take advantage of the helpless victims. And many times, emergency managers, and other rescue workers have been at the receiving ends of hostilities at emergency scenes especially in the face of poor performance and inefficiency in service-delivery, even when these inefficiencies are apparently unavoidable due to inadequate man-power, skills and materials. The Dana plane crash of June 3rd, 2012 is a very recent example. This perhaps is a reflection of the general decay in societal values. Also, such attitudes reflect the degree of ignorance of emergency mitigation and response on the part of Nigerians. Due to extreme cultural beliefs and primordial sentiments, disaster occurrences are perceived as "the wrath of the gods" especially in the face of a perceived forceful and unjust possession of lands, corruption, injustice, sacrilege, and taboo. This is unlike the case in advanced countries like the United States and other developed countries where emergency response is often and adequately done by the concerted efforts of the people who are resident at such emergency locations even before the arrival of emergency authorities/agencies. This, they see such as an opportunity to for patriotism and genuine nationalism, and also, an avenue to contribute their quota to the advancement of their country. Russell Dynes captures a holistic community response to the 1995 Oklahoma City bomb explosion in his work "Social Capital: Dealing with Community Response" The problem of poor attitudinal disposition can be directly linked to the absence of disaster management training platforms for Nigerians to acquire the necessary knowledge that would aid emergency responses, is another identified problem. The effective management of disaster is not solely the function of government and its agencies which are assigned to undertake such task. This perhaps has made government especially in developed countries to institute programs so as to develop the know-how of emergency management in the populace. In the U.S. alone, there are over 180 schools with emergency management related programs (Bob, 2008:11-15). Beside this, there are short time training programs.

Another problem is the lack of proper coordination of disaster/flood management activities in the country. Disaster management is the coordination and integration of all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover from threatening or actual natural or human-induced disasters (NDMF, 2010:2). It is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, and multi-service initiative. Therefore, it is vital for agency like NEMA, SEMAs and LEMAs, at the federal, state and local level, whose primary objectives are to coordinate other relevant stake-holders to wake up to their responsibility. Also coordinating as a management function involves the pulling together of an organization's physical and human resources towards the attainment of organizational goals (Olaoye, 2005:39). As a co-ordinator, management is seen as a form of liaison officer amongst the various departments, divisions and units. Emergency management is a complex, tasking and comprehensive endeavor which requires clear vision and fore-sight, careful planning, unwavering commitment, discipline, proper and balanced coordination, and good technical know-how. Also involved in emergency management are the core phases of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery which must be taken care of, with each of these phases having its own required approach. In particular, emergency response which is regarded as the most difficult phase requires that preparations must be made for primary, secondary and tertiary levels of response, depending on the nature and gravity of emergency. All these make it expedient to ensure proper coordination and a holistic approach to disaster

management. Degree No. 12 of 1999, which established NEMA, saddled the agency with the broad mandate to coordinate the management of disasters in the country. NEMA is meant to coordinate the activities of other related bodies like Nigerian Civil Defense; Federal and State Fire Service; State and Local Government emergency management bodies (SEMA and LEMA); the Engineering unit of the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Civil Society, and other stake holder. However, the poor response to the various emergency events in Nigeria, especially those of the 2011 and 2012 flood incidents are evidences of poor coordination.

Another observed problem is the insincerity on the part of the government to provide functional emergency services especially at state and local government levels. Studies, (Dynes 2006, and Bob 2008) have shown that "decentralization of emergency activities bring about better and a more efficient service-delivery". Similarly, Andrew S. Mener, of the University of Pennsylvania, Department of political science in a scholarly paper, stated that disaster management in U.S.A. is backed up by several legislations which respect the federal structure of the country. This also is true about countries like Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand, and Germany. However, in Nigeria, there exist is absence of functional emergency management in most of the 36 states and the 774 local Councils. It is important to note that in 2012, June 12th when the 50 years old Abakpa-Nile Bridge in Enugu State collapsed under the heavy weight of rainfall: an incident that made commuters to remained stranded for several hours before the Enugu State Government mobilized a private company to the site (Onwubiko, 2012)

The problem of disaster management and response initiative in the country is worrisome at the local government level. The impact of 774 LGAs are hardly ever felt in disaster management due primarily to undemocratic tendencies of state governors that are yet to respect section 7 of the 1999 constitution which involves ensuring that democratic structures are institutionalized at the grass root level (Onwubiko, 2012). This is unlike case of the inhabitants of New Orleans in the United States of America who received tremendous assistance by all levels of government beginning from the local council whereby the Mayor excelled exceedingly to the federal level, before, during and immediately after the deluge. The Hurricane Katrina of August 2005 showed that disaster management is everybody's business. Another challenge is lack of a good early warning system to ensure accurate and timely emergency response when disaster occurs. Lack of early warning system and awareness a well as absence of training to respond to a warning prevents agencies from executing proper precautionary measures which could help reduce loss of lives. Another challenge is lack of effective land use planning. People build houses on risk prone areas thus resulting in increased natural disasters and causing barriers to prevention and disaster risk management. This is further aggravated by there is inadequate regulation and enforcement of land use regulation.

VIII.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Disaster management should not be seen as an entirely government responsibility. Neither should it be seen as any particular persons business. It should be seen as a collective responsibility of every individual human being, communities, governments and established agencies. With the increase spate of disasters occurrences, Nigeria is threatened and may give in totally. The task of adequately mobilizing people to respond effectively to their environment threats, are quite enormous to be left in the hands of individual and communities. Governments have a lot of roles to play. The level of both fire disaster and flood devastation in Nigeria at a point clearly became above individuals control and it became imperative that government must intervene. This work exposed the magnitude of various disasters the citizens of this are contending with and the colossal destruction of lives and properties that appeared unnoticed. It is important to state that disaster management aims at motivating societies at risk and reduction of vulnerabilities in various communities. As a cross cutting issues, it demands substantial commitment from public authorities/civil society and a greater inter-sectoral and policy co-ordination at all levels. It is on this note that the following recommendations are made:

All Nigeria's disaster management agencies need to network and synergise for effective coordination of their activities. Emergency managers should synchronize the activities of all relevant stakeholders to achieve a common purpose. The principle of coordination requires that the emergency manager gain agreement among these disparate agencies as to a common purpose and then ensure that their independent activities help to achieve this common purpose. They should create and sustain broad and sincere relationships among individuals and organizations to encourage trust, advocate a team atmosphere, build consensus and facilitate communication in environment of high uncertainty. A good measure of quality interpersonal trust is essential for collective action.

Early warning system: advancement in technology has eased the tasks of meteorologist in providing near accurate predictions on weather conditions and environmental changes in given societies. The technology is applied for forecasting and early warning alert systems as it has gone beyond mere forecast. Effective early warning systems requires reliable forecast with warning messages that serve to communicate anticipated threat. This will enable communities at risk to take meaningful action within a stipulated time. There should be sufficient lead time to take appropriate action.

There is no mutual information sharing among the government, disaster management agencies and non-government organizations, private sectors, vulnerable communities and the media hence the frequency at which disaster strikes with its destructive impacts. It calls for regular, routine pre-disaster contact among concerned stakeholders in order of foster readiness and mutual understanding of one another's working condition.

Funding is the major challenge hampering disaster management in Nigeria. Fund is the grease that lubricates all human activities. For all the emergency agencies to function to their optimum capacity, enough funds needs to be made available for their logistics and other needs. Government should be more committed towards providing the needed fund for the functioning of emergency agencies. Adequate funding and planning is highly imperatives if we want to halt the frequent losses currently being incurred perennially to disasters. For example, funds are needed to purchase fuel, gas and oil needed to drive most of the equipments. In many cases fire service have in the past failed to respond to distress calls because of lack of fuel and diesel in the equipment.

Provision of adequate tools needed to attack the emergencies as it occurs. Sound equipment and materials for their operations must be made available for their work. Also maintenance of the purchased equipment must be given a top priority to avoid the usual government attitude towards maintenance culture. The singular negligence could paralyze the entire operation because of a very minor repair. For Nigeria to get to the stage of managing disaster at all level, the country must be ready to dedicate a substantial amount in annual budget to acquire such equipment.

Law enforcement is equally important. For instance, those contractors responsible for collapsed buildings need to be arrested and prosecuted. Same for those building on water ways or those blocking drainages. Government has the responsibility to prevent disaster by doing the needful on time.

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Staff motivation must be vigorously pursued and sustained by the government. Disgruntled staff is like an 'an enemy in a friendly camp'. With the best equipment and most qualified staff, without adequate remuneration of the workers could paralyze all the operations to any emergency management. Some may even resort to stealing the provided parts or even equipments. A disgruntled worker poses a threat to the organization he belongs to. This can affect emergency response in Nigeria.

Government must try to create enabling laws to smoothen the operations of the various agencies for the handling of emergencies in Nigeria.

Communication should be taken seriously. It is an indispensable tool in the daily transactions among human beings and particularly, it has been recognized as one of the critical requirements in communicating disaster and emergency situation to all stakeholders in disaster management process while promoting timely understanding of the issues at stake among the vulnerable population. Communication means the gathering; processing, storage, retrieval and transmitting of disaster related information to individuals and group of susceptible people who need them to take immediate actions so as to pre-empt mitigate a potentially disastrous situation.

Quality education and awareness campaigns are major pillars towards disaster risk reduction. Societies need knowledge in order to manage their situation. Education provides passage of important life skills messages especially in the area of managing disasters. It paves ways for preventing and mitigating disaster in the future and makes DRR cost effective. Education is transmitted through experience, established warning arrangement, information technology, staff training among others to facilitate sharing of information and knowledge to citizens, professionals, organizations and policy makers.

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