

INSTITUTIONAL NEED AND RELEVANCE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY IN THE NIGERIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This paper espouses the institutional need and relevance of emergency management agency at local level. It acclaims the emergency management techniques as being capable of undertaking activities aimed to mitigate disaster effects on local communities. It discusses the guiding principles; organisation and structure of emergency management agency at local level. This paper argues that emergency management at local level will facilitate safety and protection of lives and properties which is a fundamental function of government at any level; as well as the reduction of human and economic losses derailed by disaster - thereby enhancing socio-economic progress.

KEYWORDS: Emergency Management, Hazards, Disaster, Local Government and Local Emergency Management Agency.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Human and economic losses from disasters remain a menace to the national economic life. The damage caused by disaster is unquantifiable; and varies with the geographical location, climate and the type of earth surface or degrees of vulnerability. This influences the mental, socio-economic, political and cultural state of people in the affected area, thus leading to economic imbalance and instability to the country at large. Yet, government only plans when there is disaster; refutes preparedness and preventive mechanisms.

These disasters derail socio socio-economic progress and put millions of people into dire poverty or make the poor even poorer. According to Ovosi (2013): “the world is witnessing a rapidly increasing impact of disasters caused by the combination of natural hazards and vulnerability, which constantly threatens people’s lives and livelihoods”. Therefore, disasters pose a global threat to the world. Aggravating this

global threat is dearth of knowledge on emergency management by the people, such that when disaster occurs, the affected people become inactive and helpless.

Nigeria has experienced varying degrees of both natural and man-made disasters - leading to a serious disruption of the functioning of society; causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources; and most recently the insurgency and act of terrorism in some parts of the Northern Nigeria. This paper argues that these problems are, to an extent, avoidable by institutionalizing the culture of disaster and emergency management in local government system owing to the fact that such problems usually emanate from a locality prior to its manifestation as a national disaster.

As a result of financial constraints, it can, however, be stated that local councils are not fundamental in the business of providing emergency services due to the absence of disaster or emergency agencies or units in the local government system, it is assumed to be the state and federal governments' responsibilities. Notwithstanding, local government should be a first point of contact for emergency needs and services by the people due to its localness and proximity.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

This paper is to basically analyse the need for disaster and emergency management agency at local level; induce the act of undertaking activities aimed to mitigate disaster effects on local communities; promote the spirit of preparedness, responsiveness and recovery in an emergency situation at grassroots; and highlight the socio-economic importance of this preventive and proactive measures in national development.

METHODOLOGY

Typology of this research work is basically descriptive. Its research method is qualitative. Data for the study came primarily from secondary sources such as articles, textbooks, lecture notes, journals, newspapers and academic research projects. The contents of numerous data gathered are fittingly analysed.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND ITS PRINCIPLES

Emergency management is an important area of governance which aids in the protection of the citizens from consequences of any form of disasters, damages, threats and acts of terrorism. This is an act of

militating against possible threats as well as its study and prediction for preparedness purposes. This preventive measure, however, eulogises mitigation against risks; preparedness for any form of threats; quick responsive to any form of social problems; and methods of recovery after disasters.

Pragmatically, it involves the established plans, structures and arrangements to bring together the activities of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive and coordinated way to deal with emergency needs, including prevention, response and recovery (Hyatt, 2007:2).

Khan, Himayatullah & Abuturab (2011) noted that disaster is an emergency incident; unexpectedly calamitous which is devastating to life and property. On the other hand, Haddow and Bullock (2005) posited that risks also are most often man-made which seldom lead to crisis and disaster as the case may be. Ovosi (2013) identified two types of disaster - Natural and Man-made. Major natural disasters include Flood, Cyclones, Cold waves, Drought, Thunderstorm, Earthquake, Heat waves, Mud slides and Storms among others. On the other hand, man-made disasters include Fire outbreak, Road Accident, Riots, Food Poisoning, Epidemic, Industrial disaster, Deforestation, Environmental pollution, Building collapse, Plane crash, Chemical pollutions, act of terrorism and war etc. It therefore, becomes imperative for a preventive system to be designed at mitigating all forms of disasters - this constitutes the focal point of emergency management.

Blanchard (2007) convened a working group of emergency management practitioners and academicians to consider principles of emergency management. The group agreed on eight principles that will be used to guide the development of doctrine and activities of emergency management. The summary provided below lists these eight principles; and provides a brief description of each principle (See, Alexander, 2008): Emergency management must be:

- Comprehensive – emergency management consider and take into account all hazards, all phases, all stakeholders and all impacts relevant to disasters.
- Progressive – emergency management anticipate future disasters and take preventive and preparatory measures to build disaster-resistant and disaster-resilient communities.
- Risk-driven – emergency management use sound risk management principles (hazard identification, risk analysis, and impact analysis) in assigning priorities and resources.
- Integrated – emergency management ensure unity of effort among all levels of government and all elements of a community.

- Collaborative – emergency management create and sustain broad and sincere relationships among individuals and organisations to encourage trust, advocate a team atmosphere, build consensus, and facilitate communication.
- Coordinated – emergency management synchronize the activities of all relevant stakeholders to achieve a common purpose.
- Flexible – emergency management use creative and innovative approaches in solving disaster challenges.
- Professional – emergency management value a science and knowledge-based approach; based on education, training, experience, ethical practice, public stewardship and continuous improvement.

These principles are expected to facilitate effective management of disasters, and moreover, show the efficacy and capability of emergency management at preventing disasters and preparing for emergencies. More importantly, the activities of emergency management revolve around a cycle, which is known as emergency management cycle – there are four (4) broad phases to this cycle. These are:

- i. Mitigation – it is simply about knowing and avoiding disasters. This phase is two-fold. First, this includes understanding of possible risks/disasters to personal/family health and to personal property and public properties. Second, the understanding of possible disasters will provide an insightful knowledge on preventive measure in right direction. Scholars discussed that mitigation involves Structural and Non-structural measures taken to limit the impact of disasters, thereby enabling risk reduction (Times of India, 2010).
- ii. Preparedness – this phase emphasizes readiness; addresses planning against any form of hazards. Planning becomes pivotal in this phase using sound risk management principles (hazard identification, risk analysis, and impact analysis) in assigning priorities and resources. It enables risk assessment.
- iii. Response – this is a reactionary measure to disasters at its inception. This is concerned with rescue mission. It is an action part of emergency management. This is a major task of emergency management. Its failure renders the entire emergency management processes futile.
- iv. Recovery - the recovery phase starts after the immediate threat to human life has subsided. It is a step to resettle, revive and relieve the victims of disaster.

This paper uses a terminology (SR²) to explicate the activities of emergency management. This (SR²) means ‘Search’, ‘Rescue’ and ‘Relief’. The ‘search’ (i.e. searching for possible threats) enables mitigation and preparedness, the ‘rescue’ relates to response and the relief denotes recovery. This terminology simplifies the basic activities of emergency management.

A careful examination of the emergency management systems in some countries reveals differences in terms of nomenclature, style, plan, structure and organisation as well as approach. However, the acknowledged country is the one that takes an ‘all-hazard’ approach, and such approach is worthy of emulating in Nigeria. In line with Hyatt (2007:3), this type of approach recognises that even though specific counter-measures will often vary with different hazards/ emergency events, a single set of management arrangements capable of encompassing all hazards will be established.

Above all, emergency management should be seen as an integral part of individual life, groups and societies all over the world. Therefore, the state must be proactive in this regard by synchronising the activities of all stakeholders, especially local government, in order to achieve the purpose of emergency management.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government is the closest government to the people at the grassroots. Hence, it becomes essential for government at the local level to provide a diverse range of services for the people. Local governments have crucial role to play in every function of government, most especially, those functions which are safety-oriented. Moreover, an excerpt from the local government definition given by the 1976 reform ascribed its capability to complement the activities of state and federal government, as well as maximising the local needs and services (Local Government Reform, 1976:1).

Furthermore, Muttalib and Khan (1982:1-2) defined local government as an “ancient institution with a concept of administration having a direct bearing with provision of services to local clients of the state”. Remarkably, local government is service and efficiency oriented.

In Nigeria, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has, however, identified local government as ‘first responder’ in the case of disaster (Economic Confidential, 2010). Hence, local government occupies the best position to address the root causes of disasters as well as reducing their impacts on our communities. Significantly, local government is seen as having the capability of gathering

intelligences on the act of terrorism ravaging the Nigerian ‘nation-state’ due to its close contact to the people.

Although, the local government has its weaknesses which are not quite different from that of higher levels of government, and it is even worse in the area of financial resources, where local government suffers a major setback. Against this backdrop, overhauling becomes necessary for Nigerian public service - aiming at enhancing quality assurance and effective service delivery at all levels.

THE NEED FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL RELEVANCE AT LOCAL LEVEL IN NIGERIA

According to Economic Confidential (2010), vulnerability is often more pronounced at the community level. Expatriating further, local communities are more prone to disasters due to lack of adequate control of the environment and its ecologies. More often than not, disaster does not warn before it occurs. The above statements necessitate the incorporation of emergency management system at local level.

As rightly observed, local communities are typically perturbed by natural emergencies such as: Bush fire; Floods; severe storm; and also man-made disasters such as: Road Traffic Incident, Blockage of drainage amongst others. These identified hazards have ruined the economic life of the local communities in Nigeria. For instance, at local areas, most deplorable roads are as a result of blockage of their drainages; uncontrolled bush fire has razed many useful agricultural produce; total destruction of valuable properties has been caused by floods and severe storms; and many lives have been exterminated by road traffic incidents. To avert the destructive effects of all these disasters on local communities, emergency management agency at local level becomes necessary.

This paper advocates that emergency management at local level will facilitate safety and protection of lives and properties which is a fundamental function of government at any level; and of course, the above statement justifies the rationale and philosophy behind its need and importance at local level. This paper further highlights the responsibilities of this emergency management agency at local level amongst others as thus:

- Identifying hazards and assessing potential risk to the community.
- Enforcing building codes, zoning ordinances, and land-use management programs.
- Coordinating emergency plans to ensure a quick and effective response.

- Fighting fires and responding to hazardous materials incidents.
- Establishing warning systems.
- Stocking emergency supplies and equipment.
- Assessing damage and identifying needs.
- Evacuating the vulnerable communities to safer locations.
- Taking care of the injured.
- Sheltering those who cannot remain in their homes.
- Aiding recovery efforts. (See, World Bank, 2004)

Remarkably, the highlighted responsibilities will reasonably suppress harsh effects of the identified hazards at the local areas. The effective discharge of these responsibilities becomes imperative in order to drastically reduce human and economic losses at local areas. These responsibilities cannot be carried out in vacuum or by no entity. It is therefore essential to discuss the organisation and structure of emergency management at local level.

ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL

In Nigeria, each political subdivision has authority to establish local organisation or to be a member of joint local organisation in accordance with state directive or approval. On this note, local governments are privileged to organise emergency management agency by ordinance or resolution passed by their legislative bodies. On the other hand, two or more local governments, which are geographically close, may join in the establishment of emergency management agency. This is more advantageous as it reduces the financial burden, economic and administrative costs and up-scales, as well as enabling collaborative efforts as eulogised by the guiding principles of emergency management. This paper advances this collaborative effort as capable of tackling spreading of epidemic diseases, forestalling inter-tribal, communal and religious crisis.

This paper adopts the work of Mike Lindell (2004) on “Building Effective Emergency Management Organisation” to elucidate on the organisation and structure with little modifications. Similarly, the generic term we will use in this paper to refer to the community agency that is responsible for emergency management is the Local Emergency Management Agency herein referred to as (LEMA). In practice, the LEMA might be known as the Office of Civil Defense, Emergency Management, Emergency Services, Homeland Security, some combination of these names, or yet some other name. Moreover, the LEMA

might be a separate department, a section of another department, or a unit (Lindell, 2004:61). What is important is the fact that LEMA must not operate in isolation; there should be clear-cut relationships with other agencies. It is therefore conversed that LEMA must have downward vertical linkages with households and businesses, upward vertical linkages with state and federal agencies, and horizontal linkages with social and economic influentials and hazards practitioners.

It is mandatory on LEMA to brief the Local Government's Chairman during emergencies for onwards report to state and federal executives, but frequently reports to the head of collaborative agencies such as police, hospital, environment management, public works, fire and state and federal emergency agencies during normal emergency operations. The workforce of LEMA should vary in their employment status—full-time paid, part-time paid, or volunteer—again depending upon jurisdiction size (and, thus, its financial resources) and hazard vulnerability (Lindell, 2004:62).

The Job Description

LEMA's job is based on the four (4) phases of emergency management cycle discussed above, and it is appropriately guided by principles. Again, these four phases are:

- i. Mitigation.
- ii. Preparedness.
- iii. Response.
- iv. Recovery.

These four (4) watchwords should be passably understood by the staffers of LEMA as their organisational objectives, such that assignments, duties and responsibilities are designed towards the attainment of the stated objectives. Explicitly, the highlighted responsibilities are the specific functions of the LEMA. However, the descriptive functions are not static; perhaps, it is subject to change informed by the dynamic nature of disasters. Therefore, there is need for periodic update for efficiency purpose. In addition, compartmentalisation should be carried out on the basis of responsibilities. Moreover, Lindell (2004:62) writes further that a LEMA officer's first task is to comprehend the duties of his or her own position as defined by a job description. To whom does the incumbent (the person who serves as the local emergency manager) report, who reports to the incumbent, what is the specific function of the position, what duties for the position are specifically listed in the job description, and what are the specific qualifications (education, training, and experience) that are listed in the job description? If there currently is no job

description or the one that exists is outdated, the emergency manager should draft a new job description and discuss it with the organisation (See, Department of Internal Affairs, 2007).

LEMA Staffing

Lindell (2004:62) analysed that LEMA should have administrative officers (clerk, secretary, or administrative assistant) and professionals (emergency management analysts) staff who are either paid on part- or full-time basis. Such personnel need to have job descriptions specifying their titles, reporting lines, functions, duties, and qualifications. These personnel support the LEMA by receiving and tracking correspondence, drafting plans and procedures, maintaining databases, scheduling meetings, maintaining meeting minutes, and the like. In cases, where LEMA's budget is too small to support enough paid staff to perform all of these activities. Consequently, volunteers are enlisted by contacting community service organisations, clubs, Boy and Girl Scout troops, and others (Boin, A. and Rhinard, M. (2008). These volunteers can be a valuable source of assistance in achieving the LEMA's goals by performing tasks that are delegated by the LEMA top officers. Indeed, some volunteers have valuable skills (e.g., computing, radio communications).

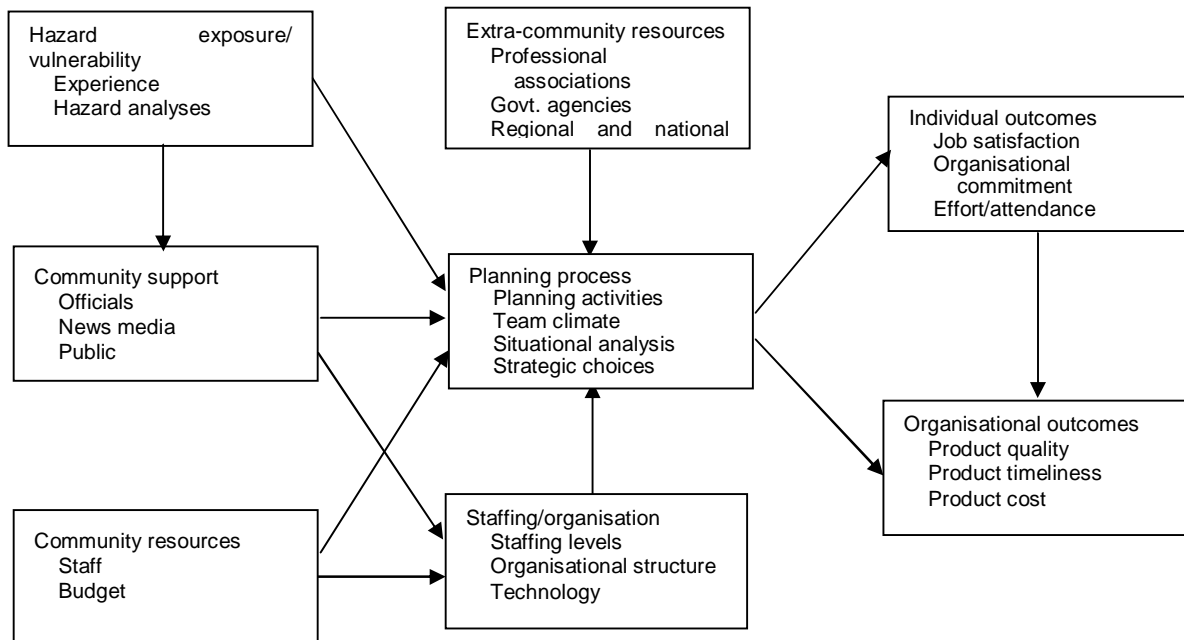
Buchanan (2000) reiterated that each of the LEMA staff members should be given a clear description of his or her duties. In addition, most jurisdictions require paid staff to be provided with periodic (at least annual) performance appraisals. These appraisals allow employees to assess their performance over the previous year and to set training and performance objectives for the year to come. Although rarely mandatory, regularly scheduled performance reviews for volunteers are valuable in guiding their development and enhancing their performance effectiveness. A jurisdiction's human resources department can provide valuable guidance on its personnel policies (See, Lindell, 2004:62).

LEMA Program Plan

LEMA needs to develop program plans that systematically direct their efforts over the course of the year. It should set annual goals in each of the major programmatic areas for which they are responsible—such as hazard and vulnerability analysis, hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness, recovery preparedness, and community hazard education. The emergency planning process consists of five principal functions as stated by Lindell (2004:68), and these are: planning activities, team climate development, situational analysis, resource acquisition, and strategic choice. Once these goals have been set by various departments in LEMA, thereafter, assess the LEMA's ability to achieve these goals. This capability

assessment is likely to identify satisfactory levels of capability in some areas but not in others. Lindell (2004:63) further expatiated that the emergency management analysts should document the capability shortfall and devise a multi-year development plan to reduce that shortfall. Sometimes, the limited funds available for emergency management might make it a certainty that the shortfall cannot be eliminated within a single year, so this is the reason why a multi-year (typically five year) development plan is needed. Despite its long planning horizon, the multi-year development plan, according to Buchanan (2000), should identify specific annual milestones (measurable objective indicators) to determine if progress is being made at a satisfactory rate.

A Model of Local Emergency Management Effectiveness



Source: Mike Lindell (2004:66).

This analogy shows that planning process for each emergency program plan is informed by hazard exposure/vulnerability; also demands support from community, professional associations and government

agencies for efficient organisational structure with sophisticated technologies capable of enhancing product cost, timeliness and quality.

LEMA Budget Preparation

An organisation's budget lists the categories of anticipated expenditures and the amount that has been allocated to each category. The budget usually covers the jurisdiction's fiscal year, which is a 12 month period that might or might not be the same as the calendar year (from January 1 to December 31). The budget is a financial plan that identifies the amount of money that has been allocated to each of its budget categories (World Bank, 2004). Typical budget categories include routine continuing items such as staff salaries, office space, office equipment (e.g., copiers, computers, and fax machines), telephone (local and long-distance), travel, and materials and supplies (e.g., paper, toner). The budget should anticipate the need to replace worn out or obsolete equipment or to purchase new equipment that will increase the LEMA's capabilities. The budget also should contain a contingency fund that addresses the costs of resources that will be expended in an unforeseeable emergency (Lindell, 2004:63).

The challenge for the LEMA, as Lindell (2004:63) identified, is to ensure the expenses do not exceed the budgeted amount. This is not difficult to do for the routine continuing items because, for example, staff salaries, office space, and local telephone service are fixed and materials and supplies are quite predictable from month to month. Repairs to office equipment can be unpredictable, but this can be managed by signing a service contract that establishes a fixed fee for routine preventive and corrective maintenance. Long-distance telephone and travel for training are somewhat less predictable but are discretionary, so these activities can be reduced if the expenses for other categories prove to be greater than expected.

The amount to set aside in the contingency fund for emergency response is more difficult to estimate because the scope of an emergency (or even whether one occurs) is unpredictable. Nonetheless, Haddow and Bullock (2005:14) suggested that past agency records or discussions with emergency management agencies in neighboring jurisdictions can provide some insights into the appropriate amount to request. When preparing a budget, Buchanan (2000) noted that it is essential to justify each of the budget items. Once again, records of previous years' expenses are useful guides, but it is important to make adjustments for inflation (consult the jurisdiction's budget office for guidance on the amount they allow) as well as making adjustments for changes in the program plan. Lindell (2004:64) mentioned some insightful questions which may guide and provide clues in an attempt to make adjustments to the program plan.

These questions are: Has a new chemical facility been opened? Are there new subdivisions that have been built in flood prone areas? As new needs arise that cannot be addressed with the resources provided by previous budgets, MRSC (2011) recommended that LEMA needs to request funding increment that will meet the new program requirements. The nature of these needs is typically documented in a budget narrative that accompanies the budget request. The budget and the accompanying narrative are submitted in written form and, in many cases, are presented orally as well. In the latter case, the use of presentation graphics can be a valuable method of explaining how each of the budget items contributes to the achievement of the program plan.

LEMA Funding Sources

LEMA source of funding is categorised into two types; these are primary and secondary sources. The former includes local sources that can be contacted for financial and in-kind assistance. Local government, as a primary source, must statutorily provide funds for its LEMA. Other primary sources include Local industrial facilities, Truck and rail carriers and other commercial businesses which might be contacted for financial contributions to provide in-kind contributions or make small financial contributions for community hazard awareness programs; to defray the costs of emergency preparedness for their facilities; and training assistance

The latter (i.e. secondary sources) consists of financial grants from state and federal government as well as international donor organisations. The federal government has a range of programs that provide financial assistance to local government. This paper illuminates the United State experience in showcasing other secondary sources, for example, Emergency Management Performance Grants, according to IAEM-USA (2012), require LEMAs to submit a statement of work and budget that makes the local jurisdiction eligible for matching funds (i.e., a 50/50 cost sharing). This program, as noted by Haddow and Bullock (2005:16), is administered through each state's emergency management agency, which might impose its own requirements for funding. For example, in some cases, state governments provide grants for LEMA with emergency management plan that meets a specified standard of quality and provides competitive awards based upon the quality of recent planning, training, and exercising activities. Another example is the Hazardous Materials Assistance Program, which provides technical and financial assistance through the states to support oil and hazardous materials emergency planning and exercising (Haddow and Bullock, 2005:15). All these measures are to be emulated by federal government of Nigeria, most especially, the Hazards Material Assistance Program for the Niger- Delta region.

LEMA Budget Management

As the fiscal year progresses, expenses are automatically incurred for some items such as salaries, space, and local telephone use. Other expenses might require the emergency manager's authorization (and possibly countersignature by a higher authority). These include purchase orders for equipment and supplies; contingency funds used for emergency mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. These records are forwarded to the jurisdiction's accounting office where they are entered and charged against the appropriate accounts (Lindell, 2004:64). However, unforeseen expenditures attributable to a major emergency should only be the basis for a supplemental request from the major sources, but foreseeable items such as replacement of broken equipment are likely to receive a favourable review. Consequently, LEMA must make mid-year adjustments in all categories so as to be on top form at discharging emergency responsibilities.

Senior elected and appointed officials typically require periodic (e.g., monthly or quarterly) reports of progress on the program plan and budget. As it is the case with the presentation of each year's budget, presentation graphics can be a valuable method of explaining which milestones in the program plan have been achieved and how this compares to the level of progress expected to date (Haddow and Bullock, 2005:16). In addition, LEMA should explain what percentage of each budget line has been expended to date in comparison to the percentage of the year that has elapsed. For example, the LEMA officers should find it easy to explain why 0% of the budget for a particular assignment has not been expended in the first three months of the year. However, it probably would be more difficult to say why 40% of the budget for salaries had been expended in that same period. In either case, the source of the variances and the anticipated method of adjustment must be explained (Lindell, 2004:65). All these methods are to institutionalise accountability and transparency.

CONCLUSION

Every citizen must see emergency management as an integral part of life: it is intended to protect people and property from all types of disasters. Government, as a regulatory body, must be proactive and place high priority on emergency management at all levels. Each political subdivision should therefore develop, promulgate and embark on a comprehensive emergency management plan in accordance with the guiding principles. However, two or more political subdivisions may join in the establishment of an emergency management organisation, giving no room for 'interest' in all ramifications.

In Nigeria, the establishment of emergency management agency at local level (i.e. LEMA) becomes imperative with a view to safeguard lives and properties at local communities. Local governments are, thus, to:

- Develop and adopt emergency management plans based upon an 'all hazards' approach;
- Undertake risk assessments to identify areas where hazards can be eliminated or negated in local council areas;
- Incorporate strategic plans into the aspects of contemporary emergency management, namely; prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and that these plans support relevant State and National plans and policies;
- Provide funding options to support the needs of Local Government in Emergency Management;
- Integrate the institutional plans into the budgets; formulate policies and coordinate these activities coupled with risk assessment which has to do with the impact of developmental programmes on the vulnerability of the citizenry;
- Carry out the organisational responsibilities in a careful, diligent and objective manner;
- Build a cordial relationship with households and businesses, state and federal agencies, as well as social and economic influentials and private hazard practitioners; and
- Encourage staff training and manpower development.

Source: *Emergency Management Report in South Australian Local Government; 2007.*

In addition, the agency (i.e. LEMA) should relate with other major stakeholders like Road Safety, Fire Service and the police for intensive campaign and sensitization of public through appropriate media of communication on their expectation at any given time when disaster occurs.

It may be necessary therefore to say that not all disasters can be avoided; but proactive measures can be taken to avert large scale casualties e.g., some disasters - especially ethnic and religious clashes that are influenced for selfish interest of individuals or groups – can be fairly averted by ‘upbeat’ mechanisms. The plane crashes as result of technological malfunctions, frequent oil spills in the Niger Delta and increasing threat to desertification could be largely avoided by knowledge, skill acquisition and best practices (Ovosi, 2013).

Conclusively, this paper is optimistic that incorporating emergency management agency (i.e. LEMA) at local level will, at least, be capable of reducing the human and economic losses derailed by disaster thereby boosting socio-economic progress. Also, it is assumed to relieve the state and federal

governments on some emergency exercises which might subvert governmental programmes and actions on national economy.

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