

ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the rate at which fire disaster, collapse of buildings, road traffic accidents, particularly in the urban centres, are occurring is high and there is the need to put a stop or at least reduce the rate of emergency cases in order to alleviate the magnitude of the after effect of damages on civil life. This paper seeks to highlight significant threats by reviewing the activities of Emergency Agency in Lagos State of Nigeria. The extent of disaster outbreaks in Lagos State during the period under review prompt the researcher to delve into the activities of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) to ascertain the frequencies of disaster outbreak and level of preparedness in case of emergency. The data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis to determine the trend of cases. Results revealed that most emergency cases in Lagos State were as a result of human error. The paper recommends the measures to be taken to curtail frequent emergency of cases in urban areas of Nigeria.

Keywords: Curtail, Emergency, Error, Human and Investigation

1.0 Introduction

In the developing world, accidents and injuries including burns and fires are commonly accepted as part of the price that must be paid for achieving industrial development. While, on the other hand, in the developed world, life in high rise buildings and sky scrappers, are dependence on electric appliances, air-conditions, heater and cookers, and the overloading of such equipment can all be causes of fire, despite stringent precautionary measures and safeguards. In Nigeria, fire disasters, road accidents, collapse buildings, particularly in the urban centres, have become so alarming such that there is the need to reduce the rate of fire incidences and to alleviate the magnitude and the after effect of damage in civil life (Oritusin, 2004).

Hamatty (1985), pointed out that mankind realized the importance of fire in most of his daily activities. He has constantly been faced with a sort of unending struggle to curtail its attendant destructiveness. Although variously described as a good servant, the hazardous nature of fire has proved that it is a bad master and because of this, government of every country tries to provide adequate facilities to combat its outbreak. Fire incidence occur everyday in villages, towns and cities. Both private and public buildings have at various times been ravaged by fire. Fire hazard in markets in this country have reached an alarming proportion in the recent times. Examples include, fire outbreaks at Eleyele Market in Ibadan, Kano Central Market, Oshodi market in Lagos, Jos Market, Minna Central Market in Niger State, Sokoto Central Market among others. Each fire outbreak either public or private leaves behind a horrible story of woe and destruction, and lives and properties have been lost as a result.

In addition to those listed, there is also the burning down of main markets located at Nkalagu in Enugu State; Yola in Adamawa State, Jos in Plateau State; Owerri and Odu in Imo State, Aba and Umuahia in Abia State, Markurdi in Benue State (Nzeako, 1987). Large - scale fire outbreak burnt down the entire Kaduna main market and the same event took place in part of the new Yola main market. Alonge (1999), was of the opinion that fire hazards in market in the country have reached an alarming proportion in the recent times; incident of fire outbreaks from Kano central market to Benins' Oba market, popular Oshodi market, Ibadan markets, so also Warri main market joined the queue recently to mention but a few. Sources of the fire were either electrical appliances left on working or in attempting to loot some hoodlums find their ways into markets at odd hour to set it ablaze and in the process carryout their nefarious activities. This paper seeks to highlight significant threats posed by disasters in Lagos by reviewing the activities of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency in Lagos state.

1.1 Area of Study

Lagos State was created on May 27, 1967 by virtue of State (Creation and Transitional Provisions) Decree No. 14 of 1967, which restructured Nigeria's Federation into 12 states. Prior

2007, Lagos recorded quite a number of fire incidents. On Christmas eve, December 24, 2006, plot no 77, Aroyola Street in Lagos Island, watched as their houses and businesses went up in flames while others were joyfully planning how they will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. There was another incident at Amukoko, a suburb of Lagos, leaving people to count their losses (Ogbogoh, 2007)

About three months later, the Bank of Industry on Broad Street, Lagos Island joined the list of fire statistics in the state. In December, 2007, Tejuosho Market in Yaba area went up in flames and the traders are still counting their losses till date. The Lagos State Emergency Management Agency was primarily set-up to coordinate activities of all relevant government Ministries/Agencies including NGOs in disaster management. It should be noted that because of the unique position of the Lagos State as the most densely populated state in the country is particularly prone to certain disasters due to its topography, vegetation, climate and population concentration which makes it a complex terrain for responding to and managing disaster (Oritusin, 2004). Lagos State Fire and Safety Services (2006), in its report explained that the operations unit is in charge of mobilizing and coordinating stakeholders in emergency management in the State to scene of incidents for prompt and adequate interventions to disaster. During the period under review, the unit mobilized various stakeholders to the under listed Emergencies/Disasters:

- a. Culvert trapped at Ebute-metta
- b. Collapse building at Egerton, Oke-Arin, Lagos Island, Lagos.
- c. Flood disaster at Ajegunle, Kio Kio Village, Maidan in Ikosi - Isheri LCDA.
- d. Fire incident at Oju elegba, Surulere, Lagos.
- e. Fire incident at Unity House, Marina, Lagos Island, Lagos.
- f. Intervention at Agidigbin Road where a tanker filled with AGO crossed the road which led to traffic obstruction and spillage.
- g. Fire incident at Tejuosho model market
- h. Fire incident/ building collapse at Aroloya, Lagos Island, Lagos.
- i. Pipeline vandalisation at Kate Village, Iru Victoria Island local Council Development Area of Lagos State.
- j. Fire incident at Mushin main market.
- k. Fire incident / building collapse of a shopping plaza situated at 58 Ojekunle Street, Lagos State. (LSFS 2007)

2.1 National Strategy for Disaster Reduction (NSDR)

National Strategy for Disaster Reduction (NSDR) in Nigeria is designed to bring about mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into national development with reference to participation at the community level and appropriate advocacy, public enlightenment and education of the civil populace in prevention and mitigation of emergencies. The House Committee on Emergency and Disaster management established recently to continually review policies and promote legislative development for appropriate disaster management in Nigeria. Community Based disaster Risk Reduction Programmes in 14 states to commence after necessary approval of funding. The programme is essentially to mobilize and decentralize DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) to the communities so as compliments to federal, states and local government efforts at disaster reduction in the country. It is about advocacy, public enlightenment and education of the people in preventive and mitigative activities. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) will deploy resources as the coordinating agency for disaster reduction in the country for this programme. The participating states and local authorities shall give counterpart funding in kind. The programme is essentially to mobilize and decentralize DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) to the communities so as compliments to federal, states and local government efforts at disaster reduction in the country (NEMA, 2006).

2.2 The Role of Volunteers in Disaster Management

The use of volunteers in disaster management in Nigeria is often faced with improper coordination. There is hardly any legal framework, umbrella, or regulatory commission that oversees their activities. NEMA is not solely in charge of this responsibility but however collaborates with them during large-scale disasters. Voluntary organizations and first responders often struggle to play various professional and non- professional roles and in the process make the coordination very difficult.

In most cases, spontaneous, volunteers will come forward regardless of previous planning. Therefore with the help of NEMA and other relevant stakeholders, a way must be determined to redirect them to more appropriate roles. Similarly, volunteer disaster management is too often an

after thought. A more structured approach with the help of NEMA should be provided particularly when hundreds or thousands of volunteers want to be engaged in any major disaster.

The Federal Government through NEMA has a mandate to assist States and Local Governments in disaster response and recovery. Recovery personnel at the National Emergency Coordination Centre (NECC) in tune with this mandate are required to closely monitor response activities and to obtain valuable data regarding the severity and intensity of the event, the affected geographic area and the potential unsatisfied critical needs of the affected population. When a Federal disaster declaration is issued in response to an incident, key Federal and State recovery officials should establish and co-locate at a Disaster Office (DO). This could be at the SOC in the case of a State disaster or at the National Emergency Coordination Centre (NECC) in the case of a national disaster. In choosing the DO location, officials should attempt to select a site that is as proximate to the affected area as possible, but is removed from the immediate disaster zone.

This is done to avoid placing an additional burden on the area's already strained infrastructure and social system. The DO serves as the hub for the coordination of Federal and State disaster assistance as well as a focal point for the associated recovery and reconstruction issues. Many critical post-disaster concerns, particularly in a catastrophic event, cannot be directly resolved by the application of traditional federal disaster relief. Resolution of these issues would therefore require a coordinated Local, State and Federal effort and would often involve application of non-disaster community assistance programmes (NEMA, 2007).

2.3 Response and Recovery Actions

Federal agencies are prepared to take a variety of actions to assist State and Local governments in responding to and recovering from a major disaster. These actions - ranging from initial notification of a disaster to preparation of a final disaster after-action report. They are not necessarily in sequential order; some may be undertaken concurrently (NEMA, 2007). NEMA indicates the extent of damage of fire in Nigeria and the degree of federal assistance required. NEMA then forwards the request to the Presidency, along with a recommended course of action.

allow "for efficiency and speed" which remains the watchword in disaster preparedness as well as for Search and rescue Operations.

3.0 Methodology and Fieldwork

Descriptive statistics are intended to reduce data and allow for easier interpretation. Analysis of the data is facilitated with the following statistical methods employed. These include Pie Charts, Histograms, and Bar Charts among others. During the course of this work, data collected were displayed using one of the techniques of descriptive statistics (Bar Chart). Below is the secondary data collected from the Lagos State Ambulance Services (Lasambus). The population of Lagos state was obtained from National Population Commission, which is based on 2006 census. The study period is limited to year 2007.

Table 1: Number of Victims of Emergency Accidents in Lagos State

S/N	TYPE OF CASES	TOTAL
1	Road Traffic Accident	1976
2	Gun Shot Wound	84
3	Home Accident	4
4	Collapsed Building	63
5	Industrial Accident	5
6	Explosion	0

Source: Lagos State Ambulance Services (LASAMBUS) 2007.

The data collected from Lagos State Ambulance Service were scrutinized in relation to the population of Lagos State in order to determine the type of cases per 100,000 of the population.

This is represented in the bar chart below

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

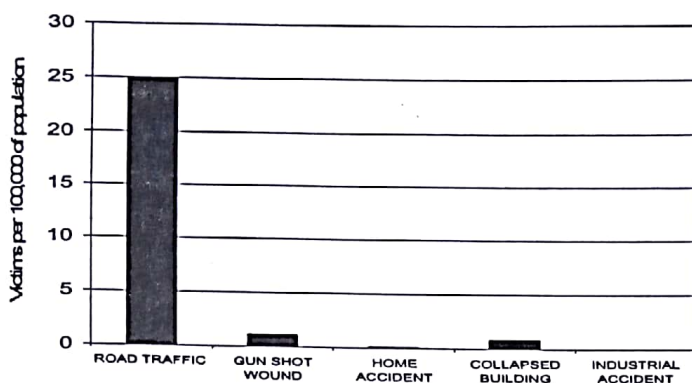


Fig. 1: Type of Cases by Number of Victims per 100,000 of Population of Lagos State.

From the figure 1 above, it can be seen that road accident accounts for higher percentage of all the cases identified while the industrial accident accounts for none

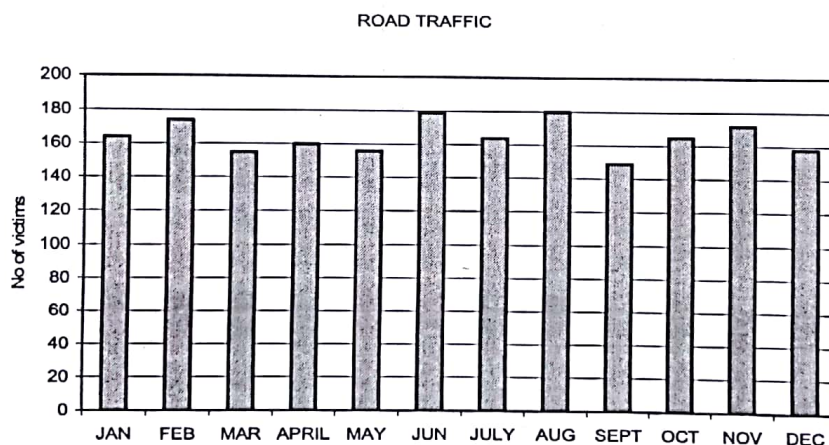


Fig. 2: The Number of Victims of Road Accidents on Monthly Basis (2007)

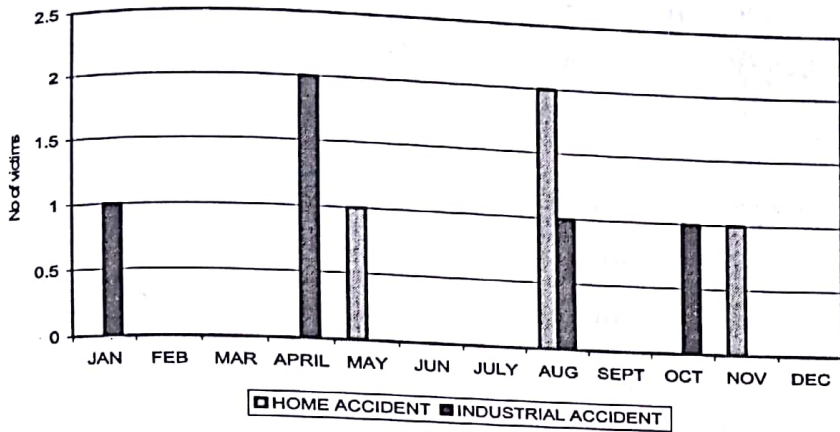


Fig. 3: The Number of Victims in Home and Industrial Accidents (2007)

Figure 3 shows the number of victim in home and industrial accidents in 2007. In January 2007, there was a single case of industrial accident whereas no home accident was reported. The number of industrial accident cases in April 2007, rose to 2 while home accident rose from 0 to 1. The trend changed in August when home accident cases increased sporadically. No cases of accident were reported in February, March, June, July September and December. Figure 4 shows the trend of number of victims in collapsed building which reached the highest peak in November, 2007.

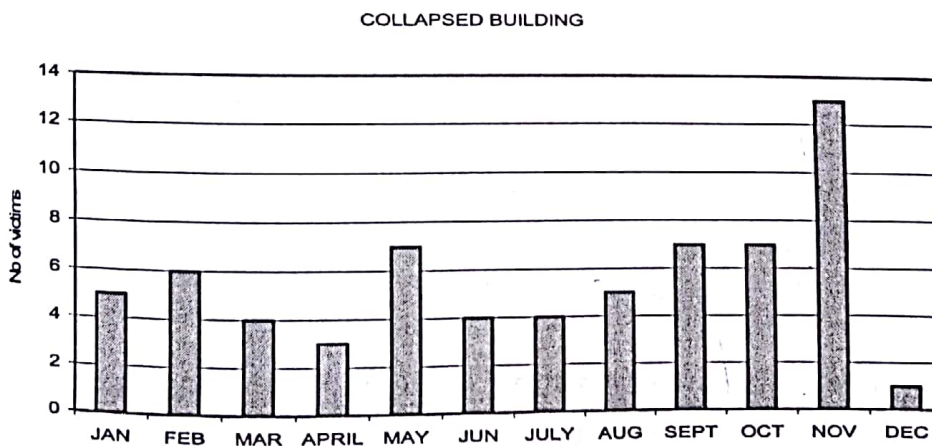


Fig. 4: The Number of Victims In Collapsed Building

4. Summary Of Findings

The cases of emergency described above per 100,000 of population in Lagos state revealed that road accident share a larger percentage in the number of emergency cases, followed by gunshot wound, which could be as a result of armed robbery attack or accidental discharge by security operatives. The increase in the number of victims of road accidents is a cause for concern. The number of victims in collapsed building reached the highest peak in November, 2007. This might be as a result of the poor building construction / workmanship and inferior building materials. It should be noted however that the number of victims of industrial accident in Lagos state is minimal,

5 Conclusion

The paper concludes that following the increase in the emergency cases recorded in Lagos state and Nigeria at large, agencies such as LASMA and NEMA should intensify effort in disaster prone areas of Nigeria.

6 Recommendations

The paper recommended the followings:-

- The Federal Road Safety Corps, which is already decentralized, should be well equipped to be able to monitor and curtail the over speeding of drivers.
- The Federal Road Maintenance Agency should intensify effort in the maintenance of Nigerian roads
- In case of disaster along major roads, mobile clinic should be provided to attend to victims

These recommendations can be implemented by:

- i. Procurement of vehicles and first aid equipments for the FRSC in order to widen the scope of their work.

- ii. Extend the services of FERMA to cover all deteriorated federal roads and
- iii. Creation of State road maintenance Agency to oversee the maintenance of state roads in Nigeria.

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