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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Disaster, Displacement, and Threats to the Eco-System: A Consideration of the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA), 2006 – 2020

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Abstract: Despite the establishment of the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA) in 2006, disaster and emergency management still poses a significant challenge in Benue State. Indeed, disasters, either natural or man-made, are a global issue, posing a serious threat to the environment and causing loss of lives and damage to livelihoods. Over time, Benue State and Nigeria in general have been affected by natural and human-caused disasters such as fire outbreaks, flooding, and farmer-herder crises, amongst others. This has led the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to classify Nigeria's North-Central and North-East regions as areas with high rates of internally displaced persons (IDPs), a worrisome situation. This study, therefore, interrogated the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA) in relation to disaster and emergency management in Benue State between 2006 and 2020. A combination of primary, secondary, and multidisciplinary instruments was adopted as data collection methods, while historical methodology served as the core analytical approach. The theoretical foundation of the study is grounded in two theories: emergency management theory and goal theory. The study observed that disasters in Benue State have affected residents through social imbalance, displacement, economic stagnation, and ecosystem disruption. These outcomes stem from insufficient funding for BSEMA, mismanagement of the meagre available resources allocated to the agency, or a combination of both constraints. The research therefore recommends more robust collaboration between state emergency management institutions such as BSEMA and private-sector institutions to facilitate efficient disaster management within the state.

Keywords: BSEMA, disaster management, emergency management, IDPs, Benue State

1 Introduction

The occurrence of disaster is a global issue, and not peculiar to Benue State. But disaster management or response is a major challenge in different regions of the world and its impact equally differs (Muhammad, 2018). This is because some regions are confronted with natural disasters, while others are faced with man-made disasters. The environmental geography shows the complex interactions between people and their environment; this interaction differs from region to region, making it challenging to identify underlying patterns in disasters that occur in many societies and locations around the world (Odunsi et al., 2020). There are various types of disasters that have affected various regions of the world. For instance, many natural disasters that have had impact on the environment happens both in developed and developing nations. The impacts are in varying degrees, because of the different environmental disasters such as typhoons, hurricanes, and floods (Odunsi et al., 2020). Geographical reasons explain why countries of the world experience various degrees of disaster. For example, on January 12^{th}, 2010, a devastating earthquake rocked Haiti (Ajimuse, 2020). The effect of the earthquake was felt throughout the country and its environs. Another was the earthquake that struck Padang City in Indonesia in October 2009, with 7.6 magnitudes, which led to the death of 704 people (Ezeodum, 2020). It also destroyed building structures in the city.

Africa and Nigeria have also had their own experience of disaster incidences - both natural and man-made. Although, Africa being a plateau continent, seems not to experience some

natural disasters like the western countries. Thus, even if disaster like tsunami hits the coast, it will only affect few communities. On the other hand, human activities such as blocking of water ways due to indiscriminate dumping of refuse and felling of trees which serve as a protection against wind and erosion that could bring about flooding are common in the country; these activities have largely accounted for natural disasters in Nigeria. The country recorded various levels of disasters which differ across regions (NEMA, 2015). In the Niger Delta, the nation's coastal area, and the flood plains of significant rivers including the Niger, Benue, Gongola, Hadeja, and Jamare River Basins, the heavy rains of July, August, and September frequently cause severe floods (NEMA, 2015). Meanwhile the eastern part of the country is largely characterised by erosions which are as a result of the topography of the region. The hottest month in the nation is February in the southern states. The temperature distribution across the nation also varies (NEMA, 2015). In the northern regions, epidemics of cerebrospinal meningitis are caused by congested housing conditions during these hot, dry months. It is in these hot, dry months that overcrowded living conditions promote epidemics of cerebrospinal meningitis in the northern areas (NEMA, 2013). The disaster occurrence in the northern part of Nigeria is as a result of inadequate management of dams and building on waterways. For instance, the 2012 flood was due to the release of water from the Lagdo Dam, located on the upper Benue River which destroyed lives, structures and property in some parts of the country.

Benue State have had its own share of disaster, which varied in scope and timing. The situation is not new, but it keeps recurring which brings to question the nature of disaster management mechanisms in the State. The state has in recent times experienced several disasters, prominent among them are the crop farmers and herders crisis, flooding, fire outbreaks, and the Corona virus. These disasters have devastating effects on the residents of the state. With the prevalent of disasters such as those brought about by crop farmers and herders' crises, flood, pandemic and fire outbreak, it is yet to receive management and mitigation approach it deserves. These forms of disasters have characterised the state, at different period and varying dimensions, but the management method is questionable. Existing literatures on the subject equally establishes this gap. This brings to mine a number of questions such as how has disaster been managed traditionally prior to the emergence of the Benue State Emergency Management Agency, what are the prevailing disaster incidences in the state, and how has BSEMA confront them. Hence, the objectives are tailored to achieve the following:

(1) Tracing the disaster management method prior to the establishment of BSEMA;

(2) Identifying the prevailing disaster incidences in the state;

(3) Examining the interventions of BSEMA;

(4) And evaluating the impact of BSEMA on disaster management in the state.

The most significant contribution of the study to scholarship is the historical approach on disaster management, which has traced the changing nature from traditional method, to state approach that climax with the creation of BSEMA. This places the study in a vantage to have made the suggestions/recommendation arrived at, in the concluding part of the study. It looked at the root causes, and made relevant recommendation such as a change in approach/method on disaster management in the state.

2 Conceptual Framing: Disaster

Disaster connotes an occurrence disrupting the normal conditions of existence and causing a level of suffering that exceeds the capacity of adjustment of the affected community (Obioji & Eze, 2019). Disaster occurs suddenly and causes damage and loss of life resulting in a messy situation. It is a significant interruption in the normal operation of a society or a community (Nnamdi et al., 2019). Therefore, the combination of both man-made and natural disaster has negative impact on members of the society where the disaster occurs. It must be noted that, natural phenomena alone do not constitute hazards as it is their occurrence that brings about disaster to the environment. Thus, it is also understood as catastrophic situations which affect or alter the normal pattern of life or eco-system, resulting in interventions in a bid to preserve or save properties, human life or the environment (Obioji & Eze, 2019).

Accordingly, Article 1 (6) of the Tampere Convention of 1998 on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations posits that, disaster is a serious disruption of a functioning society through man-made or natural phenomena that pose significant threat to human life, properties and environment. It could be natural, accidental,

nature of human activity or developed as a result of long-term complex processes that have adverse effect on human life or the environment (Obioji & Eze, 2019). In essence, the causes of disaster are natural, accidental, and man-made or a spontaneous occurrence resulting from the gradual evolution of a phenomenon that is capable of causing harm.

Disasters are results of different activities. Inordinate exploitation of the environment as well as degrading activities amongst other reasons account for disasters (Ajimuse, 2020). Natural disasters such as floods are caused by excess water, while man-made disasters are caused either intentionally or by accident. They pose severe threats to public health and economic development and general well-being of the people because their occurrence is unpredictable (Ajimuse, 2020). It threatens both normal life and the process of development, and as well causes sudden violence, deaths, destruction of means of livelihood, destruction of hopes and dreams, destruction of structures and displacement of people (Obioji & Eze, 2019). The deployment of the word 'disaster' as used in this study connote both natural and those brought about by human activities. These include flood, fire out breaks, communal clashes and pandemics. The occurrence of these disasters has resulted to wanton destruction of life, properties, and serious environmental hazard in Benue State. This study examines how they have been able to be manage over the years.

3 Literature Review

Herdsmen/farmers' violence in Benue State, Nigeria, constitutes security challenges and exacerbates food insecurity in a state tagged "food Basket of Nigeria". More than 2000 lives were lost in Nigeria and over 170,000 were internally displaced in Benue state (Alao et al., 2019). The findings indicate that food insecurity in Nigeria is not only caused by herdsmen and crop farmers' violence, but poor agronomic practices are part of it. Though, it recommends modernisation and transformation of the agronomic practices, but it did not specifically state how the government can achieve this. What is significant here is a pointer to the fact that food insecurity is not always a result of disaster associated with crop farmers and herders' conflict but also of insufficient agronomic practices. The work is relevant to the current study because it reflects on crop farmers and herders related disaster which is one area covered by the current study – it looked at other trend of disaster in the Benue state.

In another study on the level of risks and damages associated with flood disaster in Makurdi, covering a five-year period (2014-2018), it argues that Makurdi has been ravaged by floods over the years (**?**). It points out that floods are the most common environmental disaster in the study area representing about 97.7 percent. Mismanagement of water reservoirs (mainly dams), heavy rainfall, and inadequate drainage facilities are found to be major causes of the flood (**?**). Major strength of the study lies in revealing a gap left by the government in terms of managing water resources which often result in flood, and it became important to the current study by helping us understand the fact that flood is a major disaster in the state. However, their focus is skewed towards relief and rehabilitation support for the victims which in reality would not prevent flood recurrence. The current study examined the victims but how the menace can be addressed with lessons from the past.

Moses and Taiwo investigated the role of government in disaster risk management and argue that the role of government in disaster Management is inadequate hence the recurrence of disaster (Moses & Taiwo, 2019). The study recommended that individual and collective effort be geared at improving education, funding and research coupled with governmental preparedness and prompt response towards the prevention and control of all forms of disaster in Nigeria. Though the study anchored issues around government "willingness" towards disaster, but the recommendation still revolves around what is already existing, that has not changed the narratives. while it focuses on emergencies preparedness and response, the current study aimed at the root causes as part of disaster management.

Communities ridden by crop farmers and herdsmen conflict in Benue State over land use have taken a serious toll on farming household livelihoods (Soomiyol & Fadairo, 2020). Such conflict results in losses along production chain, harvesting, preservation and marketing. Despites the enactment of the Open Grazing Prohibition Law by the Benue State government, such conflict continued because herders are opposed to it, while farmers remained resolute in their support for the law. A concerted effort involving religious institutions, government and Non-Governmental Organisations including persuasion of herders to consider other options of livestock production

such as ranching or settlement scheme would go a long way. The work is significant particularly in looking at the role played by the state government via introduction of the Prohibition of the Open Grazing Act, as a way of curtailing disaster associated with farmer/herder conflicts and problems associated with it. But disaster related to farmers-herders conflict is just one problem. The current study also looks at other disasters occasioned particularly by flood.

The Bourgeoning Emergency Management System in Nigeria, has a long way to go because it faces innumerable challenges, including poverty, lack of funding for emergency management programs, and marginalisation, among many bourgeoning disaster Management (Sadiq, 2012). According to Sadiq (2012), the low level of disaster education is another reason why Nigeria is vulnerable to hazards and finally, poverty and marginalisation have been mentioned by some experts as the leading cause of domestic terrorism, especially the type of terrorism manifested in the Niger-Delta area. Sadiq's study is pivotal because it pinned one of the major problems confronting disaster management such as funding. It also draws our attention to other forms of disaster like those associated with terrorism. But this study embraces more forms of disaster.

A study on Statutory Framework for Urban Planning Involvement in Nigeria, posits that proffering solutions to challenges posed by disasters requires multidisciplinary approaches and actions which urban planning is important in that regard (Odunsi et al., 2020). The study points to the existence of legislation that spells out the participation of urban planning professionals in disaster management in Nigeria. The strength of the work lies in drawing attention of relevant authorities to the neglect of urban planning which has been one of the major problem confronting disaster management. Like other studies it also drew attention to collaboration. But while it looked at statutory frameworks, the current study looked at both state and non-state systems.

Most of the literature focused on post-disaster management, and in a few instances disaster mitigation actions such as early warning signals, and education of the masses on disaster incidences amongst others. But root causes associated with changing environmental factors such as climate change and floods received little attention. Even more, the examination of disaster in time perspective, which should look at the nature of disaster management in the past, up to when institutions like BSEMA emerged, its interventions and impacts particularly the changing dimension over time are scanty.

4 Methodology

The study area is Benue State of the middle belt region in Nigeria. The methodology adopted for this study is the historical approach which allows for analysis of the subject in a time-based perspective taking cognisance of the changes over time. Both primary and secondary sources were consulted. The primary sources included oral interviews and official reports/publications. Those interviewed were randomly selected in four local government areas of Makurdi, Guma, Logo and Agatu where major Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps are situated as a result of one disaster or the other. Staff of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), BSEMA, and state ministries of Health, Water Resources, Information, and the State Fire Service, were interviewed. Selected Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Community links, International Organisation for Immigration (IMO) and the Nigerian Red Cross Society, were among those interviewed.

Though there were limitations such as difficulty accessing some terrain characterised by kidnapping, banditry and other forms of social crime; phone numbers of some of the informants were collected to bridge these difficulties. Also, some of the informants did not understand English considering their lack of access to Western education, but the services of an interpreter was engaged in that regard. The validity and reliability of the interviews conducted were gauged by other sources which served as a complement, vis-à-vis the secondary sources which included Journal Articles, Books, Unpublished and online materials. Search terms were disaster, Open Grazing Prohibition Act in Benue, and corona virus. Search engine such as researchgate.net, was employed.

5 Result

5.1 Disaster Management Prior to the Establishment of BSEMA

One of the ways the Benue people managed disasters was through traditional means. In the event of fire outbreak for example, the people resort to using wet leaves to contain its spread. In

most cases the outbreaks were as a result of bush burning during hunting expedition. Sometimes in the early sixties in Gboko, a yam barn was engulfed by fire and it was fresh leaves that were used to curb the fire outbreak, and some tubers of the yam were salvaged in the process. Apart from wet leaves, water was also used in controlling fire outbreaks. Though access to water was a challenge, but in situations where there was a fire outbreak, community effort was usually deployed. In 1971 for example, a fire was lit in a bush to expose rats and other animals, but in the process the fire was getting out of control and spreading to nearby maize farm. But the fire was contained by the hunters using water from a nearby river. The whole maize farm would have been burned down if not for the source of water which was close.

The use of water in managing fire outbreaks is still relevant today. However, the water is being mixed with chemicals that are capable of reducing the force of fire. In the period prior to the establishment of a disaster management agency, undiluted and unadulterated water was used to control fire. But now with the help of research, fire outbreaks are curbed through improved processes. It is important to note that victims of fire disasters often receive relief materials from members of the community as a show of concern. Relief materials such as maize, guinea corn, millet, and non-food items like clothing were given to those affected. Youths also organised themselves to rebuild burned houses. The houses were usually mud-and-thatch houses.

In the case of crop farmers and herders clashes which are age long in the Benue region, traditional institutions were employed. However, it is important to establish certain facts namely:

(1) Prior to the establishment of the Benue State Emergency Agency, the population of the state was not as large as it is now. The demography of the state was lower than what is obtainable in 2020.

(2) Urbanisation is a gradual process, and prior to the establishment of BSEMA, some parts of Benue State were not urbanised as it is in 2020.

(3) Some cattle routes have been blocked due to infrastructural development, growing population and climate change.

(4) There has been an increase in rural-urban migration of some of the local farmers in Benue State in recent times than what was obtainable previously.

Mainly two traditional tools were used in managing crop farmers and herders' clashes. One of such ways is the use of dialogue, and sometimes youths confiscate the cattle of the herders until payment of damage is made before they are released. This process is usually coordinated by traditional institutions. This way, disasters were being managed without necessarily escalating. Today, the issue of managing crop farmers and herders' clashes is a subject of ongoing debate in the state. Traditional institutions are no longer trusted due to issues of bias along ethnic, and religious lines. Politics has also emerged to be a fundamental issue in the debate, as such farmers herders' conflict has continued to be a contention.

Community approach was also significant in managing crop farmers and herders' clashes. This approach brings the community together in offering support and aids to victims of such clashes whose houses and properties are destroyed. Thus, temporary shelters are provided, food and sometimes clothing. The household system was instructive to this, and extended families extend their generosity by housing some of the affected family members. This approach was significant because it shows how united a family or community was prior to colonialism and to some extent in contemporary Nigeria. The community and household system played tremendous and complementary roles in making sure that internally displaced persons were catered for by providing house and food for them, and in some cases, farmland is provided since they were forced out of their original homes. Prior to the establishment of BSEMA, the state government usually visited the affected areas and provide succour in the form of relief materials such as building materials, clothing, blankets and food items. Sometimes the government provided financial assistance to IDPs in the state. These relief materials were distributed by a task force that was formed on an adhoc basis where government would just move in to assist the victims and some non-governmental organisations (NGO), civil society organisations (CSOs), faith-based organisations and individuals.

The State has been a flood flash point over the years. One of the most catastrophic was in 2012, with devastating consequences affecting farmlands, houses, and bringing about water borne diseases amongst several others. One of the ways floods were controlled before the establishment of institutions such as the BSEMA was the terracing method. This method

involves channelling flowing water into the river. It also involves using cement to harden the topsoil so as to prevent the washing away of the topsoil which may result in flood. The terracing process is significant in protecting the land against any form of degradation, and safe for agricultural development. Azoho opined that the southern parts of Benue State, sharing boundary with Enugu State were the most affected by erosion, and communities near the River Benue are severely affected by flooding. Part of the reasons is that the water table in areas close to the river is high and it tends to be impervious in retaining water during the wet season. Also, refuse is often dumped at the banks of the river which prevents free flow of water and this is what is regarded as the load of the water. Climate change, occasioned by both man-made and natural factors is also part of the reasons. This has negative effects on water table, leading to the reduction of the volumes of water, and also allowing negative flow of water, resulting in the spread of water to other areas thereby leading to flood (Udo, 1976).

There were also community service/effort in managing flood incidents. Community members construct drainage systems that allowed the flow of water out of the affected areas into the river Benue. In some cases where houses were submerged by flood, victims were provided with succour by neighbours, friends and family members. Although resources were usually not enough, these traditional methods were significant in managing disasters. There were no restricted areas for IDPs in the community as is the practice today, where we are having about ten (10) existing IDP camps allegedly characterised by corruption, misappropriation and politics. It is also worth noting that the traditional method of disaster management, characterised by the use of wet leaves, water, and the provision of relief materials, was bound by family, clan, and community ties.

5.2 Emergence of BSEMA, 2006

The BSEMA was established in 2006 to handle catastrophes in the state (Benue State of Nigeria, 2006). The establishment of the agency was brought about by several developments. It started in 2001 when there was trouble between the Tiv and some neighbouring states within the North Central geopolitical zone. This crisis occurred in some parts of Nasarawa and Taraba States and it led to the displacement of the Tiv ethnic group who settled in those areas. The crisis according to Ortese, was as a result of communal clashes between the Jukun and Tiv, the Alago and the Tiv among other tribes. The consequences of these crises were that many people lost their lives and properties were also destroyed. It therefore created a humanitarian crisis and there was a need for the evacuation of the displaced persons to Benue State. At that time, George Akume, the then Executive Governor of Benue State, visited the two states of Nasarawa and Taraba and evacuated the displaced persons into four camps, namely: Ukpam, Daudu and Agasha in Guma local Government Area (LGA) and Ayiin in Logo LGA.

The evacuation of the displaced persons was done by Hon. Boniface Ortese, a member of the State Task-force on Displacement as the administrator covering all camps and satellite camps in Benue State (2019). There were 11 satellite camps in the State. Thus, the camps that were established began to house a great number of displaced persons and there was need for the Benue State Government to carter for the material needs of the people. At that time, there was no specific agency in charge of the collection and distribution of relief materials. The distribution of relief materials was done by different ministries. However, a task-force committee was formed by the state government to take charge of the distribution of relief materials and it assumed the duty of catering for the displaced persons. There was also a section of the Act which established NEMA that gave States of the federation the power to establish state emergency management committees that would be responsible for emergency management cases, Agbase opined. The Emergency Management Committee was established in the state and it later became BSEMA. At the time of the establishment of the agency, Mr Adikpo Agbatse was made the pioneer Executive Secretary of the state agency in 2006.

5.3 Disaster Incidences in Benue State, 2012-2020

In 2012, Benue State was hit by one of the most devastating floods. The flood affected five Local Government Areas of the State including Agatu, Logo, Gwer, Guma and Makurdi (NEMA, 2012). It occurred as a result of the release of excess water from Lagdo Dam by the Republic of Cameroon which flooded different parts of Nigeria (Benue State, 2019). The flood resulted in a number of disasters such as environmental degradation due to the huge number of debris that was dumped by the flood in residential areas and industrial layouts as well as on farms;

Houses and Farmlands were destroyed, causing severe hardship in the affected communities, (NEMA, 2012). In Makurdi the State Capital, many lost their lives, some were displaced, and State Government property was destroyed. On 29^{th} September 2013, Logo LGA was flooded. Three Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty Three (3, 983) people were affected, and some Three Thousand Six Hundred and Twelve (3,612) people were displaced (NEMA, 2013). In 2015, another flood recurred affecting both Makurdi and Guma LGAs again, destroying lives and properties.

In 2013, the State witnessed a spree of communal crises. Beginning from January 2013, crisis erupted in Otukpo Local Government Area affecting Ebologba, pipeline, Amla, Ipapo, Otokpo-Icho and Idabi communities (NEMA, 2013). It resulted in loss of lives, destruction of houses and displacement of people. A total of five thousand and eleven (5,011) persons were displaced, seven thousand four hundred and thirty one (7,431) were affected and 3 persons died (NEMA, 2013). Based on NEMA, on the 3^{rd} March, the crisis recurred in the same LGA leading to the burning of some houses, destruction of farmlands, and displacing six thousand two hundred and eleven people (6,211), about ten (10) people lost their lives. On 28^{th} March, like a whirlwind, it spread to Local Government Areas. Also, houses were burnt affecting Ten Thousand One Hundred and Thirteen (10,113) persons, displacing Nine Thousand Three Hundred (9300) persons, and Ten (10) people were killed. On 24^{th} October, Agatu again came into the spotlight. Houses and worship centres were destroyed. The total number of affected persons was Seven Thousand Three Hundred and Twenty-Six (7,326), while Three Thousand, Four Hundred and Sixty-Five (3,465) were displaced and One Hundred and Seventy-Nine People (179) killed. Since this period, Benue State has continued to be a flash point of communal crises in the country.

The period beginning from 2014 up to date is being characterised by different communal crises in various locations of the State, involving mainly herders and crop farmers dominated largely by Fulani on one hand, and other ethnic groups in the State. These periods have been catastrophic. In 2014 alone, about Nine Hundred and Seventy (970), People were killed by herdsmen in Agatu, Guma, Gwer-West, Gwer, Makurdi, and Kwande Local Government Areas (BSEMA, 2016). The population in IDP camps increased across the state, due to incidences of herdsmen/farmers crisis between 2014 and 2019, which led to the displacement of Four Hundred and Eighty Three Thousand, Six Hundred and Ninety Three people (483,693). These people were placed in six official and Twenty Two unofficial camps spreading across the state. Out of this number, there were 112, 617 children under the age of five, while 85,626 male children and 73,818 female children were above the age of five, bringing the total of children in that category to 159,444 (Okpeh, 2019). Some of the LGAs affected by the herdsmen/farmers crisis include; Agatu, Buruku, Guma, Gwer, Gwer West, Katsina Ala, Kwande, Logo, Ukum, Makurdi, Tarka, and Obi; and among the affected LGAs in the state, Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi and Agatu were the worst hit by this disaster.

These incidents have continued unabated. On 1^{st} January 2018, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas witnessed another round of attack by suspected Fulani gunmen (Abu, 2019). The attack resulted in the death of about 80 people. Some of the farmers who survived the attack however lost some of their family members; their crops were destroyed and were forced to abandon their homes (BSEMA, 2019). The attack based on Shior, later spread to Makurdi, Gwer-West, Gwer, Agatu, Otukpo and Kwande LGAs. This has been the situation up to 2020 (BSEMA, 2015b). All these incidences combined created serious humanitarian crisis in the state. Flooding and communal clashes have displaced thousands, and resulted in the burning of homes. Similarly, fire outbreaks have equally led to the burning of Wadata market and Makurdi Modern Market, all in Makurdi the State Capital, and that of Otukpo Central Market. Other disaster incidences were those linked to Pandemics. Cholera broke out on 16^{th} November, 2013 in Otukpo, affecting One Hundred and One (101) persons, and resulting in the death of two people (NEMA, 2015). On 28^{th} March, 2020 the state recorded its first case of COVID-19. The outbreak of the disease had devastating effect on the economy and led to the death of many people in the state.

5.4 Interventions of BSEMA in the State, 2006 – 2020

The Benue State contingency plan was developed to enable effective coordination of humanitarian and emergency response in the state, in collaboration with other government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and other relevant organisations in the management of

disaster in the state. BSEMA was established to ensure timely, consistent, coordinated and planned response to disasters and emergencies in order to minimise the potential humanitarian crisis as a result of disasters. The agency is also responsible for prevention, mitigation and control of disasters in the state.

In what came to be one of the worst incidences of flood in the state, the agency launched a search and rescue mission during the 2012 flood. In that regard, evacuation of victims and property from the flood affected communities of Guma, Makurdi, Agatu and Otukpo LGAs was carried out as reported by Agbatse. He further posited that IDP camps were created at Local Government Areas, Primary Schools, and Wadata in Makurdi LGA, where victims were taken to in order to cushion the effects of the flood. Similarly, the IDPs camp at the Makurdi International Market came about as a result of the 2015 flood (BSEMA, 2015a). Awareness and sensitisation campaigns were another measure deployed by the agency in the state. In 2017, when NIHSA released the seasonal prediction by NIMET, a flood alert for states across the federation, Benue State was one of them. Thus, as a pro-active measure to mitigate the impact of the flood, BSEMA constituted an awareness creation team headed by Late Mr. Vincent Tsea, who carried out sensitisation on the potential for floods in Agatu, Gwer West, Katsina-Ala, Logo, Buruku, Guma and Makurdi Local Government Areas of the state. The team carried out public enlightenment campaigns which targeted the vulnerable communities and encouraged themto undertake safety measures during the flood.

Search and rescue missions were also deployed to victims of Herder/farmers crisis. BSEMA, in collaboration with NEMA, carried out rescue operations during the herdsmen/ farmer's crisis in eight local government areas of Benue State in March, 2014. It was during this period that IDPs Camps were established at Nongu u Kristu u i Ser u sha Tar (NKST) Primary School, Gyungu-Adze in Guma LGA, LGEA Primary School, Kula and Ikpayongo in Gwer LGA. The affected LGAs were Agatu, Guma, Gwer, Gwer- West, Makurdi, Katsina-Ala, Kwande and Logo with about 884,174 displaced persons (BSEMA, 2016). Other IDPs Camps established include those in Apa, Logo, Buruku, Ukum, and Tarka LGAs (BSEMA, 2015b).

In order to curb the recurrence of the violence clashes, a conflict resolution committee was inaugurated to identify the causes of the crisis in 2014. In its report, the committee recommended a resettlement plan of displaced communities to their ancestral homes. However, the plan was not backed up by a structural plan that accommodated the resettlement process. The plan was to provide support in terms of rebuilding the burnt houses, food for sustenance while waiting for fresh harvest, disarmament of feuding parties, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, including bridges/culverts linking communities as well as safe water points and sanitation facilities (BSEMA, 2015a). Moreover, the peace and resettlement plan was further compounded by renewed attacks by herdsmen in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The continued communal clashes informed the state government's decision on the enactment of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, in 2017 to prevent the herdsmen/farmers crisis (Gusa & Tijah, 2017). However, this measure is yet to curb attacks by herdsmen in the state as there are cases of recent attacks.

The attacks in January in 2018 led to an increase in the number of IDPs Camps in the State. The agency established new camps in Guma, Makurdi and Logo Local Government Areas (LGAs). These camps were located at Gbajimba, Tse –Ginde, Daudu 1, Daudu 11and Daudu in Guma LGA; Abeda, Ayiin and Ugba, in Logo LGA, Abagena in Makurdi LGA and Naka in Gwer West LGA (Chiata, n.d.). The camps were established as temporary homes of the IDPs who were displaced by the crisis. However, in the same year, the agency closed down the Ugba and Abeda in Logo LGA due to insecurity among the host communities. The displaced populations who were hitherto accommodated at these camps were integrated into the Ayiin IDPs Camp. These Camps contain varying numbers of IDPs. For instance, Abagena Camp (Makurdi LGA) held 8,210 displaced persons, Daudu Camp I had 5,451 IDPs in 12 blocks for streamlined food and non-food item distribution, and Ayiin IDP Camp (Logo LGA) housed 35,686 IDPs organised into 14 blocks. The agency adopted a camp coordination and management model for daily camp administration, run by BSEMA camp managers and appointed IDP representatives. Weekly IDP assessments were performed by camp managers, with findings reported to the central office.

In order to have a database for disaster incidences in the state, the agency developed a disaster case filing in 2015. This captured all forms of disasters in the state, so as to serve as a basis for

interventions by major stakeholders. The case files were grouped into disasters that affected individuals, families, communities, organisations, widows and vulnerable persons. The purpose of this was for easy identification of victims of disasters when they occur. An assessment of flooded locations was carried out by BSEMA in Makurdi town due to torrential rainfall in August 2015. The report was used by the agency to provide relief materials to the affected population.

Research team on disaster management was also contracted by BSEMA, saddled with the responsibility to carry out research on new strategies of disaster management. The experts trained staff through workshops on emerging trends in disaster management. In January 2019, the agency collaborated with a consultancy outfit, Yavnelle Konzont and organised a symposium on the plight of the IDPs. The symposium brought together the academia, development partners, and CSOs who sparked a discussion on the condition of the Benue IDPs and exposed the humanitarian crisis in the State, Shior said. The focus was on the plights of IDPs and how they can return to their ancestral homes. It noted the need to empower the IDPs and rebuild homes that were destroyed as a result of the farmers/herders' crisis. The academic gathering urged government, stakeholders, and individuals at all levels to work towards the welfare of the IDPs by providing for their needs in terms of food, shelter, clothing, health, among others. Although significant recommendations emerged from the symposium, they were however, not implemented by the government.

5.5 Impact of BSEMA in the State

Despite efforts by the agency in terms of disaster management, it is confronted with a number of problems. One such problem is funding. Most times, resources are not readily available for immediate response to disasters when they occur. The major source of funds for BSEMA is the State government. The Agency is expected to be financed by 20% of the sum accruable to the State Ecological Fund for the management of ecologically related disasters Benue State of Nigeria (2006). Only 2% of the sum accruable to each LGA and grants from organised private sector, international organisations and other donor agencies would be used for disaster response in the state. This often hinders the agency's mandate of providing quick services to people who are affected by disaster. The funds are not enough to take charge of all the problems at that particular time. Prompt and adequate funding is essential factors that determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organisation. Emergency management requires huge resources for the acquisition of up-to-date equipment and technologies that will help in the prevention, control and mitigation of disasters, especially natural ones. In the case of BSEMA, the law that gives financial independence to the agency is not yet implemented as LGAs are required to remit 2% of their monthly revenue to the agency for disaster management. This makes it difficult for timely response of the agency to emergency situations in the State. Most times, the agency depends on donor agencies, both local and international NGOs, for interventions in disaster situations. Also, for the agency to build human capacity, good funding is needed in the training of staff on current disaster management trends. But insufficient funding has crippled the operationalisation of the Agency in the State. For example, in 2020 when Covid-19 broke out, humanitarian interventions ceased and distribution of food and non-food items became grossly insufficient.

Living conditions of IDPs at various camps were also affected. One of the IDPs interviewed suggested that their conditions got generally bad because when they were displaced from our various homes, they were left with nothing. So, they only depended on the government and NGOs for survival. But in 2020, the condition became much worsen and pathetic because they could barely eat. Ordugh (2022) also maintained that since they were displaced during the 2018 herdsmen attacks from their villages in Mbalagh council ward, Makurdi Local Government Area of the State, they have been taken refuge in Daudu IDPs camp, but left the Camp with his family and was hosted by the community where some of his relatives are living because the condition at the camp was bad. In the same vein, Maor (2022) argued that since he came to Daudu IDPs Camp III in November 2018 due to the herdsmen/farmers crisis in Guma LGA, it has not been a good experience. They sometimes go out in search of means of survival because the population at the IDP camp is large. Though he observed that BSEMA, has done well in terms of provision of food and non- food materials to IDPs, but it was not enough to carter for the large population at the IDPs camp, especially during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when assistance from NGOs ceased. This kind of situation characterised various IDPs in the State. In Abagena IDPs camp, similar situation was reported where they could

hardly eat, and some were forced to move out to on the basis of survival.

By implication the issue of funding has equally affected staffing of the Agency. Lack of sufficient funding has presented a serious constraint on the part of the agency to recruit required staff for its operations across the state. Thus, the agency's staff are mostly deployed from other MDAs, which actually threatens the smooth functioning of the agency. Some of the out sourced staffs are not trained, so do not have prerequisite technical knowledge to carry out disaster management function during emergencies. Ortese, explains that at the time he headed the agency, it had only eight permanent staff and ten were on secondment. This situation usually compelled the Agency to employ the services of ad-hoc staff, given the magnitude of the situations at the various IDPs Camps, and the number of IDPs involved. The engagement of ad-hoc staff to manage disaster has made the management of disaster difficult because most of the staffs are not adequately trained on how to respond to emergencies.

Coordination is another problem faced by the Agency. In order to create, sustain and improve the competence to plan for, defend against, and respond to disasters when they occur, disaster management requires the right coordination and integration of all activities. The BSEMA's coordinating efforts with other relevant stakeholders in this area are inadequate (Olaoye, 2015). The task of coordination requires clear vision, careful planning, unwavering commitment, discipline, and good technical know-how. There is lack of synergy and poor coordination between the agency and other humanitarian service providers leading to duplication of functions. This lack of proper coordination, monitoring and evaluation usually results in cases of diversion of relief materials meant for victims of disasters into private hands. The Benue State Emergency Law saddled BSEMA with the broad mandate to coordinate the activities of other related bodies like the State Fire Service; and other stakeholders, including civil society. However, the lackluster and untimely response of the state's numerous emergencies, particularly flood disasters and the herdsmen problem, is proof of weak coordination. The basic emergency management phases of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery must also be handled, and each of these phases has a distinct method that must be addressed (Adefisoye, 2015). It should be noted also that for effective management, there must be adequate preparations for primary, secondary and tertiary levels of response, depending on the nature and gravity of emergency. All these cannot be achieved if proper coordination and a holistic approach to disaster management are not deployed.

6 Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the argument that establishing an Agency alone is not sufficient in fighting disaster. Benue state is known as "food basket of the nation", but has been crippled due to disasters. This has placed the state in a spotlight for the wrong reasons. Thus, the findings corroborate earlier studies by Alao et al. (2019), Moses and Taiwo (2019), and Sadiq (2012) which argue that government institutions such as the BSEMA, have inherent weaknesses in the areas of management of water resources which manifests itself in the continued flood over the years, lacuna in the enforcement of the grazing laws which would have curtailed the incessant crop farmers and herders' conflict, and funding amongst others. However, the historical approach deployed in the study has established how the same methods over the years have been used in disaster management, which is why the results have not changed for the better.

It is established that some of the prominent disasters bedeviling Benue state arise from floods, communal clashes, crop farmers and herders' conflict among others. Apart from the field sources engaged here, empirical evidence from Peter et al. (2020) corroborated this fact. This has brought about various degrees of conditions such as displacement, loss of lives, distortion of economic activities, poverty and misery among the affected persons.

Some traditional disaster management methods, which were effective prior to the establishment of modern institutions including BSEMA, have lost their efficacy for several reasons. Using water and leaves to suppress fire outbreaks is no longer adequate: communities have expanded in scale, while unifying bonds of family, clan and communal solidarity have eroded. This breakdown stems from exposure to Western liberal values, alongside religious and ethnic divides. Consequently, such practices are no longer widely prevalent.

Again, the terracing method used to curtail flood, has now been confronted by bigger

challenge such as release of water from dams, particularly the Lagdo dam. The evidences from the field suggest that refuse dump and its management further compound this problem because refuse is being dumped indiscriminately by the people without any form of control either by the government or communities affected. This act, has overtaken the age-long tradition of drainage constructions. Even then, the practice of drainage construction by communities has for long ceased.

Also, traditional institutions which have proven effective in managing crop farmers and herders related disasters have been over taken by suspicion. Sentiments across religious and ethnic lines have now become a determinant of, or a force in, most societal issues. This is further amplified by political factors. So long as you belong to one ethnic group/religion or the other, your crimes may be overlooked. Thus, trust in traditional institutions no longer exist as it were. A third party who usually plays a mediatory role is often called upon. This has been the case with Agatu, which eventually led to operation Cat race, and Whirl stroke.

With the emergence of BSEMA, the scope of disaster management received a broad coverage including mitigation, response and inclusion of broader cases such as flood, pandemics and climate change. The instrument of disaster management was now broadened beyond those obtainable in traditional method. Based on the Act establishing BSEMA, other stakeholders including Ministries, Department and Agency, together with local government are to be mobilised for disaster management. However, both empirical and field evidences left little to be admired from the BSEMA interventions in the state.

Take the case of flood. Following the 2012 flood, which left the state in a precarious level of disaster, BSEMA together with other MDAs, carried out an evacuation of victims from flood affected areas, and IDPs camp emerged and spread across some local government areas and primary schools. Again, drawing from the field sources, awareness campaign was carried out in areas such as Agatu, Gwer West, Kastina-Ala amongst others in preparation against 2017 flood. Though, creation of IDPs and disaster awareness campaign are good, but not enough. These actions were taken to curtail the effect of disaster, but not aimed at minimizing disaster itself. Though a number of existing studies (Peter et al., 2020; Essoh & Abutu, 2018), support such measures, but they have not been effective, as incidences of flood disaster keep recurring over and over again. Going by the empirical evidence presented by Peter et al. (2020), mismanagement of water bodies is the major cause of flood. So far, no evidence suggesting the management of water bodies in the state such as river Benue and flow of the Lagdo Dam which has been a major threat. Instead of creating Dams to manage these water resources, establishing IDPs, and awareness campaign are relied upon, and has often not stop the recurrence of such incidences. The approaches appear reactive rather than proactive.

The same approach is being applied to crop farmers and herders related disasters in the state. Instead of "nipping it in the bud" BSEMA continued with the usual search and rescue operations. For instance, following the 2014 incidence, a number of IDPs came up, and also conflict resolution committee came up with resettlement plan, without a structural plan. This brought about a return to tranches in 2018, 2019, and 2020. A more modern approach like ranching, which would have been more effective. This is corroborated in an earlier study by Soomiyol and Fadairo (2020). Also, Alao et al. (2019) made reference to something close to ranching which he described as modernization but did not state how. What came to look like "a square peg in a square hole" was the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law passed into law by the Benue state government in 2017. Even though, this measure appears appropriate, it was not accepted by all parties involved: while crop farmers see it as a solution, herders see it as an infringement to their age long nomadism that is now not in tune with modern practices. Secondly, the OGPA lacks an enforcement plan. This kept the issue lingering till date.

Though, other evidence as provided by Iheukwumere et al. (2020), hazards that government has done satisfactorily in terms of its responses to disaster management. Such responses include early warning signals, distribution of relief materials etc. of course, even field sources support some of these claims especially the data base established on disaster case filling, the OGPA and resettlement plan among others. But these measures are not enough doses for the ailment called "disaster". There are gaps in terms of water management, funding structure, coordination among stakeholders, and implementation plan for some of the policies, and lack of legal backing for the agency across all levels.

By and large, the study offers a systemic and time-based approach to scholarship in disaster

management. The historical approach which was deployed gives the study a better understanding of issues surrounding disaster management, that has helped in identifying which approach has failed, and which is yet to be applied. Of course this offers stakeholders in disaster management with better options, and practical solutions to be experimented.

7 Conclusion

Disaster in Benue state has become a topical issue due to its recurrence and significant destruction to lives, properties and environment. Most of the disaster incidences characterising the State include flood, communal clashes, fire outbreaks and pandemic. Disaster management system in the state has emerged over the years from traditional method, to a more organised/institutionalised structure which came to be known as Benue State Emergency Management Agency established in 2006. But as disaster management method transformed from traditional to institutionalised approach, so has the nature of disaster incidences in the state, evolved into a more complex situation brought about by factors such as increase in population, increase in different occupational groups due to the presence of water bodies such as the Benue River, climate change, and politics amongst others.

The dynamics in disaster incidences have posed serious challenge to disaster management in the state. It further exposed the weaknesses of the Agency in the areas of structures for decision making and the execution of disaster management policies, especially at the local government and community levels which is fragmented. These structures were created by the law establishing the agency. However, the law itself has not undergone full implementation. More problematic is the fact that these structures are manned by human capital with inappropriate capacity to perform some of the tasks assigned to them. Unless this challenge is addressed, there will be insufficient capability to reduce risks and develop disaster plans at these levels, even as these are the levels where disaster impacts are usually and directly felt. Thus, capacity building and a paradigm shift are required to be able to reduce disaster risks in the state.

Also, the problem of coordination by the Agency can be curbed when the state government increases funding and designate an institutional focus for appropriate coordination of disaster situations with both local and international partners towards the prevention of disasters in the State. Increased funding by the State Government would thereby lead to recruitment of more staff to meet with the increasing demand in emergency situations, and prompt response to emergencies usually occasioned by flooding, fire outbreak, and farmers/herders' crisis in the state amongst others. Establishment of a proper team comprising major stakeholders in disaster management by the State Government would mitigate the issue of corruption in the Agency which has often resulted in subverting relief materials or palliatives meant for the IDPs, and has led to hunger among the IDPs in the State. The business of government is governance, so when government takes the business of governance seriously, the issue of playing politics with disaster management in the state would be curtailed.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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