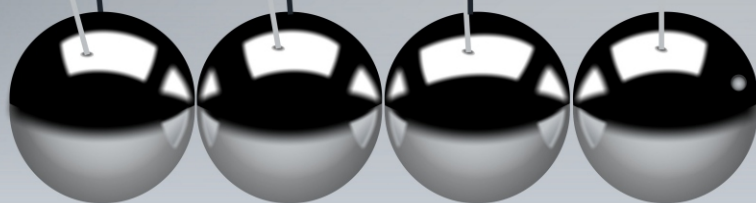


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National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and Disaster Management in South East 2009 – 2016.

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Abstract

The growing trend of disasters has continued to pose serious challenges for sustainable national development in Nigeria. This study therefore explored the link between National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the administration of emergency situations in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria, between 2009 and 2016. We anchored our analysis on the theory of structural functionalism. The questions of the study include; how did the application of multi-sectoral approach by NEMA undermine disaster management in the South East geo-political zone between 2009 – 2016. Does the structure of decentralization of NEMA's operational framework weaken disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria? We hypothesized as follows: the application of multi-sectoral approach undermines disaster Management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria; the pattern of decentralization of NEMA's operational framework adversely affects disaster Management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. Primary and secondary data were collected via survey and documentary methods, while content analysis based on logical deduction was employed. On the basis of the above, the study found amongst others that: the existence of bureaucratic bottlenecks in NEMA operations, the existence of multiple agencies performing conflicting roles in disaster management across the country, and the pattern of decentralization of NEMA's operational framework adversely affect disaster management in South East geo-political zone of Nigeria, between 2009 and 2016. The study therefore concluded that NEMA's operational inadequacies undermine its capacity to respond to and manage disasters in the South East geo-political zone. Among others, the study recommends that there is the need to amend NEMA's operational procedures to eliminate inefficient bureaucracies and empower the zonal offices to ensure prompt response to disasters.

Keywords: Disaster, Emergency, Multi-Sectoral approach, Decentralization, Management.

Introduction

Disasters are complex events with multifaceted causes. Disasters dislocate the mental, socio-economic, political as well as cultural state of the affected area. Disasters are grouped into two broad categories namely natural and human made. Natural disasters include cyclone, floods, earthquake, and tsunami volcanic storms. While human made are associated with human actions or inactions like technological failure, industrial accidents, oil spills, transportation accidents, among others (Olurunfemi & Adebimpe, 2008). Disasters are clearly a developmental problem. More fundamentally, the impact of natural phenomenon on the

prospects for long term development is considerably greater in less developed countries (Babatunde, et al., 2013).

As a developing nation, Nigeria has experienced varying degrees of both natural and human-induced disasters. The growing trend of disasters in Nigeria has had serious implications for national sustainability and development. These disasters which occur in form of drought, desertification, flooding, epidemics, dam failure, building collapse, oil spillage, maritime collision or accident, bomb explosion, communal clash, fire, air crashes and boat mishap, amongst others are associated with diverse consequences such as mortalities, loss of income, home, farmlands, social networks, livelihoods and infrastructures (Owolabi & Ekechi, 2014).

Meanwhile, organized disaster management in Nigeria dates back to 1906 “when the Fire Brigade was established with functions that went beyond fire-fighting to the saving of lives and property and provision of humanitarian services during emergencies” (Owolabi & Ekechi, 2014, p. 18). Thereafter, this noble and systematic approach was replaced, in 1960s and 70s, with ad-hoc arrangements domiciled in the offices of the Head of State and the State Governors. During this period, disaster response was considered as mere security issues. The devastating drought Nigeria experienced in the period 1972/1973, with its attendant negative socio-economic consequences, led to the establishment of the National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA) in 1976 with the mandate of collecting and distributing relief materials to disaster victims. In 1990, an Inter-Ministerial body was set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to address natural disaster reduction strategies in line with the UN International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and to address the limited scope of NERA. In 1993, the FGN decided to expand the scope of managing disasters to include all areas of disasters. This bold approach was backed up by decree 119 of 1993 which raised the status of the Agency to an Independent body under the Presidency (Nasiru, 2012; Fagbemi, nd). In 1997, the management of NERA organized a National Workshop involving major stakeholders in disaster management in Nigeria to deliberate on critical factors for an effective disaster management system in Nigeria, and noted the need to:

- i) Expand the functions of NERA, amend the decree setting up NERA and change its name to National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA);
- ii) Structure the new Agency by putting into consideration appropriate policies and strategies; search and rescue resource mobilization capabilities; information, education and prevention strategies; administration, finance and logistics systems; relief and rehabilitation capabilities; research and planning; and

- iii) Provide appropriate budgetary allocation for the operations of the Agency (NEMA, nd, p.7).

The acceptance of these recommendations by the Federal Government culminated in the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in March 1999 by Act 12 of 1999 as amended by Act 50 of 1999 to manage disasters in all its ramifications. The functions/powers of the Agency, as enumerated in Part 11 Section 6 sub-section 1 of the Act, among others include:

- ❖ formulating policy on all activities relating to disaster management in Nigeria and co-ordinate the plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disasters;
- ❖ monitoring the state of preparedness of all organisations or agencies which may contribute to disaster management in Nigeria;
- ❖ collating data from relevant agencies so as to enhance forecasting, planning and field operation of disaster management;
- ❖ educating and informing the public on disaster prevention and control measures;
- ❖ co-ordinating and facilitating the provision of necessary resources for search and rescue and other types of disaster curtailment activities in response to distress call;
- ❖ co-ordinating the activities of all voluntary organisations engaged in emergency relief operations in any part of the Federation.
- ❖ In fulfilling its mandate, NEMA has been tackling disaster related issues through the establishment of concrete structures and measures such as the education of the public in order to raise their level of awareness and reduce the effects of disasters in the country. To effectively respond to emergency situations in Nigeria, NEMA has developed several plans and guidelines. Some of these are National Disaster Response Plan, the Search and Rescue/Epidemic Evacuation Plan, the National Nuclear and Radiological Plan, the Early Warning System on Epidemic, among others. NEMA has operational office in Abuja and Gombe and Zonal Office in each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Over the years NEMA has encountered some challenges in the implementation of these plans aimed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness in disaster management in Nigeria.

Against this background, this study examines the link between the National Emergency Management Agency and the administration of emergency situations in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria, between 2009 and 2016. The link between NEMA's application of multi-sectoral approach and the pattern of decentralization of NEMA's operational framework on the one hand and disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria on the other hand forms our central area of focus.

Literature Overview

Disaster Management

Disasters, as natural or human induced events that disrupt the normal functioning of the Society, are increasing in frequency and magnitude (NDMOB, 2012). The nature, spread and cost of disasters call for mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction strategies at both the national and local levels to:

contribute to the decrease of disaster risks and the negative impacts of disasters and attainment of sustainable development and poverty alleviation, by facilitating the integration of disaster risk reduction into development and day to day risk-deduction-related decision making (NDMOB, 2012, p. i).

However, although disaster occurrence is universal, Africa appears to be the only continent whose share of reported disasters in the world total has increased over the past decade. According to DRRSDA (2004, p. 2):

More people are affected by natural hazards, and economic losses incurred are rising. Disaster impacts have become an impediment to sustainable development in Africa. Disaster risk reduction policies and institutional mechanisms do exist at various degrees of completeness in African countries. However, their effectiveness is limited, hence the need for a strategic approach to improving and enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency by emphasizing disaster risk reduction.

To address the impact of disasters which normally happens with or without prior notice, the African Union (AU) and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) offer the opportunity to promote such a strategic change. This came to the fore during the process of developing NEPAD's operational programmes by the NEPAD Secretariat, which provided the impetus for the development of an Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRRSDA, 2004).

Furthermore, to address the impact of disasters also, a number of institutions, policies and plans have been put in place at various levels. The main purpose of these institutions and plans is to address, in a timely, effective and efficient manner, the challenges that are often posed by the disasters in order to minimize its impact on the vulnerable community. The extent to which these institutions have fared in effectively forestalling and addressing the impacts of disasters has come under examination. Abebe (2010) examines the trajectories of Ethiopian disaster management and the checkered history of Ethiopian Disaster Management system (EDM). The scholar underscores that over the past few years, policy makers and the disaster management community have tried to transform the Ethiopian disaster management system from one of response and recovery to preparedness and prevention. The pitfalls that EDM has recently faced were addressed and suggestions proffered on how to overcome the policy and institutional challenges.

Similarly, Rohwerder (2015) evaluates the national crisis management models, policies and agencies or centres adopted by the governments of Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia to co-ordinate responses to a wide range of natural and human-induced crises and noted that their national crisis management strategies which essentially relate to crisis risk assessment; crisis risk reduction; crisis preparedness, prevention and mitigation; crisis response; and crisis recovery are designed to respond to crises generally, rather than specific types of crises. With respect to Nigeria, the author states that the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), under the supervision of the Presidency, was set up in March 1999. He also posits that NEMA has developed several plans, guidelines and the National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF), based on the various challenges and lessons of implementing these plans, to fulfill its mandate, which include the national disaster response plan, the search and rescue/epidemic evacuation plan, the national nuclear and radiological plan, and the early warning system on epidemics, amongst others. Regarding Kenya, Rohwerder (2015, p.7) avers that the Kenyan government has comprehensive and coordinated policy and legislation for disaster management which:

sets out an integrated and multi-sectoral approach and establishes an institutional framework for disaster preparedness and management. One aim is to make disaster management an integral part of the development process. Another aim is to put in place a systematic framework for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and management in the country. The main focus of the policy is to strengthen institutional capacities for the delivery of services that improve management and preparedness.

The scholar, however, notes that:

lack of a single authority to manage disaster responses means that there are multiple ministries with different responsibilities, limited resources to execute their powers, and weak overall governance of the process. This poses a challenge to transparency and accountability in government-led responses. The overall disaster response in Kenya was characterised by weak coordination by the government.... The lack of action on early warning led to a late, rushed, more expensive and politically pressured response (Rohwerder, 2015, p.7).

Finally, Rohwerder (2015) reveals that the Ethiopian government has been using the Early warning systems (EWS) since the 1970s. A key strength of the Ethiopian national (EWS) is seen in its ability to draw on local-level data and cascade early warnings from national to regional and community levels. However, despite its effectiveness, the national EWS is seen to be subjected to recurrent political interference, resulting in avoidable delay which has undermined the capacity of the Ethiopian government to assess humanitarian needs accurately and in good time.

Meanwhile, organized disaster management in Nigeria which began in 1906 with the formation of the Fire Brigade, culminated in the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in March 1999 by Act 12 of 1999 as amended by Act 50 of 1999 to manage disasters in all its ramifications. Disasters, whether natural or man-made have engendered widespread unimaginable destructions to lives and properties across the world. Disaster management, which entails 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, ought to be seen as an integral part of life intended to protect people and property from all types of disasters (Kasperson & Pijawka, 1985). Government, as a regulatory body, ought to be proactive and place high priority on emergency management at all levels. However, despite the Nigerian government's disaster management strategies, the country has had its fair share of disaster-induced tragedy. Thus, the efforts of the Nigerian government, through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), to manage emergency situations in Nigeria have been variously examined and a sizeable volume of literature has accumulated in this regard. Owolabi and Ekechi (2014) appraise the various communication methods engaged in disaster management and the interplay of communication with other disaster management tools with the purpose of discovering their mutual roles in the four stages of disaster management. The study notes that the incidence of hazard does not automatically lead to disaster and that natural disasters, though cannot be prevented, but their social and economic impacts on lives and property can be considerably minimised through the timely identification of imminent disasters, detection of disaster-prone areas and communicating effective warning message about the threat to vulnerable communities in sufficient time to enable the residents take necessary measures to avert the negative impacts.

Similarly, Ayo, Adeboye and Gbadeyan (2011) advocate the application of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly the use of modeling and visual reality to sustainable physical planning and the development of a Mobile Ad Hoc Network (MANET) for disaster response and management. The writers, while presenting the use of MANET to provide a quick, self-configurable and inexpensive communication infrastructure for email, text communication and instant messaging in order to enable all the parties involved to interact continuously, opine that though environmental hazards such as earthquake, hurricane, flood, acid rain, volcanic ash among others may not be preventable, appropriate technologies can be employed to make accurate predictions and speedy dissemination of information to reduce the amount of casualties. The above contributions are useful because they highlight the application and usefulness of information and communication technology in disaster response and management. They however fall short of articulating the link between the application of multi-sectoral approach and disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Lamidi and Benson (2014) advocate the institutional need and relevance of emergency management agency at local level. The paper sees the emergency management techniques as being capable of undertaking activities aimed at mitigating disaster effects on local communities. It discusses the guiding principles; organisation and structure of emergency management agency at local level. The paper further argues that:

Emergency management at local level facilitates safety and protection of lives and properties which is a fundamental function of government at any level; as well as the reduction of human and economic losses derailed by disaster -thereby enhancing socio-economic progress (Lamidi & Benson, 2014, p. 15).

The paper notes that since the establishment of emergency management agency at local level in Nigeria is necessary to safeguard lives and properties at local communities, local governments should develop and adopt emergency management plans based upon an 'all hazards' approach, undertake risk assessments to identify areas where hazards can be eliminated or negated in local council areas, incorporate strategic plans into the aspects of contemporary emergency management, provide funding options to support the needs of Local Government in Emergency Management, among others.

Relatedly, Aladegbola and Akinlade (2012) trace the burdens of hazard management as occasioned by natural processes and technological development and applications. The universality of the burden of disaster is seen to specify that, man has come to live with the reality of mitigating preparedness, response and recovery; when it comes. The failure of policy makers to properly checkmate these natural and man-made attacks, are largely blamed on the service institutions which are made weak by the external inadequacies as represented again by the policy makers. The writers further posit that the adequacy of a modern government could largely be measured by her immediate response to calamitous situation, and the prevention of its occurrence in the society. The forgoing contributions are apt because they highlight the relevance of government and the emergency management agency in the management of natural and man-made disasters in Nigeria. They however relegate the effect of the application of multi-sectoral approach on disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria

Highlighting the need for the bottom up approach in disaster management, Babatunde *et al.* (2013) aver that the Nigerian government should develop a long term vision towards prosperity for all citizens. Part of the vision should aim to establish functional, efficient and effective risk reduction systems against the various threats that have increased due to the ever-changing climate. Top down approach to disaster management is not the best since it fails not address local needs, ignore the potential of indigenous resources and capacity, and increase people's vulnerability. The best way to reduce of disaster is from the bottom up.

The inputs of allied professionals in the environmental and social sciences are seen as important for effective planning and implementation of disaster management programmes. These professionals include planners, civil engineers, architects, sociologists, land surveyors, estate values and surveyors among others relevant to different aspect of disaster management. As prime consultant of a typical urban renewal project which is a form of disaster management technique, the town planner is charged with different categories of responsibilities ranging from initiation of ideas through identification of goals and objectives, plan preparation and evaluation, to adoption and implementation of the best alternatives. All these could be achieved through the support of services of other professions at appropriate stages of project development. This contribution advocates for the bottom up approach in

disaster management but fails to articulate how this can improve the activities of disaster management agency in Nigeria, particularly the application of multi-sectoral approach.

Focusing on the incidence of building collapse and emergency management in Nigeria, Umeora (2013); Adedeji (2013) variously investigate the causes and magnitude of building collapse in Nigeria. An evaluation of the existing capacities to forestall further incidence of building collapse in Nigeria was carried out. The study, carried out with the aid of a model and secondary data which were used to assess the scale of human casualties emanating from reported cases of building collapse in selected Nigerian cities, showed that building collapse killed a good number of people in Nigeria between 1997 and 2009. Based on the magnitude of human casualty associated with building collapse and the ineffectiveness of the emergency management agencies in Nigeria in handling the situation, the study avers that drastic actions should be taken to make the environment safe for human dwelling. The above contributions rightly observe that the ineffectiveness of the emergency management agencies in Nigeria account for the rise in the incidence of building collapse. They, however, fail to articulate whether the application of multi-sectoral approach undermines disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Overall, the above contributions generally evaluate the application and usefulness of information and communication technology in disaster response and management, the relevance of government and the emergency management agency in the management of natural and man-made disasters in Nigeria as well as the link between the emergency management agencies in Nigeria and the rise in the incidence of building collapse. However, the link between the application of multi-sectoral approach and disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria between 2009 and 2016 has not been adequately and systematically examined.

In sum, the preceding discussions amply highlighted the menace of disasters as well as the strategies and challenges of disaster management in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the linkage between the pattern of decentralization of NEMA's operational framework and disaster management in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria between 2009 and 2016 has not been adequately and systematically examined. This therefore forms the gap the current study aims to fulfil.

Theoretical Perspective

The study is based on Structural-Functional analysis which is a derivative of the General System theory. Structural-functionalism originated at the turn of the century with new discoveries in the natural sciences and is a holistic view of society which suggests that just as organs serve different functions for the biological organism, so the individual institutions of our society serve the needs and purposes of the whole of our culture (cited in Winton, 1995). It is strongly associated with the work of philosophers/anthropologist as Radcliffe-Brown (1952), Parsons (1954), and Durkheim (cited in Calhoun, 2002). These writers variously argued that society is like the human body. Just as the body is made up of various parts that need to function together and properly for it to be healthy, so is society. Each part needs to be in a state of equilibrium, or balance. Just as the human body has evolved over time, so has society developed (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993).

Structural-Functionalism views society as a set of interrelated structures or parts with each structure performing a function which is important to the maintenance and stability of society (Strickland, 2007). Society is seen as existing in a state of consensus and equilibrium. It tries to shift the focus of analysis away from the observable institutional political mechanisms to any area where the actual performances of the functional requirements of the systems are located. Political systems are therefore analyzed based on the extent to which political structures perform specific functions. Hence, Verma (1983) raised three basic questions pertaining to political structures and the functions they perform, (1) what basic functions are performed in a given political system? (2) By what structures (3) Under what conditions? Verma (1983) further emphasized that functions deal with the consequences of patterns of actions whereas structures have to do with arrangements within the systems that perform the said functions.

Thus, NEMA as an agency was established in 1999 essentially to “formulate policy on all activities relating to disaster management in Nigeria and co-ordinate the plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disasters at national level” (NEMA Act, 1999, p. 23). Unfortunately, since most emergency situations do not have direct impact on members of ruling class who control state resources and use same to protect their interests against disasters, NEMA as an institution for disaster management has suffered serious operational crisis arising from poor bureaucratic processes, ineffective coordination and communication all of which vitiate the capacity of the institution to respond to emergency situations which usually requires rapid response actions and early warning systems.

Furthermore, the functions of NEMA as specified in the Act establishing the Agency shows that the capacity of NEMA as a disaster management institution is further weakened because it is more or less used by the ruling class as a channel for attracting aids from foreign organizations and NGOs thereby placing less emphasis on using state resources to engage disaster management. Section 6(h-i) aptly captures this interest of the capitalist class by stating thus: the Agency shall (h) Receive financial and technical aid from international organizations and non-governmental agencies for the purpose of disaster management in Nigeria; (i) collect emergency relief supply from local, foreign sources and from international and non-governmental Agencies...

Structural-Functional theory therefore enables us to understand that NEMA as a political structure is not properly performing its assigned function which border on disaster management in the South East geo-political zone due to the application of multi-sectoral approach. Hence, there are bureaucratic bottlenecks in NEMA operations - over 12 different procedural steps required to activate & mobilize NEMA emergency response teams in emergency situations. There are also multiplicity and ineffective coordination of disaster response agencies as over 25 agencies are saddled with the tasks of detecting and managing various disasters as well as absence of integrated multi-sectoral early warning system. These accounts for the inability to avert human casualties resulting from disasters as - over 35,000 casualties recorded in various disasters in South East, between 2009 and 2013; delay in search and rescue of disaster victims on road crashes alone in South East Nigeria; and delay in survey and assessment of disaster impacts and needs disaster victims.

Methodology

This study adopts time-series design. The time series design is a form of longitudinal/trend design which calls for a lengthy series of repeated measurements before a presumed causal event occurs, followed by another lengthy series of measurements (Leege & Francis, 1974:87). The design controls for a wide variety of sources of internal invalidity and may be used in conjunction with laboratory experiments, surveys or aggregate data.

In order to generate the relevant data for this study, we employed both survey and documentary methods. For the former, we relied on unstructured elite interview. Both methods of data collection are qualitative. Qualitative research constitutes one of the two major approaches to empirical research in social sciences. . Thus, we interviewed the following people: (i) South-East Sector Commander, FRSC (ii) Chief Fire Officer, Fire Service Commission, Enugu (iii) NEMA Zonal Coordinator, South East. We used documentary method to generate secondary data from government documents, official documents textbooks, journal articles, magazines, conference papers and relevant articles.

The study used content analysis and logical deductions to analyze both primary and secondary data. This is so because the methods we employed in data generation- unstructured elite interview and documentary method are both qualitative, and as such, yielded qualitative data.

Bureaucratic Bottlenecks in NEMA Operations

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was established under the Office of the Vice President by Act 50 of 1999. NEMA has the mandate to formulate policy on all activities relating to disaster management in Nigeria, coordinate the activities of other stakeholder in Disaster Management, coordinate plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disasters in the country, and promote research activities relating to disaster management in the country.

However, the NEMA's mechanism of responding to disasters is characterized by bureaucratic bottlenecks. These bureaucratic bottlenecks hamper the very essence of establishing NEMA mainly because disasters are emergencies which by their nature require proactive and rapid management mechanisms. For instance, under NEMA operational guideline, in the event of any emergency, the necessary bureaucratic procedures for activating and demobilizing the emergency response teams include:

Step 1: alerting the Deputy Director Search and Rescue Operations (DD SAR Ops) when an emergency alert is received

Step 2: The DD SAR (Ops) will alert the Director Search and Rescue Operations (DSAR), the COO and the Emergency Response Team (ERT) Leader on duty.

Step 3: The ERT Team Leader on duty will assemble and prepare the ERT Team for response while waiting for activation order from the DD SAR (Ops).

Step 4: Depending on the nature and severity of the emergency, the DSAR will notify the DG before activating the ERT or activate the ERT and inform the DG accordingly.

Step 5: DD SAR (Ops) activates the ERT while the other ERT members are contacted by the COO to be on standby.

Step 6: The COO briefs and tasks each team member before proceeding to the incident area

Step 7: The ERT Team Leader inspects to ensure that all response equipment being taken for the operation is serviceable.

Step 8. The COO coordinates all emergency response and report to the DD SAR (Ops) of actions taken.

Step 9. The COO shall request for additional resources if such a need arose during operation.

Step 10. The COO calls off the operation after getting clearance from the DD SAR (Ops).

Step 11. The DSAR or any Deputy Director chairs the after action review conference.

Step 12. A formal report is presented by the COO to the DG through the DSAR

The above reveals the bureaucracy embedded in NEMA's operational procedure for dealing with disasters. This operational procedure impacts negatively on the capacity of NEMA to adequately deal with disasters because disasters are emergencies which by their nature do not lend their selves to bureaucracy if they must be assuaged. That is, bureaucratic procedures undermine the very essence of emergency management. For instance, NEMA's operational procedure as illustrated above shows that Zonal offices depend on the Headquarters to get alert emergency situations and to also approval and direction on how to respond to such emergencies. With this, there is every possibility that emergencies would always get out of hand before NEMA's response.

In our interview with one of the respondents, he averred that one of the biggest challenge the South East zone faces in dealing with disasters remains the bureaucratic processes in NEMA's operation. According to him:

The zone cannot just intervene whenever there is any disaster because there are procedures that have to be followed in responding to disasters. In most cases you have to get the necessary approval, alert other collaborating stakeholders who must also follow their own guideline in responding to disaster. So you see that the bureaucracy must be respected even if it causes delay. However, we hope that an integrated response system will be developed in the future to enable us at the zone respond to disasters without being bottled up by the bureaucracy... (Face-to-Face Interview by the researcher).

Multiplicity and Ineffective Coordination of Disaster Response Agencies

Undoubtedly, NEMA is designated as the overarching emergency management agency in the country. For instance, Section 6(1a) of the Act establishing NEMA confers on it power to "formulate policy on all activities relating to disaster management in Nigeria and co-ordinate the plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disasters at national level". Meanwhile, the multi-faceted nature of disasters necessitates the participation of many other related agencies with various specialties in management of disasters. The situation in Nigeria reveals existence multiple of agencies performing similar functions with regards to disaster management. For example, the acts establishing most of these agencies

also confer on them conflict powers with regards to management of disasters of various types in the country.

Currently, in addition to the military and other paramilitary agencies, there are over 12 agencies involved in various forms of disaster management in Nigeria. These agencies are established by various laws which confer on them powers to engage disaster management in Nigeria. Some of these Acts include:

- i. Nigerian Airspace Management Agency Act
- ii. Nigerian Civil Aviation authority Act
- iii. Civil Aviation (Fire & Security Measures) Act
- iv. National Maritime Administration and Safety Agency
- v. Fire Service Act
- vi. Federal Road Safety Commission Act
- vii. Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps Acts
- viii. National Oil Spill detection and Response Agency Act
- ix. Nigerian Metrological Agency Act
- x. Police Act
- xi. Nigerian Red Cross Society Act

Most of these agencies are recognized by NEMA for operational collaboration in terms of emergency. The standard operating procedure states that in the case of emergency disaster situation, it is the duty of NEMA to alert other agencies that may be required to respond to the situation mainly because the 112 call center is not yet operational. Hence, when there is any incident, depending on the type of incident, having been alerted of the incident, NEMA will then follow the under listed steps to contact the agencies categorized as primary agencies in the order specified in Figure 1.

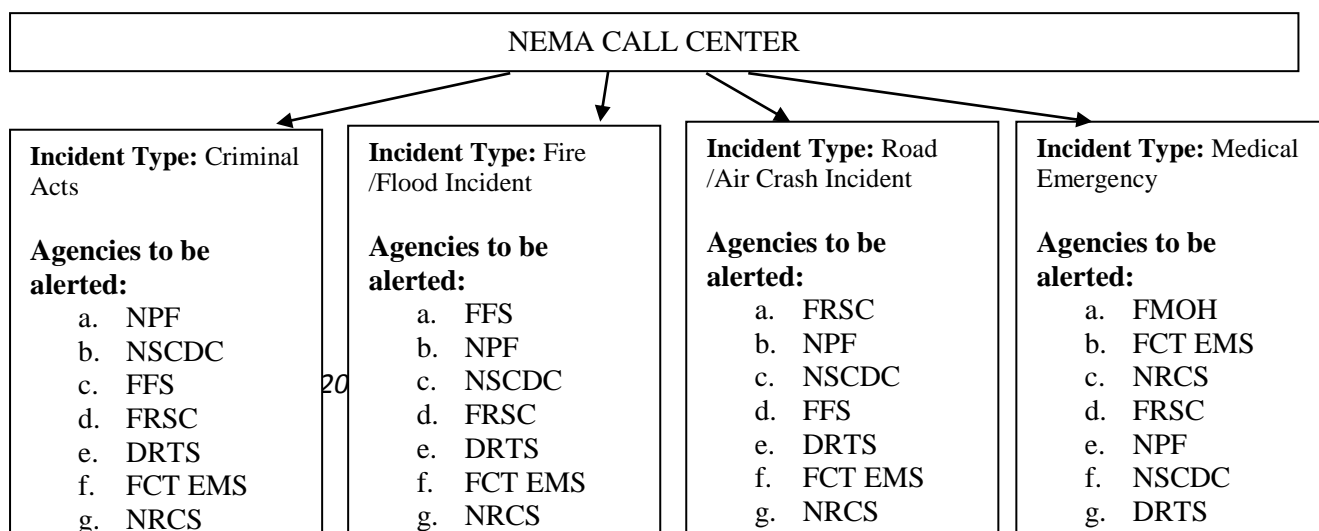
Step One: NEMA Emergency Call Center/Room receives notification of emergency

Step Two: The Call Center/Room notifies any of the three NEMA officers below

- a. Director Search and Rescue
- b. Deputy Director Search and Rescue
- c. Concerned Zonal Coordinator (if the incident is at the zone)

Step Three: the Call Center/Room contacts the primary responders as specified in figure 1 depending on the incident

Figure 1: Flow Chart Showing NEMA's Mode of Coordinating Response Agencies



Source: Designed by Researcher based on information in EPR & DRR National Capacity Assessment Report 2012

After activating these primary responders in the order listed above, the secondary responders are alerted. These secondary responders include the DSS; NIA; Armed Forces (DRUs); NIS; NCS the Federal Ministry of Environment and Federal Ministry of Works.

As a result of the multiplicity of agencies involved in disaster management, coordination of these agencies becomes problematic in the event of any disaster because of absence of articulated system for coordination of the activities of these agencies to avert role conflict. For instance in the case of air crash incident, there is possibility of conflict between agencies like the FRSC, Nigerian Airspace Management Agency and Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority since NEMA's operating procedure does not delineate roles for each of these agencies or framework for collaboration among the participating agencies.

According to one of the respondents in a face-to-face interview:

...because there are many agencies that also have enabling laws that empowers them to respond to emergencies, sometimes we have serious problem with these agencies who just respond to disasters and begin to treat issues in their own ways. This at times brings about conflict of roles even at the disaster scenes. Again, even when we need the assistance of some specialized agencies, we usually run into problem because we discover that there are in some instance up to three agencies empowered to perform one particular task. (Face-to-Face Interview by the researcher, 2016).

The above view was shared by another respondent, who asserted that most times, FRSC officers and men have conflict with the Police and men of the NSCDC in the field as they struggle for supremacy at disaster scenes. He said:

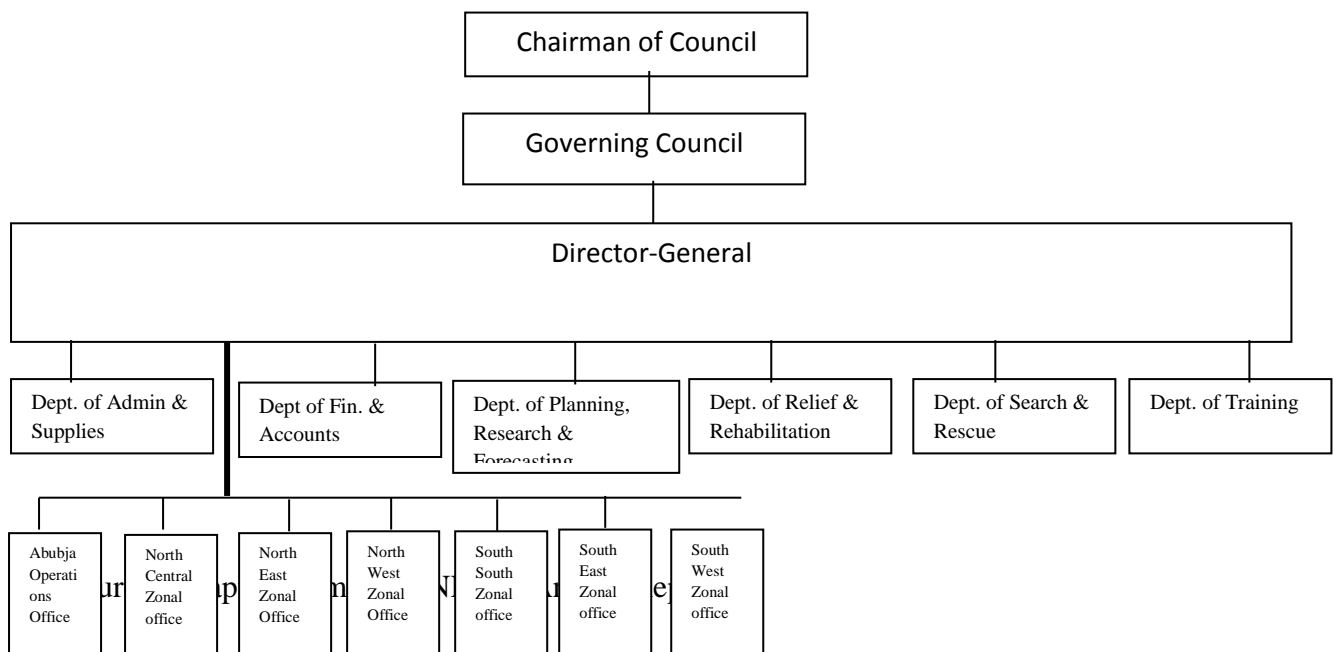
Take for instance, when there is a road crash, the Police comes in and wants to take full control of all the activities in the crash incidents without giving space for the road safety officials to perform the job they are trained for. Even when there is agreement on which function to be performed by each of the

agencies, there is always problem on coordinating these activities...(Face-to-Face Interview by the researcher, 2016).

Emergency coordination/ Response Centers & Equipment

The pattern of decentralization in NEMA is such that offices are located at the zonal level without adequate capacity to handle disasters and other emergency situations. The zonal offices are mere field offices while the major departments empowered to coordinate disaster response are in the headquarters without being replicated in the zonal offices. Again, as can be seen from NEMA's organogram (Figure 6) these zonal offices have no direct link with the departments empowered to coordinate disaster response but reports directly to the Director General in case emergency.

Figure 6: Abridged Organogram of NEMA Showing Zonal Offices



Furthermore, not only are these zonal offices estranged from the real operational departments of NEMA situated in the headquarters, the number of NEMA zonal offices are also grossly inadequate to deal with disasters in the zones. For instance, only one NEMA office in the whole South East region that has five (5) states and 89 LGAs. This inadequacy was confirmed by the south east Zonal Coordinator of NEMA Dr. Abdullahi Onimode who stated that "...the use of just one office to coordinate disaster response in the entire south east comprising five (5) states is a big challenge for NEMA because it undermines the capacity of the agency to actual play its role of managing disasters". He also added that the zonal office has no direct link to other operational departments of NEMA and must report directly to the DG for the Emergency Response Team (ERT) to be activated in the event of disaster.

Table 6: Population Figure of South East Nigeria Based on 2006 Census Figure

State	Male	Female	Total
Abia	1,430,298	1,451,082	2,881,380
Anambra	2,117,984	2,059,844	4,177,828
Ebonyi	1064156	1112791	2176947
Enugu	1596042	1671795	3267837
Imo	1976471	1951092	3927563
Total			16,431,555

Source: National Population Commission 2016. From <http://www.population.gov.ng/index.php/state-population> retrieved 05/07/2016)

Furthermore, there is no equipped IDP center for disaster victims in the south east zone. IDP camps are organized on ad hoc basis whenever there is any form of disaster. NEMA mainly converts public schools to IDP camps thereby further displacing school children from their education. Worse still, these schools are not equipped with adequate infrastructure to serve as IDP camps, the security of such camps are also usually poor. The poor infrastructure of the IDP camps like lack of toilets, poor access to clean water, and proper diets usually leads to child killer disease outbreaks like cholera, malnutrition, and maternal mortality within the camps.

Inadequate manpower

Another major challenge of NEMA is inadequate manpower. For example, the south east zonal office of NEMA has only 26 staff posted to coordinate emergencies. This number of staff is considered inadequate in view of the fact that there are 5 states under NEMA southeast zone, and 89 LGAs with an estimated population of 16,431,555. In addition, most of these staff are mere operational staff and are not experts in various areas of disaster management. For example, there are no medical doctors, professional psychologists etc. One of our respondents stated that NEMA largely depends on collaborating stakeholders for proper management of the IDP camps and this mitigates the shortcomings of inadequate manpower in NEMA zonal office. According to him:

Obviously, we do not have standby professionals in the zonal offices because these professionals are provided by other collaborating agencies like Federal Ministry of Health when the need arises. Most of the staff we have in the zonal offices are operational staff who have received training to perform their duties in various units within NEMA... (Face-to-face interview, 2016)

Weak autonomy of NEMA zonal offices with regards to disaster response and management

Like other zonal offices, NEMA south east zone also lacks autonomy to take key decisions in response to disaster situations. Policies are articulated and implemented direct from the headquarters while the zonal offices are only to carryout decisions as directed from the headquarters and report back to the headquarters. For instance, all the decisions bordering on relief and rehabilitation are made and implemented by the Relief and Rehabilitation Department directly under the Director General in the headquarters. The zone only receives and stockpiles relief materials received from the headquarters and others directly donated by NGOs and individual donors.

Basically, the zonal offices are only collation centers for collation of data and/or other necessary information for onward reporting to the headquarters. Again, a respondent confirmed that the zonal office has no power to initiate disaster response without getting clearance from the headquarters. He added that before it can collaborate with other disaster management agency, it also needs to get clearance from its headquarters and possible the headquarters of the collaborating agency. According to him,; “we mainly implement decisions at the zonal offices and report back to the headquarters”.

Non-sustainability of disaster response and intervention mechanisms

Disaster response and intervention mechanisms of NEMA are mainly organized on ad hoc basis without being systematized. When disasters occurs in Nigeria, the institutional response has always consisted only of after-the-event response like facilitating the evacuation of victims and providing such victims with palliatives like make shift shelters in IDP camps, food stuffs, clothing etc. Again, search and rescue operations by NEMA and other related agencies are usually haphazardly carried out and as soon as any particular disaster response is completed, the rescue team is disbanded while rescue equipment are abandoned most times without servicing them until another disaster occurs. For example, one major challenge in dealing with fire disasters has always been lack of water for the Fire Service men to put off the fire. No sustainable plan has been put in place to make water always available in the right quantity for the Fire Service in case of disasters. In most cases, when there is fire disaster in Enugu Metropolis, the Fire Service when alerted begins to proceed to 9th Mile Corner in the outskirt of Enugu to search for water. This undermines the capacity to respond to and manage disasters. In our interview with officials of Fire Service in Enugu, it was revealed that there is no functional water supply system within the premises of Enugu Fire Service. According to the Fire Service official: “we usually get our water from boreholes in 9th Mile whenever we are alerted of fire disaster within our area of operation”.

Similarly, the collaborating agencies and states have not also been able to put up any form of sustainable action plan for disaster response and intervention. For instance, in the wake of the 2012 flood disaster, the Federal Government declared it a National Disaster and released 17.6 billion naira to the affected states to mitigate the effects of the flood. Of the total amount released, the affected states were to receive 13.3 billion altogether while the Federal Government agencies will receive 4.3 billion (Obeta, 2014). States were categorized

into four groups based on varying degrees of reported impacts. On the basis of this grouping, the south eastern states got the following allocation:

Table 7: Amounts Allocated to States in South East to Mitigate Impact of 2012 Flood

S/No	State	Category	Amount Received
1	Anambra	Category A	500 million
2	Imo	Category B	400 million
3	Ebonyi	Category C	300 million
4	Abia	Category C	300 million
5	Enugu	Category D	250 million

Source: Culled from Obeta (2014)

This money was shared to the states without any long term plan to sustain their response to future disasters. As a result, whenever there is any form of disaster, the states still demonstrate their inability to respond appropriately.

Generally, the disaster response and intervention mechanisms by NEMA and other collaborating agencies are not sustainable and this makes management of future disasters always difficult. In agreement, Obeta (2014) opined that the non-sustainability of existing institutional frameworks for disaster response and management contributed to the 2010 to 2012 flooding across Nigeria. According to him, manifestation of such non-sustainability are reflected in building construction on river floodplains, indiscriminate waste disposal, poor drainage, poor road networks, poor bush burning practices. In some instances, building approvals are granted without clear understanding of the nature of the environment and the impacts of the construction on the overall environmental quality of the area thereby obstructing free flow of water (Obeta, 2014).

Conclusion/Recommendation

Findings of the study revealed that the existence of bureaucratic bottlenecks in NEMA operations and the existence of multiple agencies performing conflicting roles in disaster management across the country. More so, NEMA does not have effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of these agencies. Again, available data reveals absence of any integrated multi-sectoral early warning system to aid disaster management despite the adoption of multi-sectoral approach by NEMA in disaster management. As a result, NEMA and other related disaster management agencies have not been able to avert huge human casualties resulting from disasters occurring across the south east zone with over 63,202 casualties recorded in various disaster incidents between 2009 and 2016.

Furthermore, findings reveal that the pattern of decentralization of NEMA's operational framework adversely affects disaster management in the south east zone. This is mainly because inadequate emergency coordination and response centers at the zonal level, inadequate manpower and weak autonomy of the zonal office with regards to disaster response and management all of which accounts for the non-sustainability of disaster

response and intervention mechanisms, failure to manage and mitigate risk factors and failure to train adequate grassroots emergency volunteers in various communities. Based on these findings, we upheld our hypotheses.

Based on the findings of our study, we recommend as follows:

1. NEMA should evolve a well articulated and institutionalized disaster response mechanism that would not depend on any bureaucratic procedure for activation in the event of disaster.
2. NEMA zonal offices should be granted autonomy, properly staffed and equipped to enable the zones respond to disasters appropriately.
3. States and community based associations should maintain standing disaster response teams that will augment the activities of NEMA during disaster response and management.

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