# Emergency Management: A Challenge to Public Administration in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*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 quick response of United States of America to the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre is an example of how a responsible and responsive government should go in the protection of her citizens. Nigeria falls short in this regard. Even, in the face of intervention, there are always procedural flaws, shortage of human and material resources as well as administrative bottlenecks that sometimes paradoxically expand the problem they are attempting to solve. This review provided a blueprint in managing emergencies and the essential duty of government in providing security for life and property and the general welfare of its citizen.*
*Keywords: Calamity, prevention management, responsible administration*

## INTRODUCTION

The socio-economic horizon of the society is expanding daily, population and its social fabrics are on the increase. The business of harmonizing the attendant complexities is equally heavy and tasking. The burden of the State as represented in the above is resting on the government, which is the whole machinery by which a State is governed. In the light of these, the role of government has moved from the primary and traditional issues of mere maintenance of law an order, to intervention and co-ordination of the multi-various socio-economic complexities. Agagu (1997) corroborates this assertion when he insisted that government has not only moved away from traditional role of law and order maintenance to solid economic development of the people but also support to provide security, welfare services and ensure that the citizen are well taken care of.

In another dimension, socialization, civilization and technological advancement are taking their toll on men over exploitation of the nature and environment to meet the rising demands for economic and social survival. The nature is fully stressed, the environment has no 'breathing' gap; hence in most cases, basic exigencies or eventualities are not put into consideration. For example, the repercussion of building a multipurpose structure under a heavy power line (high tension power cable) or swampy environment. The likelihood of costly hazards is not always considered, but when it happens; the government is expected to rise up to the challenges, to provide help or assistance to cushion the effects, even when such hazards are caused by poverty induced and basic neglects. The socio-economic danger that suddenly befalls the society through these hazards erupts into what people normally refer to as emergency management. The fact is that if government roles are

expending then it follows that the roles of the public administration, administrators or civil servants, a corollary of government must automatically be on the increased. According to Nnoli as cited in Omotoso (2001), public administration is the machinery as well as the integral process, through which the government performs its functions and, it is a system that causes the intentions and programme of government to be realized in real life. On this note, public administrators are the spectrum via which policy decisions including that of emergency management are translated into concrete actions. It therefore, means that, if public administrators fail, it may mean a failure of government. This study seeks to make a critical analysis if emergency management procedures in Nigerian public administration. Essentially, the underlying motive is to bring into focus the appraisal of government handling of natural and human hazards that have become part and parcel of our national life.

The theoretical basis of this study is located in the Benthamin and Lockean theories of utilitarianism and social contract theories respectively. According to Bentham (1952), nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters (pain and pleasure). To this end, human happiness can only be achieved when pleasure is at the maximum while pain is at the minimum. Government in this wise is seen to be in existence only and mainly to ensure the happiness of the society and that such happiness can be maximized. If government policies bring about the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people and to ensure the surplus of pleasures over pains. On this note, a government or public administration is considered a failure when people suffer more pains than pleasure.

Efficient emergency management by government considered in this study as balance of pleasure over pains. The social contract theories of John Locks, Thomas Hobbes and Jean Jacques Rousseau as cited in Appadorai (1974), has a main theme that government is a sort of agreement between the people and those that are governing them and the existence of government, its legality and legitimacy hinges on government continuous and judicious allocation of State resources, which is a commonwealth (Omotoso, 2000). It could be deduced from the above clarifications that responses to emergencies by the State as represented by government or public administration is a social responsibility. Along this line undermines the essence of government altogether.

## The Role of Government in Emergency Management

From the analysis of the relevance of government to the society, the question, at this stage is not whether government will be required to respond to emergencies but rather when and how urgent? Clary (1985) provides some basic policy questions that government anywhere needs to answer in its emergency management outlooks. The questions are:

(i)      What is the proper role of the federal government in disaster management vis-à-vis States and location?

(ii)     How much emphasis should be given to the control and prevention of hazard versus responding to them after they have occurred?

(iii)    How much of the costs of a disaster should be borne by government and by the society?

(iv)    How best can government provide aid and assistance?

(v)     How can inter-agency and inter-governmental co-operation be facilitated?

(vi)     What types of scientific research should be encouraged to better control and respond to natural hazards?

(vii)    What are the methods to educate the general public to the risks from hazards?

Clary (1985) identifies three stages of action that a responsive government can take towards emergencies management. These include:

(i)      Prevention of the events

(ii)     Preventing consequence, and

(iii)    Mitigating consequence after they have occurred.

Kasperson and Pijawka (1985) present a flow chart of hazard management into major managerial activities and bureaucology strategies as: hazard assessment, control analysis, control strategy and implementation and evolution. The flow chart depicts the hierarchical, formal and procedural workings of bureaucracy in public administration; and expected to be followed in government management of public policy. Drucker (1982), however, did not see the efficiency in the techniques. He claims that technocracy is not enough, that government managers must be more than a technocrat, and cannot be content with mastery of skill and tools alone but must be a 'craftsman'; making his institution perform the mission and purpose for the sake of which it exists. This responsibility no doubt crates a major new challenge and raises the more difficult problems both on management theory and practice, but it has become a fact.

Perry and Nigg (1985) have placed on government, the responsibility of giving its citizens, risk education programmes, to make the public aware of any danger, and to inform them about possible means of achieving protection. According to them, during times of crisis, making emergency services personnel visible to the community, possibly wearing a distinctive garb, may enhance public awareness of emergency management or use clearly marked vehicle. In the same vain communication system are to be made part of the planning process, they further reiterate that emergency plans must be based upon accurate knowledge of the hazard and human response. Also, there is the tendency for the officials to think only of response and fail to consider the other essential components of an adequate emergency management programmes as identified by McLoughlin (1985) to include:

(i)      Mitigation which are the activities that reduces the degree of long term risk to human life and property for natural and man made hazards.

(ii)     Preparedness which are activities that develop operation capacities for responding to an emergency

(iii)    Response: Activities taken immediately before, during or directly after emergency that rescues situations. E.g. evacuation and shelter.

(iv)     Recovery: Short or long term activities that restore vital life-support systems to minimum operating standards.

In all, the emergency manager should be at the center of government efforts for all of these components, which needs to be coordinated with other serious issues for the time and attention of responsible officials; there is the need for correct policy decisions and support the emergency programme manager in the implementation of policy initiatives. Emergency

is the arising, sudden or unexpected occurrence (of a state of thing) or an event. For example, the emergency of an unexpected case. A juncture that arises or 'turns up' especially a state of things unexpected arising and urgently demanding immediate action; a situation where relief is sough (Oxford English Dictionary). Emergencies are new national priorities that will undoubtedly but unexpectedly sometimes arise. Create additional management problems of internal and external integration. They add to the challenge, the task of maintaining workable balance among all the diverse forces, calls for a high order of ingenuity; and in contributing to solution; Government as a manager of State resources is dealing with these social problems at the level of concrete action (Newman and Waren, 1997).

*Hazard:* Kasperson and Pijawka (1985) broadly define hazards as threat to human and what they value in life, well-being, material goods and environment; they differentiate hazard from risk, which is seen as the probability that a particular technology or activity will lead to specified consequence.

*Hazard Management:* As argued at the introductory aspect of he study; our achievements are fast overtaking the finite capacity of our natural environment, as is painfully evident in the energy (electricity), oil crisis and in air and water pollutions. Hazard or emergency management is seen as the purposeful activity by which society informs itself about hazards, decides what to do about them, and implements measures to control or to mitigate their consequences (Kasperson and Pijawka, 1985). Emergency management is seen here as a form of activity which has two essential functions intelligence-which provide the information needed to determine whether a problem exists; to define choice and (retrospectively) to determine whether success has been achieved. Secondly the control function consisting the design and implementation of measures aimed at preventing, reducing, or redistributing the hazard and/or mitigate its consequences.

## Hazards and Emergencies as a Universal Phenomenon

From time immemorial, disasters, from natural occurrence and later as prices of technology, are largely accepted as a norm; an inherent parts of human existence, the management of which was not seen as part of proper role for government (Clary, 1985). In United States of America, until 1930's the response of congress was to pass bills to aid victims of a specified disaster and until 1950, the Red Cross which is a voluntary organization, remained the primary disaster relief agency. The human confrontation with nature and technology had over the years, contributed to a colossal loss of lives and properties that go beyond man's accurate statistic and records. According to Perry and Nigg (1985) in the past decades, increasing number of Americans have become exposed to natural and man-made hazards. Many were exposed to health and safety risks. Kasperson and Pijawka (1985) gave staggering statistics of loss of lives to natural disaster, floods and drought where over a million people died in India between 1899, 1901 and 1931; the Hwang-Ho flood in China. The bubonic plague in Europe in 1348-166 where estimated 25 million people were killed; influenza in India in 1917-1919 that claimed 13 million victims and millions in Africa and Europe. They pointed out that, in developing countries natural hazards such as floods, droughts, earthquake and tropical cyclones remain major problems.

Technology is also listed among the major sources of hazards in modern society, the exposure of million factory workers to pollution is expected to be responsible for deaths of about 67,000 workers annually especially with the present chemical revolutions (Kasperson and Pijawka, 1985). The Tsunami in Asia and part of Africa has claimed lots of lives and property. The Tsunami that started in December 2004 to January 2005 exposed about 1.8m people to the need of food aid, and rendered an estimated 5 million people homeless. (Nigerian Tribune, January 4,2005). In August 2007, devastating earthquake hit the coast of Peru, killed several people and injured others. In the same month, flood claimed several lives in North Korea (The Punch, August 2007). According to McLoughlon (1985), in the transportation system each year, 39 states are at risk from earthquake and 22 metropolitan areas from hurricanes. Practically, hazards have universally become a series of events that begin with human needs, which may sometimes end in adverse consequences. It will only require a managerial intervention to block or control; the emergency of such hazards.

**Emergency Management in Nigeria**
By Decree 12 of 1999, the Federal Government established the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) as the successor to the National Emergency Relief (NERA), which was established by Decree 48 of 1976 and broadened the mandate of NEMA beyond mere provision of relief which was the statutory function of National Emergency Relief. NEMA, by its mandate is vested with the authority to manage all disasters in Nigeria, though with an emphasis that one does not need to wait until there is a disaster at hand before taking action. According to NEMA (2003), the Decree 12 of 1999 empowers the creation of State Emergency Agencies to perform similar functions at the State levels and also monitors the Local Government.

In section 16 of the Federal Republic of Nigerian Official Gazette (1999), the functions and powers of the agency include among others, the information of all policies on all activities relating to disaster management in Nigeria and coordinate the plans and programme for efficient and effective response to disaster at national level. NEMA functions on the principle via three stages of the pre-emergency phase, the emergency phase, and the post-emergency phase (NEMA, 2003). Nigeria like any other nations in the world is having her own share of disasters. Prominent among them are fire disasters, religious and ethnic crisis, bomb blast, oil spillage, rain storms, floods, automobile and air accidents. While some to this natural, environment, technology and man-made disasters have resulted in human and materials wastes. A critical assessment of government role in terms of management of the emergencies shows inadequacy in governments responses. From this point, peculiar disasters in Nigeria need to be raised, exposing the response of government to such emergencies.

*Air disasters (plane crashes):* Nigeria recorded her first air crash on April 10, 1948 in Kano, and since then Nigeria has had the misfortune of 102 air crashes losing 1,026 lives in the process including the 98 that died in October 2006, two kilometers from Abuja airport, where notable personalities like, the sultan of Sokoto-Alhaji, Maccido his six children, two serving senators and one serving deputing Governor perished (The Nation

Newspaper, November 4, 2006). The Aviation Safety Network (ASN) has ranked 4 of these disasters among the 100 world's worst air mishaps (The Nation Newspaper, November 4, 2006). While details of these disasters are all over the news in Nigeria media (Nigerian Tribune, Monday 23, April 2007; The Punch July 17, 2005). The common phenomenon with them is the poor response of those concern to those emergencies. For example, the ADC plane-Boeing 727- on Thursday November 7, 1996 busted into flames in the air, and plunges into Lagos Lagoon, killing 143 passengers on board; it could only be discovered 72 hours after the incident had claimed the lives of prominent Nigerians including Prof. Claude Ake (The Nation Newspaper, November 4, 2006). The December 10, 2005, Sosoliso aircraft crash that claimed 109 lives, happened at the heart of Port Harcourt Air port, and yet rescue operations was a mess. Also, the October 22, 205 Bellview air crash at Lisa village in Ogun State killed 117 while Nigerians were declared missing and when after several hours found, most of the victims were trapped in the fuselage of ill-fated aircraft buried 50 feet deep in the ground, awaiting evacuation. Investigations into some of the air disasters have exposed official corruption and compromises of standard, where planes that were not air worthy were allowed to fly on Nigeria space. Fire incidents is common in Nigeria.

*Fire Disaster:* Most public buildings like Cocoa house, Nitel Building, and several markets have been gutted by fire. The Saturday Punch (January 6, 2007) had reported that an early morning fire razed down 30 shops and a storey building at the popular Agbeni market in Ibadan, with loss of goods estimated at millions of Naira. In Nigeria, it has become apparent that every fire incident is always blamed on a story of delay arrival of fire fighters and equipment, usually attributed to lack of water and other logistics like communication problems from the appropriate government agencies. For example, in Ekiti State of Nigeria, the Government did not bother to maintain its fire service station until there was a fire incidence in 2003, which warranted the State Governor to drive a water tanker personally from the State Water Corporation to the scene, and buckets were used to get water from the tanker to extinguish the fire. This was as a result of the poor state of the State's fire service equipment.

*Bomb Disaster:* Nigeria experienced a sudden bomb blast within one of its military cantonment in Lagos on January 27th, 2001. The Government has to call foreign experts to detonate bombs after its explosion have killed many and those trying to escape drowned in a canal and several others rendered homeless.

*Building Disaster:* Most cities in Nigeria, like Lagos, Ibadan and Port Harcourt have experienced total and partial collapse of high rising buildings. No fewer than 15 buildings and structures collapsed in Lagos State alone in the last five years; a total of 17 persons were reported dead, while several others were injured during such incidents between 2000 and 2006 alone (The Punch, Thursday, March 2006). The NIDB 18 storey building suffered a five incident and later a partial collapse in March, 2006; Lagos government response was only on deployment of rescue team, cordoning of collapsed building and insisting that owners should bear the cost of demolition. With proper planning and attention, most of the disaster situations would have been averted.

**Problems and Prospects of Emergency Management in Nigeria**
While one could appreciate the level of challenges faced by government in attending to issues raised above, amidst other responsibilities; NEMA's response to them falls short of the expectation required in the management of emergencies. The agency is mainly concerned with the administration and distribution of relief materials to victims after the incidents. However, this agency has neglected this responsibility of prevention and reduction of accidents and disasters. The reason for this neglect according to them anchors on certain problems such as: mobility, accommodation, finance and equipment; all of which would have aided their quick response and capabilities in emergency situation (NEMA, 2003). Essentially, government failure in emergencies in Nigeria is basically due to poor planning, management and response. Drucker (1982) declares in the thesis on management by objective (MBO) that the management boom is over, the time for management performance has come; this is valid for all time, since economic and social development means above all, management. Despite the above blocks, Nigeria's emergency management could be improved. The United States Federal Emergency Management has developed a recommended set of capability assessment and standards "comprising about 15 different functions. These are:
(1)      Emergency management organization
(2)      Operations planning
(3)      Resource management
(4)      Direction and control;
(5)      Emergency communication
(6)      Alerting and warning
(7)      Emergency public information
(8)      Continuity of government
(9)      Shelter protection
(10)     Evaluation
(11)     Protection measures
(12)     Emergency support services
(13)     Emergency reporting
(14)     Training and education
(15)     Exercise and drills.

If these capabilities are developed and maintained, effective response and or prevention of hazards will be put in place (McLoughlin, 1985). Emergency and hazard remains the most of human experience, where the event of nature and technology has caused the greatest concern; it does not respect classes in the international system, it does not spare the developed nations nor punish the developing ones as a result of their under development. Its management has and is defying most researchers, even as this new areas of public administration are been explored. Most of the problems discovered bother on why the 'service institutions' do not perform. Drucker (1982) blames the managers who he accuses of not being 'business like' and that objective and results are intangible. The situation in Nigeria is more pathetic as efficiency becomes so strange as fair is foul, and foul is fair.

Responsibility is a harsh taskmaster, to demand it of others without demanding it of one is futile and irresponsible; this is the problem with bureaucracy. Kasperson and Pijawka (1985) have blamed the problem on implication and evaluation as a problem-prone stage of hazard management. In this area, administrative resources are often inadequate, those charged with control actions are often reluctant to do so and where managers lack monitoring and surveillance resources in their intelligence function, implementation becomes dependent upon data furnished by hazard makers.

In the Nigeria situation, tasks are allocated even without adequate material resources to carry out actions. Actions are mainly taken after calamities awakes the policy makers from 'social slumber'. This is not to suggest that the future is very bleak as emergency management and hazard control is concerned, but it requires emergency planning and capability maintenance, here lies the 'Kernel' of the analysis. In the first instance, the pay off from emergency operations is that lives are saved and property preserved. The missions must be 'doing the right thing at the right time' while making maximum and effective use of existing resources and capabilities. McLaughlin (1985) explained that well-prepared plans specify what will be done, where, when and by whom, to meet the specific demand of emergency conditions. "The paper plans' of the emergency program manager is not an end in itself, since it cannot guarantee that actual operations will be effective but the plans must be adequately implemented. In the same vain, emergency plans are valuable for training and for familiarizing new executives with their emergency duties. Also the elected or appointed government official must be kept aware of their responsibilities and authorities. In this wise, police, fire fighters and other personnel need continuous training.

## CONCLUSION

This review has traced the burdens of hazard management as occasioned by natural processes and technological development and applications. The universality of the burden of disaster specified that, man has come to live with the reality of mitigating preparedness, response and recovery; when it comes. The failure of policy makers as represented by their bureaucracy to properly checkmate these natural and man made attacks, are largely blamed on the service institutions which are not only 'sick' in their internal operation but are equally made 'sick' by the external inadequacies as represented again by the policy makers. A 'road map' is however visible if emergency planning and capability maintenances culture are largely imbibed.

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