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# MANAGING NATIONAL EMERGENCY IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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*Abstract*

*National emergency have become a recurring decimal in many parts of the world. They include natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes, and tsunamis. They also include manmade disasters such as airplane crashes, nuclear accidents, and wars. Nigeria has had her fair share of these emergencies but their management and coordination has left a lot to be desired. This paper attempts to identify these problems that militate against emergency management in Nigeria. It focuses on the work of the National Emergency Management Agency and the impediments to its smooth functioning. The paper recommends proactive management of national disasters particularly in the treatment of people who suffer the consequences of these emergencies.*

*Key words: Disaster, Emergency, Tsunami, Cyclone, Tornadoe, Flash floods, Gully Erosion, Earthquake, Typhoon*

## Introduction

Natural disasters have become a recurring decimal in the life of many nations in the late 20th and early 21st Century. In 1984 for instance, an explosion in the nuclear plant in Chernobyl in the former Soviet Union released dangerous radioactive materials into the environment, and exposed thousands of the inhabitants to dangerous levels of radiation. On 12 January, 2010, a major earthquake occurred in Haiti, killing about 316,000 people and rendering about 3 million homeless. In March 2011, a devastating earthquake in Tohoku, eastern Japan, triggered an extremely destructive tsunami that led to loss of lives and destruction of infrastructure. In addition, the tsunami caused a number of nuclear accidents at three nuclear reactors in Fukushima, releasing and exposing the inhabitants to dangerous levels of radiation. Thousands had to be evacuated to ensure their safety.

In 2008, more than 40,000 people were declared dead or missing as a result of an earthquake that occurred in the Chinese city of Dujiangyan, in the Sichuan province. Hurricane Katrina swept through New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in the United States in 2005, killing at least 1,300 people. Much of the city of New Orleans was submerged in water and properties worth millions of dollars were destroyed. The Ethiopian famine of the early 1980s created a humanitarian disaster of mammoth proportions. This was followed by a famine in Somalia

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which caused a huge concern in the international community. The above-mentioned catastrophes are a tip of the iceberg. Human history is replete with incidents such as these. In the first-half of 2016, there have been earthquakes in Italy where about 35 people lost their lives, in Tanzania where although the casualty was limited, but people were rendered homeless due to building collapse. In September 2016, tremors shook and destroyed buildings in a village in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

National emergency is not limited to natural disasters. Conflict situations have also caused humanitarian disasters. These include interstate wars, civil wars, insurgencies, communal disputes, and so on. In the 20th Century, the world experienced 'total wars' in World War 1 and II. The import of national emergency whether natural disasters or man-made as in wars, are the human suffering that an emergency can cause. At the end of the day, the management of national emergency becomes concerned not just with rebuilding infrastructure damaged, but also with containment of human suffering as a result of these situations. People who are rendered homeless or are pushed out of their homelands as a result of emergency situations become refugees. They have to be properly managed and stabilized. The management of national emergency also involves proactive measures to prepare so as to minimize the effects of the negative consequences of disasters.

In Nigeria, the concern of government has been in developing the personnel and infrastructure needed to effectively manage emergency. This has involved strengthening the capacity of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and properly equipping it to deal with national emergency situations. For the most part, Nigeria has been spared the traumatic experiences of other countries that have had to deal with serious natural disasters. However, Nigeria's challenges in this area are no less daunting. In October 2011, Flash Floods swept through many villages and communities in Sokoto State. In 2013, communities on the banks of the Niger and Benue rivers were severely flooded, causing evacuations and displacements of people. In the Niger Delta, oil spills and gas flaring continue to pose problems to the lives of the people. In the south-eastern part of the country, gully-erosion poses a serious threat to lives and properties. Whole communities become cut-off from their kiths and kins due to collapse bridges damaged by erosion. If we add the menace of terrorist attacks such as the ones that took place at the national police headquarters in Nigeria in 2010, and the UN building in 2011, we will see that NEMA is facing serious challenges in terms of timely response to and management of emergency situations.

**Statement of the Problem**

National emergency whether man-made or natural disasters are a recurring decimal in many parts of the world. Nigeria is not an exception. In the developed world, there are proper planning and response when disasters happen. State resources are brought to bear on and to ameliorate the negative consequences of disasters. This is the stage at which countries in the developing world falter. While the industrialized economies are proactive in emergency management, the low developing economies (LDEs) are reactive, often with dire consequences in terms of containment of the effects of disasters and their accompanying destruction. In Nigeria, problems of emergency management are many and they include poor coordination of emergency response, lack of proper equipment, poorly kept records and data, absence of political will and rampant political corruption. These issues will form the problematic of this paper. For instance, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Boko Haram insurgency are located in camps in many parts of the country particularly in the Northeast. They suffer hardships ranging from malnutrition, cholera, lack of educational facilities for the children who in most cases had lost their parents. There is also the problem of theft of humanitarian aid by non-refugees and general apathy by the authorities concerned.

**Methodology**

The methodology adopted for this paper is descriptive. The qualitative research method is used and it relied on content analysis of documents from secondary sources such as articles, journals, textbooks, newspapers, and online sources.

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### Emergency defined

An emergency is an unplanned event that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property or environment (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2011). Disaster is an emergency incident that is unexpected, which consequences are calamitous, and which is devastating to life and property (Khan, Himayatullah & Abuturab, 2011). Disasters can also be man-made which tends to lead to crisis, accompanied by human suffering (Haddow and Bullock, 2005). Natural disasters include Flood, Tornadoes, Cold waves, Drought, Thunderstorm, Earthquake, Heat waves, Mud slides and Storms. Man-made disasters on the other hand, include Fire outbreak, Road Accident, Riots, Food Poisoning, Epidemic, Industrial accidents, Deforestation, Environmental pollution, Building collapse, Plane crash, Chemical pollutions, acts of terrorism and war etc. (Ovosi 2013, Lamidi and Benson, 2014).

When an emergency occurs, urgent action is needed so that the situation does not become worse. Sometimes, damage may already have been done and all that the emergency management agency does is to offer palliatives measures and to try to contain the situation. An emergency can be self evident (such as a natural disaster that threatens the lives of many people). However, other incidents may require the expert at the scene to decide whether they qualify as an emergency.

Blanchard (2007) and his group of emergency management practitioners and academicians agreed on eight emergency management principles which are summarized below. According to them, emergency management must be:

- Comprehensive – able to take into cognizance all phases, all hazards, all stakeholders, and all impacts relevant to disasters.
- Proactive – anticipating future disasters and taking preventive and preparatory measures to build disaster – resistant and disaster resilient communities.
- Risk driven – emergency management must use sound risk management principles (hazard identification, risk analysis and impact analysis) in assigning priorities and resources.
- Sustained – emergency management must ensure well-coordinated effort among all agencies of government and stakeholders in a community.
- Collaborative – emergency management is not a "one man squad," but must involve a broad-based relationship among individuals, agencies, and other stakeholders for consensus building.
- Coordinated – there must be synergy in the activities of all relevant stakeholders to achieve a common purpose of mitigating disaster.
- Flexible – emergency management must use creative and innovative approaches in dealing with disaster situations.
- Professional – emergency management must put emphasis on science and knowledge-based techniques in its approaches. Its operational guidelines should be based on education, training, experience, ethical practice, public stewardship and continuous improvement.

### Types of emergencies

What qualifies as an emergency varies but in the main, they are classified according to the degree of danger that they pose to life, health, properties and the environment. The following section examines this concept and the nature of the threat they pose to life and property.

### Danger to life

An emergency can cause immediate danger to the lives of people. This can range from an emergency affecting a single person particularly medical emergency such as heart attack, stroke, and trauma, to incidents that affect large numbers of people such as natural disasters. These may include tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and

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mudslides. These incidents are accorded the highest priority of emergency by agencies around the world; and it follows the general school of thought that nothing is more important than human life.

## Danger to health

An emergency may not immediately be classified or seen as life threatening. However, it may pose serious threat to the health and well-being of the people around. Viewed from this perspective, a health emergency can advance to becoming life threatening. Exposure to radioactive materials or to high levels of radiation falls within this category. The causes of a 'health' emergency are often very similar to the causes of an emergency that is life threatening. A major oil-spill for instance can contaminate an underground drinking water supply and pose a danger to the health of the people in a community.

## Danger to property

A particular emergency may not threaten life or health, but may threaten peoples' properties. An example of this would be wildfire caused by lightening or flooding that destroys homes and properties worth millions of dollars. In the summer of 2016, the state of California lost many homes to wildfire. In 2017, the wildfires repeated in California and hundreds of homes were lost. In 2016, a 6.2 magnitude earthquake in central Italy near the city of Perugia, killed 297people and rendered others homeless. Many agencies categorize property emergency as the lowest priority, and may not take as much risk in dealing with it. For instance, if emergency rescuers know that a burning building is empty, they may not enter into it. This is because the risk index is quite insignificant and therefore, taking such major risk does not seem justifiable. But rescuers are more likely to enter a building where people are trapped, and a possibility exists that there are survivors.

## Danger to the Environment

An emergency may not immediately pose threat to life, health or property but may still affect the natural environment and creatures living within it. In some jurisdictions, this is not considered to be a genuine emergency. Forest fires, marine oil spills, and other forms of environmental degradation fall within this category. In Nigeria's Niger Delta for instance, oils spills from the activities of Multinational oil companies (MTN) have pose serious danger to human life and the ecosystem. These oil spills contaminate drinking water sources, kill fishes in the rivers and creeks, and make farmlands unproductive. Gas flaring which is a by-product of oil drilling activities, releases poisonous fumes into the environment, posing great danger to human life and the ecosystem.

## Agencies involved in dealing with emergencies

Most developed countries have a number of emergency services operating within them, whose purpose it is to provide assistance in dealing with emergency. They are often government operated, paid for from tax revenues as a public service, but in some cases, this services may be contracted out to private companies so that they respond to emergency in return for payment. Emergency services may also be carried out by voluntary agencies, which provide the assistance from funds raised from donations. Most developed economies operate three core emergency services:

- Police – who deal with security of persons and property, and can cover all three categories of emergency. They may also deal with punishment of those who cause an emergency through their actions.
- Fire Service – deals with potentially harmful fires, but are also involved in rescue operations such as with road traffic accidents. Their actions help to prevent loss of life, damage to health and damage to or loss of properties.
- Emergency Medical Service (Ambulance/Paramedic service) – These services attempt to reduce loss of life or damage to health. This service is likely to be decisive in the attempts to prevent loss of life and damage to health. In some areas "Emergency Medical Service" is abbreviated to simply EMS.

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- National Emergency Management Agencies – Some countries have established agencies to deal with emergencies of a national nature such as the outbreak of an epidemic disease, natural disasters that affect large number of people, refugee problems as a result of war, and so on.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis for this study is located in the Benthamin and Lockean theories of utilitarianism and social contract respectively. According to Bentham (1789), nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters (pain and pleasure). Therefore, human happiness can only be achieved when pleasure is at the maximum while pain is experienced when pleasure is at the minimum. The role of government then is to ensure the happiness of the society and to ensure that such happiness can be maximized. If government policies bring about the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people, this will ensure the surplus of pleasures over pains. In this light, a government is considered a failure when people suffer more pains than pleasure. Efficient emergency management is considered in this paper as the balance of pleasure over pains. The social contract theories of John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean Jacques Rousseau have as a common theme that governance is a sort of agreement between the people and those that govern them and the existence of government, its legality and legitimacy hinges on government's continuous judicious use of state resources to provide the greatest benefits to the greatest number of people (Omotosho, 2000).

Hobbes's theory of the Leviathan is based on a type of "Social Contract." According to Hobbes, man's life in the state of nature was one of fear and selfishness. Life in the state of nature was "solitary", "poor", "brutish" and "short." Man has a natural desire for security, self-protection, and self-preservation. In order to avoid pain and maximize pleasure, man enters into a contract which requires that he surrender his rights and freedom to an over-arching authority; the "Leviathan" who commands obedience. Modern government is the "Leviathan" that protects man from himself and from his fellow man. It also has the onerous role to protect and preserve lives and property.

Locke's theory of Social Contract is different from that of Hobbes.  But like Hobbes, Lock also believed that man lived in a state of nature. However, this is where they part company. Locke understood the state of nature as a "state of liberty" where persons are free to pursue their own interests and plans. Man considered his property in the state of nature as insecure and thus felt the need to protect them. Thus man entered into a social contract not for self-preservation, but for the protection of the things he owned.  Social Contract as a concept was a theme the 17th Century European thinkers repeatedly returned to. Jean Jacques Rousseau for instance posited that social contract was not a historical fact but a hypothetical construction of reason. Life in the state of nature was happy and serene according to Rousseau. People lived together in small families and then, in small communities. There was division of labour both within and between families; discoveries and inventions made life easier, giving rise to leisure time. Rousseau believed that the invention of private property constituted the pivotal moment in humanity's evolution out of a simple pure state into one characterized by greed, competition, vanity, inequality, and vice. For Rousseau, the invention of private property constituted humanity's "fall from grace" out of the state of nature. In order to control the unhealthy competition arising from the ownership of private property, people had to surrender their rights not to a single individual but to the community as a whole which Rousseau called the "general will". It follows therefore that people look on government to protect them not only from each other but from emergency, including natural disasters. Responses to emergency by the state as represented by government, is a social responsibility. Improper or inefficient management of emergency undermine the essence of government in its responsibility to the people.

**Emergency Action Principles (EAP)**

Emergency action principles are key rules that guide the actions of rescuers and potential rescuers. Because of the inherent nature of emergency, no two are likely to be the same; so emergency action principles help to guide rescuers at incidents, by adhering to some basic tenets. The adherence to (and contents of) the principles

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by would be rescuers varies widely based on the training the people involved in emergency have received, the support available from emergency services (and the time it will take to arrive) and the emergency itself.

**Key Emergency Principle**

The key principle taught in almost all systems is that the rescuer, be he a lay person or a professional should assess the situation for danger. The reason that an assessment for danger is given such high priority is that it is core to emergency management that rescuers do not become secondary victims of any incident, as this creates a further emergency that has to be dealt with. In other words, rescuers must not become casualties as this would further compound an already dangerous situation. A typical assessment for danger would involve observation of the surroundings, starting with the cause of the accident (e.g. a falling object) and expanding outwards to include any situational hazards (e.g. fast moving traffic) and history or secondary information given by witnesses, bystanders or the emergency services (e.g. an attacker still waiting nearby and who has taken hostages). Danger assessment may also include a swaying building (in the case of an earthquake). Once a primary danger assessment has been completed, this should not end the system of checking for danger, but should inform all other parts of the process. If at any time the risk from any hazard poses a significant danger (as a factor of likelihood and seriousness) to the rescuer, they should consider whether they should approach the scene (or leave the scene entirely).

**Managing an emergency-The Four Steps Process**



Courtesy: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Em-cycle:png
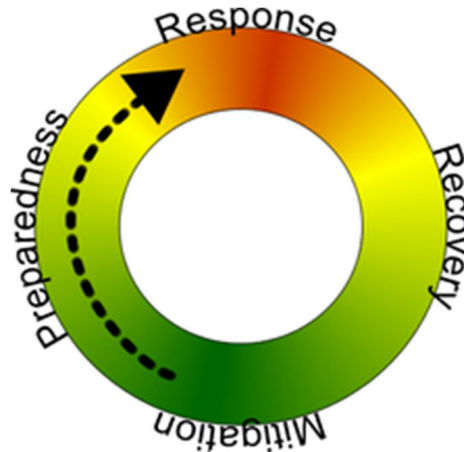
The nature of emergency management depends on local economic and social conditions. Some disaster relief experts such as Fred Cuny have noted that in a sense the only real disasters are economic in nature – meaning that the destruction caused by disasters usually run into millions of naira. Experts, such as Cuny, have long noted that the cycle of Emergency Management must include long-term work on infrastructure, public awareness, and even human justice issues. The process of Emergency Management involves four phases: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

**Preparedness**

This is the planning phase of emergency management where an agency establishes contingency plans to be activated when disaster happens. The contingency plan should of necessity include a hierarchy of command and control, functions and responsibilities and division of activities between agencies and department. This arrangement would help to avoid confusion, duplication of efforts and activities among agencies when an emergency occurs. Preparedness typically applies the insurance principle which can be used to determine when

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to insure and when not to insure. The principles states that if the chances of an event occurring is slim, but the impact or consequences will be devastating if it happens, the sensible thing to do is to insure – or prepare. Preparedness also involves human behavior modification so as to limit the effects of disaster events on people. Different strategies might be utilized here such as public education/enlightenment, and drills. Preparedness is a continuous cycle of activities that include planning, managing, controlling, organizing, training, equipping, monitoring, and evaluating to ensure effective coordination and enhancement of the capabilities of organizations involved in emergency management. Preparedness is proactive rather than reactive. In its basic elements it is the anticipation of events before they occur and taking steps to ameliorate their impacts when they happen.

**Response**

When an emergency has occurred, agencies have to move into a response phase where they mobilize resources and execute their plan. Gaps in the planning or preparatory stage may cause an agency to improvise some aspects of their response. This may be due to the nature of the disaster or the socio-economic nature of the community. The response phase calls for the mobilization of the necessary emergency services and first responders in the disaster area. This may include a first wave of core emergency services such as fire fighters, police and ambulance crews. Central to a good response strategy is the establishment of an efficient and reliable Central Command Post (CCP) for the co-ordination of the activities and efforts of agencies involved.

A well-rehearsed emergency plan developed as part of the preparedness phase enables efficient coordination of rescue. If victims are trapped in collapsed buildings as in the case of earthquake or plane crash, search and rescues operations should begin immediately. It might be necessary to bring in specialized equipments such as cranes, bulldozers etc. to assist in the search and rescue. It has been estimated that the vast majority of those affected by a disaster will die within 72 hours after impact, depending on the nature of injuries sustained by victims in the disaster, outside temperature, and victim access to air and water. Therefore, quick response is really important. Sometimes, it may become necessary to deploy heavy equipments in order to reach the site of a disaster such as an airplane crash. There is need to build an effective leadership in response to a disaster (Lamidi and Benson, 2014). A sort of Marshall Plan is needed where leadership formulates and implements effective response plans, adapting to new developments and changes in circumstances as they arise. The management of information is crucial in the response phase. Leadership must ensure that accurate and timely information is released to the public so that tensions can be doused and those affected by the disaster such as family members of victims do not panic. The media can play a crucial role here by ensuring that news coverage do not wipe-up sentiments and induce unnecessary fear in the public domain.

**Recovery**

Following an effective response, agencies may then undertake recovery operations in the wake of a disaster. Agencies can assist in the clear- up from the incident, embark on search and rescue and generally, help the people involved overcome their mental trauma. Psychologists, counselors, and religious persons may be brought in to speak to the people that are affected by a disaster and offer consolatory words and encouragement. The objective of the recovery phase is to help an affected area to be restored to its previous state. The difference between the response phase and recovery is that the latter phase is concerned with issues that have been thrown up by the disaster, and these issues must be addressed after the initial needs assessment. Depending on the type of disaster, recovery may be accompanied by efforts such as providing water, food and shelter to those affected by the disaster. Other efforts may involve rebuilding destroyed properties, providing employment, and rebuilding damaged infrastructure. Experts recommend the "build back better" approach, to reduce the pre-disaster risks inherent in the community and infrastructure. It is pertinent to note that the recovery phase can provide a rare opportunity for authorities to introduce a public policy or programme that might otherwise by unpopular or resisted in normal times. When a disaster is fresh in people's memory, they are more likely to accept negative palliatory measures than otherwise. In the United States, the National Response Plan dictates how the resources provided by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 will be used in recovery efforts. It is the

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Federal government that often provides the most technical and financial assistance for recovery efforts in the United States.

## Mitigation

The final phase in emergency management is mitigation, which involves taking steps to ensure no re-occurrence is possible. In the case of natural disasters, predicting future occurrence may be less likely however; plans could be put in place to ensure that less damage is done in the future. The mitigation phase should involve a sort of evaluation of the preceding phases to plug loop-holes and strengthen contingency plans. The result of such evaluation could then be used as feedback and linked to the preparedness stage with updated plans and strategies to deal with future emergencies, thus completing the circle.

Mitigation efforts also present opportunities in emergency management to prevent hazards from developing into disasters. In the cases of tsunamis, hurricanes, and typhoons, weather forecasting technologies have significantly improved to the point of providing early- warning signals, but not prevention. The difference between the mitigation phase and the other phases is that mitigation advocates the adoption of long-term measures for reducing or eliminating risk. Mitigation has two main types: structural and non-structural. Structural mitigation depends on the use of technology to combat disasters or to reduce their impact. Non-structural mitigation focuses on the use of government policy such as legislation, land-use planning and insurance to plan against risk. Mitigation measures may not always be suitable nor appreciated, but it is the most cost-efficient method for reducing the effect of hazards. Mitigation measures may include evacuation, relocation, land-use regulations and public education and enlightenment. Risk assessment should serve as a prelude to mitigation, identifying and evaluating hazards. The higher the risk, the higher a community's vulnerability to the hazard thereby, making mitigation and preparedness a top priority.

## Evolution of Emergency Management in Nigeria

Contingency planning in meeting the exigencies of disaster provided the basis of government policy regarding emergency management in Nigeria. Although no abstract plans are ever likely to match specific circumstances that suddenly bring about disasters, such plans provide important starting points in disaster management. Organs established with functions to manage emergencies in Nigeria went beyond firefighting to the provision of services during emergency. However, when disaster response became a security issue, they were taken over as executive functions at the state and federal level in the form of ad hoc arrangements. This situation subsisted until 1972/1973 when the country experienced a devastating drought. The drought had negative socio-economic consequences and cost the Nigerian nation the loss of many lives and properties. The development led to the establishment of the National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA) in 1976. NERA was charged with the responsibility of collecting and distributing relief materials to disaster victims. Due to the limited scope of the agency, the government in 1993 decided to expand its activities to include all areas of disasters. This was backed up with decree 199 of 1993, which raised the status of the agency to an independent body under the presidency as a unit in the office of the Secretary to Government of the Federation.

NERA later became National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in 1999 by Act 12 of the National Assembly, and charged with the responsibility of managing disasters in all its ramifications. NEMA was to establish a new vision to build a culture of preparedness, prevention; response and community resilience to disaster in Nigeria. In fulfilling its mandate, NEMA developed several plans and guidelines, some of which are the National Disaster Response Plan, the Search and Rescue/Epidemic Evacuation Plan, the National Nuclear and Radiological Plan, the Early Warning System on Epidemics etc. Over the years NEMA has encountered challenges and learnt lessons in the implementation of these plans. This necessitated the development of the National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) to correct implementation gaps and increase efficiency and effectiveness of disaster management in Nigeria. NEMA's mission is basically to coordinate resources towards efficient and effective disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and responses in the country.

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The occurrences of disaster often call for the support of both national and international organizations especially, as far as the provision of relief materials is concerned. Consequently, disaster relief remains extremely important in disaster management. However, this approach alone does not proactively address the need to reduce the human and environmental impact of future disasters. Recent thinking in the area of disaster management indicates that there is need for a system that focuses on the coordination of stakeholders responding during emergency situations (Lamidi and Benson, 2014). There seems to be no consensus between agencies and stakeholders during emergency situations particularly the search and rescue operations (SAR).There is need for a system that will not only activate agencies in order of importance i.e. military or police first to contain the situation, traffic control agencies for crowd and traffic control as well as paramedics and other disaster management agencies in the country, but also create coordination and cooperation between these agencies.

NEMA functions through three phases of pre-emergency, the emergency phase, and the post – emergency phase. In the pre-emergency phase, the emphasis is on preparedness. The insurance principle becomes very useful here and acts as a guiding light. If there is a high probability of an event occurring, preparation becomes imperative. In the same vein, if the probability of a disaster happening is remote but the effects devastating if it does, the wise thing to do is to prepare. Preparation involves putting in place emergency structure, guidelines and supports. The pre-emergency phase calls for pro-activeness which is embodied in the anticipation of events and putting measures in place to counter them if they occur.

The emergency phase calls for response activation mechanism. It is assumed that the emergency or disaster has occurred and calls for the mobilization of contingency plans to respond to it. Response is multifaceted and involves all stakeholders working together as one. Timely response is essential and necessary to reduce the extent of damage and number of casualties. The post-emergency phase is the phase of rebuilding, both psychologically and in terms of infrastructure. Disaster survivors often require psychological counseling to enable them to cope. They also require material support or assistance to enable them rebuild. This phase often calls for support from relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies. However, a post-emergency phase that is not well planned only serves to add to the trauma suffered by the survivors.

**Problems of Emergency Management in Nigeria**

Disasters, both natural and manmade are bound to happen. As humans try to deal with such disasters, there is need to establish response systems and to ensure that they function efficiently so as not to compound the disaster related problems. Nigeria has witnessed a lot of disasters, most especially terrorist attacks. These disasters created emergency situations and exposed lapses in the manner and ways in which they were handled. And of course, efficient handling of these emergencies can reduce casualty figures and also ensure a higher survival rate.

Inter-organizational coordination and collaboration is a major challenge that emergency managers encounter in Nigeria. In the midst of an emergency, it becomes obvious that quite a number of agencies that have the mandate to respond to disasters do not know their specific roles and most times, are engaged in duplication of efforts. These agencies tend to work individually when there is an emergency thus reducing response impact. There is a tendency by responding agencies to try to guard what they regard as their turf, thereby, efforts by other stakeholders during an emergency are regarded as intrusions rather than collaboration. The absence of cooperation among responding agencies is as a result of failure to put in place a system so that in the event of an emergency, stakeholders know the proper roles that each and every one of them should play. There should be unity of command in the sense that stakeholders should work towards a common purpose. The overall responsibility of managing an emergency situation should be entrusted to one agency like NEMA, and this pre-supposes that all other stakeholders should take their operational orders and activities from it. This will eliminate duplication and ensure that all response efforts are channeled in the right direction.

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Another major challenge facing emergency management in Nigeria is the misrepresentation of casualty figures. Contradictory figures tend to emerge from Nigeria's emergencies. Most times, casualty figures are manipulated by the media to make a disaster appear less disastrous. Other times, they may be inflated as cover stories to increase readership. A contributory factor to this is the fact that in emergency situations, agencies involved are charged with conflicting mandates and become very involved in their response effort to the detriment of keeping accurate casualty figures. There is really no agency in Nigeria that is charged with this mandate of taking accurate casualty scores. The result is that the masses are fed with exaggerated figures. A political dimension to this is that government officials consciously manipulate casualty figures for their gains and interests.

Patient tracking is a major issue in emergency management in Nigeria. Agencies and stakeholders assisting in evacuation most times fail to take records of which hospital patients are taken to. The fact that these patients' whereabouts are not officially recorded by agencies involved in rescue places an extra burden on their families to locate them. There have been situations where patients remain unconscious for days and sometimes even lose their memories, making it very hard or impossible to reconnect with their families.

The dearth of ambulatory services and rescue equipment hampers emergency response and relieve. Effective rescue operations during emergencies require air, land and sea ambulatory services and fire-fighting equipment. Urban and rural counties can supplement the effort of the national emergency agency with their equipment but where these are lacking, rescue operations are hampered. All of this should form part of the response strategy and as is well known, prompt response is of the essence in order to reduce casualties.

Recovery is another important aspect of emergency management and involves the restoration is of an area to its pre-disaster status as well as helping victims of disasters cope with the emotional and psychological trauma. Disaster relieve becomes part of this strategy and calls for agencies to provide palliatives such as food, water, shelter, and clothing to victims of disaster. The work of recovery becomes difficult when an accurate figure of those affected is poorly kept. This has been a major problem for emergency management in Nigeria. In 2012, many parts of Nigeria's middle belt experienced extensive flooding that destroyed homes and farmlands. The recovery effort was hampered by poorly obtained data on the flood victims. Moreover, there were shortages of and outright theft and diversion of relieve materials.

Evacuation and the provision of temporary shelter is part of recovery. In the wake of hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans, Louisiana, in 2005, survivors were sheltered in the Metrodome, a giant football stadium. Survivors often need much more than shelter. They need post-traumatic counseling, food, medicine and clothing. Children in particular need special attention. The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has rendered a number of children orphans. At the last count, these children number around 1 million in different camps and settlements around the country (Adejokun 2015, Ebegbulem 2015). Resettling these children has been difficult, making their stay in the camps an extended one. NEMA has had to improvise educational training for these children until a more permanent solution can be found. The poor enforcement of environmental policies particularly in the rural areas also contributes to the problems of emergency management in Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

Emergency and disasters are unexpected occurrences that can tremendously affect the lives of people. The twentieth century alone has experienced all manners disasters ranging from earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding, to hurricanes. Many lives have been lost; properties worth millions have been destroyed. Government's role to protect, mitigate and offer succor tends to increase with the capacity of each disaster. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been to coordinate resources towards disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response in the country. However, problems remain as other response agencies and stake holders in Nigeria seem not to know their specific roles in disaster management. The result has been that agencies engage in duplication of efforts in disaster situations. Since stakeholders and agencies are not coordinated, they hardly collaborate but work individually during emergency situations, thereby reducing response impact.

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There is also the conscious manipulation of casualty figures by government officials for political gains and interest; with the attendant result that those manipulated figures misguide policy implementation and development. There is also no proper survivors' tracking system during Search and Rescue (SAR) operations in Nigeria and this usually lead to patient displacement. Compounding the difficulties of emergency response and management is the fact that Nigeria does not have adequate air and sea ambulances and facilities to manage emergencies. On the positive side however, the government has been taking the responsibility of educating its citizens on disaster risk reduction. The awareness and public education embarked upon during the Ebola crises help to nib in the bud what would otherwise have become a health catastrophe. However, government needs to do more in terms of providing adequate psycho social support to disaster victims. There is also need for proper monitoring of the distribution of relief materials to victims to prevent the rampant theft and outright diversion of these items to unauthorized use.

**Recommendations**

In order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency management in Nigeria, the following recommendations are presented:

- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and other response agencies should coordinate resources properly towards efficient and effective disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response in the country.
- The various response agencies and stakeholders in Nigeria should be encouraged to know their specific roles in emergency response.
- The response agencies should be discouraged from duplication of efforts when disaster strikes.
- Stakeholders and response agencies should collaborate and work together during emergency situations to increase response impact.
- Manipulation of casualty figures for whatever reasons is counterproductive in emergency management and should be discouraged.
- Government and response agencies should put in place proper patient tracking system during Search and Response (SAR) in Nigeria.
- Nigerian government should help provide adequate road, air and sea ambulances and facilities to manage emergencies.
- Government should actively educate its citizens on disaster risk reduction.
- Adequate psycho-social support and post-traumatic counseling should always be made available to disaster victims as part of the mitigation process.
- There should be a tested system for effective distribution of relief materials to ensure that disaster victims are the target beneficiaries.
- In the case of an emergency, NEMA should ensure that the National Disaster Response Plan is followed to the letter to avoid duplication of efforts.

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