Global Scientific JOURNALS

Implementing policies and plans for action: The imperative of coordination in disaster management

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ABSTRACT

Disaster management as a public service derives its processes and procedures from the legal and institutional framework already developed for the sector either locally or internationally. These frameworks are reenforced by the policies and plans developed by the sector in every country where they operate. To ensure that these structures are given life, a special ingredient is added to make it work and that is coordination, which is the variable that galvanises the industry to optimal performance. This paper therefore investigated the importance of coordination in the implementation of emergency management policies and plans. In order to achieve this objective, a qualitative survey design was adopted for the study using Abuja as the study area. The population was all the staff of the Ministries, departments and agencies, and other stakeholders involved in disaster management in Nigeria. The sample for this study is 100 staff of the organisations chosen using purposive sampling technique. Five research questions were adopted for the study and questionnaires, interviews and focal group discussions were used as instruments for the study. The study concluded that the coordination and implementation of plans and policies for disaster management in a country relies mostly on the leadership of the sector, the existing institutional and legal framework and governments buy in into the activities of the relevant institutions. Based on this the paper made recommendations on how to move the industry forward in the country.

Keywords: Policy, Plans, Disaster management, coordination, Nigeria, Emergency management,

INTRODUCTION

Managing public services require a lot of cooperation among public institutions and organisations. This aspect of public administration has not been given a lot of attention in our daily administration. Disaster management in many countries is known as a multi-

disciplinary and multi sectoral endeavour which requires a lot of laws, plans and policies and even where these laws exists, a well-articulated legal and institutional framework to support its operations also needs to be available for implementation. These variables or its absence becomes noticeable when a major disaster event occurs. The presence of these disaster events makes it apparent for stakeholders and the public to see the essence of well-articulated and effectively coordinated plans and policies.

Nigeria has over the years experienced catastrophic disaster events amongst which are the Spanish influenza, Nigeria civil war, 2012 flood disaster, various air craft crashes, North East Insurgency, Ebola epidemic and presently the COVID 19 pandemic. These incidents have made bare the challenges of coordination in Nigeria's emergency management sector. For every incident, the government has always set up different committees to manage such incidents and also come up with pronouncements and executive orders to assist the country weather the storm of such incidents. Does this mean that the country does not have policies and plans to manage these incidents?

BACKGROUND

Disaster management has been in existence since the pre-colonial era in Nigeria. During those times emergency management was organised at either the village, community, clan or tribal levels. When a major incident occurs that affects a chiefdom or kingdom or emirate, the response or rehabilitation would be handled at that level. However, as time progressed, and the colonial government took over and a formal bureaucracy was established by the British led colonial government, the issues relating to welfare of citizens were then rested in the offices of the district officers and Governor General.

At the time when government had settled properly, that function was then handed over to the fire brigade in 1906. Their key responsibility was response to emergency incidents, and until the setting up of the regional governments when the responsibility was shifted to the Regional government which was now responsible for managing emergency services with the fire service as it was later know being the focal organisation for search and rescue and fire fighting. After the creation of states, the Governors continued to manage the function at the state levels while the federal government managed the function from the presidency. In 1976, the federal government set up a National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA) through Decree 48 of 1976 to enable it to manage the national drought emergency that the country faced at that time. (NEMA 2010)

As a fall out of that project, a national discourse was set up to review the activities of that intervention and part of the recommendations of that summit was the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) through Act 12 as amended by Act 50 of

1999. This marked the effective take-off of emergency management in Nigeria, a shift from the era of relief management. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was set up with the mandate of coordinating emergency management in all its ramifications.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From its inception as NERA to its evolution to NEMA, the National Emergency Management Agency has been saddled with the responsibility of coordinating emergency management in Nigeria, and as such also has the responsibility of developing plans, policies and procedures for the nation's emergency management sector. Part of its responsibilities also include the preparation of the national budget for disaster management in Nigeria. These roles and responsibilities are all clearly outlined in its establishment act of 1999.

However, there seem to have continued to be some level of ambiguity as to the willingness of the government to allow this Agency that has so been mandated with these responsibilities to solely carry out its functions with distinct clarity. In the last 20 years of the Agency's existence, government has continued to prefer adhoc committees in the carrying out of these responsibilities, than allowing the organisation do its job. Due to challenges of paucity of professional manpower in the sector and lack of clear policy directions, there has continued to be a blurry line at where these responsibilities start and where it ends. The continued lack of clarity as to what roles the Agency plays has continued to raise issues in the sector. It is also a big challenge that there has not been a conscious effort to legislate on the sector apart from the establishment acts of the various organisations acting as stakeholders in the sector, which at best also has a lot of overlap of functions and responsibilities. The recent establishment of a supervising ministry for the Agency has further increased the challenges in the sector, as the issues of coordination can further be seen as widening. Have these developments widened the challenges of this sector, or has the recent developments tried to streamline the sector thereby creating clear coordinating lines? What has been the challenges responsible for the lack of effective coordination and has coordination been the reason for challenges of non-activation of all the disaster management plans in Nigeria or its absence.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper has the objective of investigating the challenges of coordination, and implementation of disaster management plans and policies in Nigeria. Specifically, it will

1. Ascertain the challenges of emergency management coordination in Nigeria

2. Investigate the availability of disaster plans and policies in Nigeria,

3. Evaluate whether the processes of plan development and approval has been completed for each of the existing plans.

4. Determine whether the plans are being utilised or implemented in the country

5. Make recommendations on how the challenges can be resolved

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will be guided by the following research questions;

1. What are the challenges encountered in the coordination of emergency management in Nigeria?

2. What disaster management plans and policies have been developed in Nigeria?

3. What is the process required for a disaster management plan to be approved and utilised in Nigeria?

4. Which disaster management plans have been approved and activated in Nigeria.

5. What are the likely solutions to all the challenges identified in the study

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this paper is based on the five stage Public policy model developed by Howlett and Hamesh (2003). This model has variously been referred to as "Linear model" "sequential model" "heuristic stages model" or "public policy cycle" in Anderson (2011), Steve & Larimer (2009), and Jones (1997). This model states that the public policy process is in many stages. Various writers have described this model as linear following a particular process, but, recent events have shown that public policy development may not necessarily follow one linear path but can be occurring simultaneously, or in inverse order (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Rose, 1976; Howlett and Ramesh, 1995; Jann and Wegrich, 2007; Dye, 2008 ; Mandal and Rawat, 1997; Sapru, 2010).

. Howlett and Ramesh's model "identifies five stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption (or decision making), implementation and evaluation." (Brewer and DeLeon, 1983; DeLeon, 1999; Sabatier, 1999: 6; 2007: 6). The most updated reformulation and development on the stages model is offered by Eger III and Marlowe (2006). Disaster management plans and policies are public documents that in most cases have national appeal and enjoy national implementation and evaluation and as such require proper processing and implementation. This paper therefore, sees this conceptual framework as espoused in the public policy model developed by Howlett and Hamesh (2003) as an appropriate approach to this study.

Disaster management Coordination

The execution of every aspect of disaster management has solely relied on policies and plans as it operates as its wheel of success. Due to the complicated and sensitive nature of emergency incidents, well laid out processes and procedures have emerged overtime in its management and operations. These have been captured in standards of operations, policies and plans. However, the implementation of the proper utilisation of these plans over the years have always been the challenge. One of the major causes of this imbroglio has been the issue of coordination. Most of the responses to natural or human induced disasters where the sheer enormity of the incident has overwhelmed the existing capacity has also been attributed to the challenges of coordination.

According to Wells (2006) in the review of Hurricane Katrina, it was listed that the following issues were part of the challenges that surfaced as a result of the incident; inadequate existing system, limited logistics capacity, inadequate staff capacity, poor training, lack or inadequate capacity for financial management. These variables reflect a weakness in the coordination of the emergency management system in the country. This corroborates the position of Kettl (2003) that posits that having an amorphous coordinating Agency with many organizations under it makes coordination difficult. (Scotter et.al 2013, Franke, Charoy & Ulmer 2010) In other studies, the coordination of preparatory stages of disaster management which includes the design and implementation of plans is very imperative.

Coordination and implementation of plans and policies

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is an Agency of government set up by an act of parliament viz Act 12, as amended by Act 50 of 1999 with the mandates which includes, the coordination of all emergency management activities in Nigeria including development of plans and policies, management of relief interventions, relating with international organisations engaged in disaster management and humanitarian action in the country.

Disasters are complex problems demanding a holistic response from different disciplinary and institutional groups, but they rarely get this, the disaster community is often characterized by -

1. Fragmentation along disciplinary and institutional boundaries
2. A lack of understanding among different disciplines and often a lack of mutual respect

3. A lack of avenues for dialogue among the different actors

4. A culture of competitiveness and professional jealousy (fueled by competition for funds)

5. Insufficient humility in the face of the disaster problem – a greater readiness to talk than to listen

Coordination in disaster management can be regarded as intelligent sharing of information and the frank, constructive discussion of issues and possible course of actions among independent organizations with a common purpose. Emergency managers synchronize the activities of all relevant stakeholders to achieve a common purpose. Coordination is based on mutual respect for competencies and agreed responsibilities of each party and willingness to cooperate in addressing and solving problems in pursuit of a common aim, it also involves the determination of who will take on a task when two or more organizations are ready and able to do it.

Tasks in Emergency Management can be voluntary or mandated: This determines/affects success of co-ordination efforts. It involves collaboration through different phases of the response including:

1. Planning
2. Operation
3. Data Collection
4. Information Management
5. Resource Mobilization

A focused coordination mechanism is a critical first step towards effective, equitable and sustainable response to achieve early and long-term recovery. Coordination is therefore an approach to develop uniform guidelines, strategies and procedures for coordinating disaster / emergency management structures, activities and operations. (Bentley and Waugh 2005, Cigler 2006,) Coordination is intelligent sharing of information, clarification of purpose agreed and understood by all involved in order to prioritize and focus the response

The coordination of humanitarian activities seeks to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership. And to ensure that this is achieved in Nigeria, the disaster management sector through the instrumentality of NEMA and its stakeholders have come up with a coordination structure in

Nigeria which outlines the mechanism for effective coordination.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION STRUCTURE IN NIGERIA
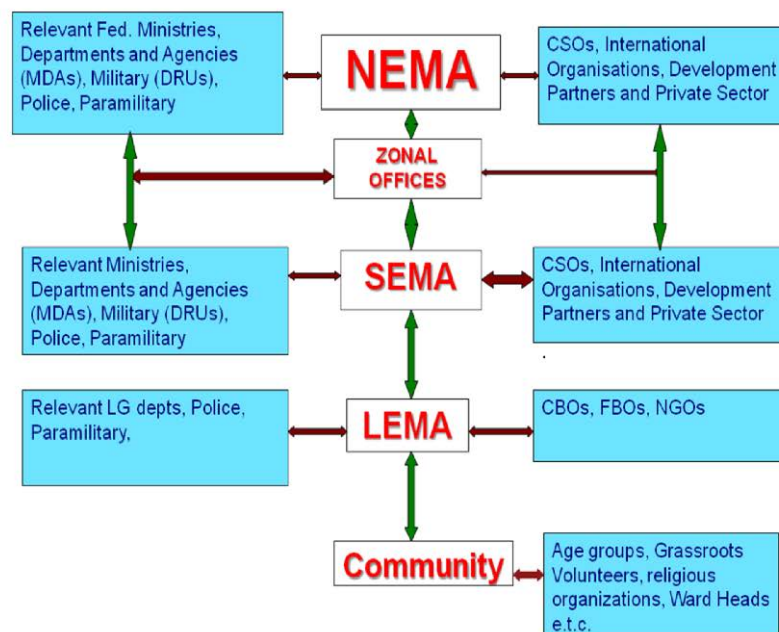
Source: NEMA National Disaster Management Framework

The structure dictates the institutional arrangement for disaster mitigation and management which includes the establishment of single entity at each level of government such as National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) responsible for coordination of such activities and maintaining communication and coordination. SEMA at State and LEMC at Local Level and Community based management structures

Following from this schematic, coordination seems to have different forms which include, Horizontal, vertical and operational coordination;

Vertical coordination: defines the progressive relationship between the federal, state, local /community jurisdictions. It describes the functional working relationships between NEMA coordinating the activities and operations of SEMA. While SEMA coordinates LEMA at the local government level and LEMA coordinates the activities and operation of the communities' structures, and report to SEMA.

Horizontal coordination: define equal functional relationship among disaster management stakeholders at the different levels of government. It describes the leadership role of NEMA,

SEMA, LEMA in mobilizing and collaborating with relevant MDAs, INGOs, NGOs and private sectors at the federal, state and local government levels.

Operational coordination: - involves the synchronization of procedures and processes for translating disaster management plans to field level operations and activities . It include coordination and deployment of resources to prepare for, respond to , and recover from disasters.

Coordination Tools

To be able to carry out appropriate coordination of disaster management, there are certain tools that are very important, and this includes;

National Incident Management System: The idea behind NIMS is the development of a nationwide template that enables all organisations to work together during a domestic incident. Until now there is no standard for domestic incident response that reached across every level of government and every response agency (FEMA 2005)

Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) and Risk Mapping/ Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA): These tools are designed for disaster risk assessment, disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness, prevention, and mitigation; and disaster recovery. They enable practitioners assess the level of threats and nature of the hazards found in a particular location or area.

Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) and Incident Command System (ICS): The ICS is a standardized on-scene incident management concept designed specifically to allow responders to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of any single incident or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries and is enhanced by the establishment and operations of an EOC.
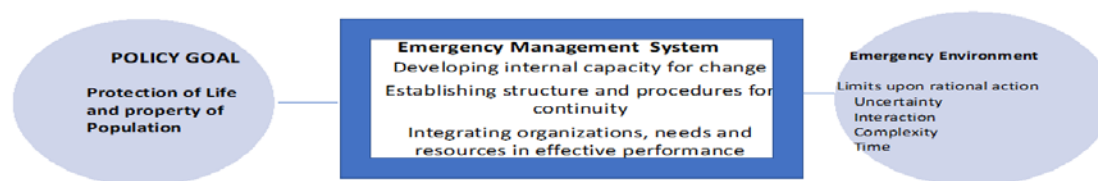
A clear conceptualisation of policy processes is a major way of coping with complexities involved in emergency management. Policy design and implementation in emergency management and humanitarian action must follow a professional design. According to Simon (1957) design must follow a conscious effort to create a system to facilitate the accomplishment of a social goal.

Challenges of coordination

There are several factors responsible for sub optimal coordination in disaster management in Nigeria and these include organizational Pride / ego, conflicting mandates, goals, priorities. Hidden Agenda, Mistrust or crisis of confidence , Loss of power/autonomy or identity, Political considerations or lack of political will, Inadequate information on coordination process, Lack of incentives for collaboration, Fear of failure, Lack of coordination skills, Lack of resources to commit to coordination, Donor pressure, Perception of image advantage "to being out in front" etc.

Disaster management Plans: The disaster management focal Agency in Nigeria (NEMA) as part of her responsibility as the national focal organization in collaboration with stakeholders has developed the following plans amongst others:

1. National Disaster Response Plan

2. National Disaster Management Framework

3. National Contingency Plan

4. Nigerian National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan (NIPPRP)

5. National Pandemic Plan

6. National Nuclear & Radiological Emergency Plan

7. Search and Rescue & Epidemic Evacuation Plan

8. Contingency Plan on Infrastructural Resuscitation etc.

Management policies are supposed to be in place in various organizations involved in its management in order to give its management some level of legality and established procedures that are recognized. Among these policies are;

1. Relief management Policy
2. Rules of engagement with international organisations
3. Code of conduct and ethics
4. Learning and development policy
5. Human Resources Management policy

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative survey design was adopted for this study. It was used to investigate the challenges of stakeholder coordination on policy and plan implementation in disaster management in Nigeria. The study area is Abuja, and the population was all the staff of the Ministries, departments and agencies, and other stakeholders involved in disaster management in Nigeria. The sample for this study is 100 staff of the organisations chosen using purposive sampling technique.

Table 1: List of organisations involved in the study

S/N	ORGANISATIONS	sample
	National Emergency Management Agency	10
	Nigeria Red Cross Society	10
	Ministry of Disaster Management, Humanitarian Action and Social Development	10
	Federal Road Safety Corps	10
	Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps	10
	Federal Fire Service	10
	Federal Capital Emergency management Agency	10
	Federal Ministry of Agriculture	10
	Nigeria Police	10
	Nigerian Army	10
	Federal Ministry of Health	10
	Federal Ministry of Water Resources	10
	National commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs	10
	NAPTIP	10

	Nigerian Immigration Service	10
		150

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demography: The respondents are distributed as follows at the end of the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. 100 questionnaires were distributed and 96 were returned, achieving 96% success.

Table 1 – Respondents' Demography

Age		Gender		Education		Emergency Management Specialisation	
18-30	28	Male	46	Graduate	74	Responder	78
31 - 60	68	Female	50	Post Graduate	22	Emergency Manager	18

Research Question 1

The respondents in their responses listed the following challenges in four categories

a. Government related issues
b. Capacity building related issues
c. Stakeholders related issues
d. International Organisations related issues

These categorisations, when expanded entailed that under the government related issues included inadequate legislation, poor legal and institutional framework, lack of properly defined funding pattern for emergencies, and poor leadership selection process for these professional organisations which has accounted for dismal performances in these flag ship agencies. They also explained that under the capacity building related issues, there are challenges like absence of unified curriculum for the training in the sector, poor harmonisation of lessons learned from foreign training leading to a clash in ideology within organisations. In the area of stakeholders related issues, they emphasized lack of clarity in mandates of various organisations, institutions' protection of their comparative competency advantages, and issues relating to poor collaboration between institutions. The issues of international organisations was reiterated in areas such as lack of rules of engagement for

international organisations, lack of harmony with existing national structures and overbearing influence on them especially in the face of poor resources management by the local institutions.

Research question 11

The respondents in general listed the following plans as already existing in the country.

s/n	Type of document	% of Respondents
1.	**PLANS** National Disaster Response Plan National Disaster Management Framework National Contingency Plan Nigerian National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan (NIPPRP) National Pandemic Plan National Nuclear & Radiological Emergency Plan Search and Rescue & Epidemic Evacuation Plan Contingency Plan on Infrastructural Resuscitation etc	
	POLICIES 1. Relief management Policy 2. Rules of engagement with international organisations 3. Code of conduct and ethics 4. Learning and development policy 5. Human Resources Management policy	

However, 27% of the respondents do not have any idea that the plans existed and even when they knew, couldn't state their names.

Research question 111

The responses from the focus group discussion listed processes required for the approval of plans and policies. The respondents listed the process for the approval of emergency management plans as follows;

Plan approval process

a. Stakeholders meetings and appointment of committee members on the policy issue.

b. Committee report and development of plan document

c. Report presentation

d. Validation of plan document

e. Presentation of plan for executive endorsement of stakeholder organisations

f. Forwarding of plan to federal executive council for approval

g. Approval by the executive council and sign off by the president or his nominee

h. Implementation of policy

i. Evaluation of policy

Policy approval process

a. Management meeting or retreat from which the policy need is identified

b. Formation of a committee for development of policy and development of terms of reference

c. Presentation of draft policy to management

d. Management approval of policy

e. Official presentation of policy

f. Implementation of policy

g. Evaluation of policy

Research question IV

The focus group discussion came up with the fact that the only emergency management plan that has received approval in the country at the national level is the National Disaster Response Plan that was approved by the federal executive council in 2004 and that the plan has never been activated or reviewed since it was approved.

Research question V

The respondents listed the solutions to these challenges to include but not limited to Identification of relevant stakeholders and responders and communication of clear intervention objectives, establishment of clear coordinating roles and responsibilities in a transparent and objective manner, conducting regular stakeholder meetings to share experiences and review strategies and building capacity of stakeholders through training workshops, conferences, seminars and exercises.

They also suggested that joint development of VCAs, Contingency plans, scenarios and simulations, vulnerability mappings, and generation of database on hazards, vulnerabilities, risk and coping capacities from the community level will enhance coordination. The respondents also opined that regular review of plans, programmes and strategies as the need arises, establishment of functional disaster management structures at the State and Local Government levels, proper funding and equipment for humanitarian actors and effective capacity building, synergy and effective Monitoring and Evaluation of Disaster Management activities are some of the strategies required for effective disaster management and humanitarian action coordination in the country.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The coordination and implementation of plans and policies for disaster management in a country relies a lot on existing institutional and legal framework and governments buy in into the activities of the relevant institutions. It is also relevant to state that the implementation of plans and policies also depends to a large extent the executive officers of the relevant organizations and their disposition towards the plans and policies in place.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The Agencies and their stakeholders should embark on the review of existing approved plans such as the NDRP.

2. The other plans and frameworks should be urgently reviewed and put forward for approval from the federal executive council.

3. The country as a matter of urgency should set in motion the development and approval of the National Incident Management system to assist the country in harmonising its disaster management systems.

4. Realigning the Nigerian humanitarian sector system to accommodate institutions which should have been included, such as the National commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs.

5. Improve the level of legislation in the sector by inviting the National Assembly to raise more bills which will assist in harmonising the country's disaster management sector.

6. There is need to motivate the workforce in the sector by improving their condition of service and ensuring a more favourable working environment and provision of tools

7. Developing a unified training policy for the industry and also having a well-developed curriculum for emergency managers and responders in the country.

8. Ensure the harmonisation of training ideas from America, United Kingdom and Asia to come out with a Nigerian concept of emergency management that will recognise the country's peculiarities and advance its own original policies and concept and eliminate the contradictions resulting from unharmonized ideas absorbed without synthesis.

9. There is also need for the increased number of Emergency Operation centres in the country to enhance operational efficiency of interventions.

10. The supervising ministry may need to facilitate the development of a harmonised human resources policy for agencies under her management.

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