

STAKEHOLDERS COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper reviewed the state of stakeholders' coordination and the effects on the management of humanitarian action in Nigeria. The paper x-rays the disaster management system and the role of government and partners in the humanitarian sector. It also explored the structural relationship between actors, sector and inter-sector dynamics, and the concepts of coordination mechanisms at all levels of governance. The barriers, mitigants and advantages of coordination as a critical factor in inter organizational relationship was analysed and policies and plans examined outlining their provisions and importance. The paper concludes with the trends in humanitarian coordination in Nigeria and suggests that the structure be streamlined in line with emerging realities in order to make the role a rewarding one with effective results for the focal organisations.

Key Words: *Humanitarian, Management, Stakeholder Coordination*

Introduction

Humanitarian action in its full throttle requires some key components to be effective. Optimal performance of the system may depend on the full compliments of communication, coordination and effective cooperation of stakeholders in the sector. The concept of coordination is recognized as the component that propels the engine of activities at both the national and international levels of humanitarian action being the rallying point of the sphere both at the national and international stages. The multi sectoral, multifunctional and the multidisciplinary nature of the sector makes it very imperative for focal organisations to understand the different structures, mandates, capacities, competencies, objectives, missions and visions of various humanitarian actors. These includes the United nations system, International Non-Governmental organisations (INGOs), National Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith based organisations (FBOs), Community based organisations (CBOs), Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs),

Development partners, donors, and national governments playing in the humanitarian sector.

The harmonization of the financing, operations and evaluation of these activities can best be done with consistent communication, operational cooperation and effective coordination of both human and material resources. The inability of any single organisation to meet all the needs of those requiring assistance makes coordination very necessary. Disasters are extreme events and in most cases are unexpected, rare and unique and as such require prompt attention and interorganisational interface as social and human systems. So, the interaction of these organisations requires effective coordination and management of resources. (Red Cross, 2001). Quarantelli and Dynes (1977)

According to Larry Minear (2005) coordination in the humanitarian sector can be defined as “systematic utilization of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner”.

The policy instruments required to harmonize the activity include:

1. Strategic Planning
2. Data and information management
3. Resource mobilization and Accountability
4. Division of labour to achieve effectiveness
5. Leadership provision
6. and, Political and institutional framework development and maintenance

This instrument injects an element of discipline without unduly constraining action. Many researchers and scholarly and practice-oriented literature have recognised the significance of collaboratively organising, which includes alliances, stakeholders' partnerships and interorganisational groupings and teamwork. The value of these relationships and the contributions they make has continued to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the group. (e.g., Linden, 2002; Powell, 1990; Gray, 1989).

National Disaster Management System

The disaster management system in Nigeria is run on the four levels of governance which involves the Federal, State, Local government and community levels. It also involves the non-governmental organisations, CBOs, FBOs, INGOs, UN System, international development partners and donors. The National Emergency Management Agency is the national focal organisation for emergency management in Nigeria. The structure is also made up of other MDAs which have statutory mandates related to emergency management and the 36 state emergency management Agencies and the federal capital territory emergency management Agency.

National Coordination Mechanism

In Nigeria and most other countries, humanitarian coordination is divided into four different organizational levels:

- a. Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
- b. United Nations system

- c. International Non-governmental organisations/ Donors/ Development partners/ National governments and government led organisations
- d. National organisations.

The structure culminates into the humanitarian consultative forum which is chaired by the Director General of the National Emergency Management Agency and co-chaired by the head of country team of the United Nations System in Nigeria. This is made up of the heads and co-heads of the 11 humanitarian sectors in the country. At the top of this forum is the ministerial consultative meeting which is the highest decision-making organ below the presidency.

The legal framework for the establishment of these systems for disaster management in Nigeria is derived from the National Emergency Management Agency establishment Act 12 as amended by Act 50 of 1999. This act establishes the structure and relationship of government and non-governmental organisations including ministries, departments, individuals and the private sector in the humanitarian sector. It also dictates the institutional arrangement for disaster mitigation and management which includes the establishment of a single entity at each level of government such as National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) responsible for coordination of such activities and maintaining communication and coordination at national level. State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) at the state level and Local Government Emergency Committee at the LGA level and other community-based structure at the community level.

According to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182 the state which is the federal government plays the lead role in humanitarian response. GA 46/182 in the Guiding principles (4) that

"Each state has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected state has the

primary role in the initiation, organisation, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territories. States whose population are in need of humanitarian assistance are called upon to facilitate the work of these organisations in implementing humanitarian assistance, in particular the supply of food, medicines, shelter and healthcare, for which access to victims is essential". pg 123

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The federal government in every situation that demands humanitarian action plays the following roles:

1. Provide leadership to the response
2. Ensure there is a mechanism for coordination with other humanitarian partners
3. Facilitate easy entry and exit of non-residential humanitarian partners, personnel, goods and equipment.
4. Facilitate legal status of operations of non-residential humanitarian partners.
5. Provide "humanitarian space": Ability of humanitarian actors to work independently and impartially in pursuit of humanitarian imperative.

Responsibility of humanitarian partners

The humanitarian partners have the responsibility of providing needs and beneficiary-based assistance. All aids must seek to save lives and alleviate suffering including support to existing services such as food, water, health, shelter, education etc. All activities aimed at ensuring respect for the

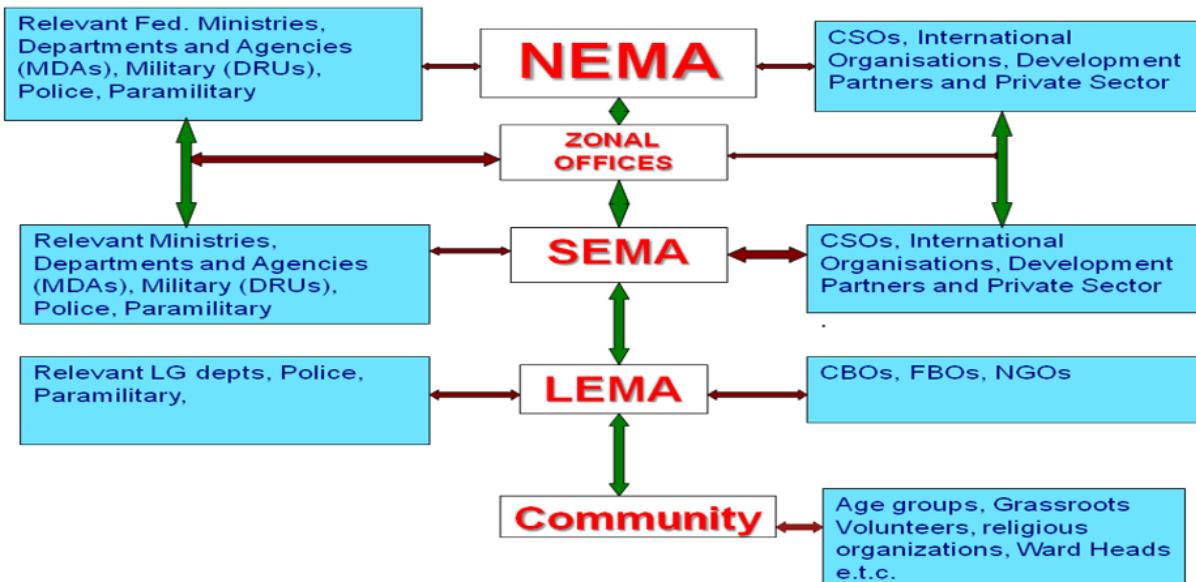
rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of relevant bodies of law, including international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law. Protection should always be integrated into humanitarian assistance.

It is imperative to note that the supporting role of the humanitarian partners are carried out under the premise that no single organisation has a comprehensive mandate or the capacity to assist and protect a large number of vulnerable population alone. This goes to confirm the multisectoral, multidisciplinary and multifunctional nature of humanitarian action.

Structural relationship between actors in the Nigerian system

The national disaster management framework in NEMA (2001) establishes a coordination framework for disaster management in Nigeria. It establishes a vertical and horizontal coordination structure. On the vertical structure, it establishes the relationship between NEMA, SEMA, LEMC, and the community structure. At the state level, the SEMA would relate with NEMA through the zonal offices while LEMC will manage the LGA structure and the community and relate to SEMA while SEMA will then relate to NEMA.

On the horizontal structure, NEMA will relate with other MDAs, DRUs, Police, Paramilitary, International and national NGOs and developmental partners. The horizontal structure defines the relationship among disaster management stakeholders and different levels of government.



It also recognizes the need for operational coordination using all tools available such as the vulnerability and capacity analysis (VCA) and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

SECTOR DYNAMICS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN NIGERIA

The adoption of the national contingency plan in 2010 ushered in the sector-based humanitarian response system in Nigeria which is an adaptation of the UN cluster system. The structure recognizes the division of humanitarian coordination into two parts made up of

The national sectors as lead/co-lead organisations are as below:

SECTOR	LEAD ORGANISATION	CO-LEAD ORGANISATION
Food security	Fed. Min. of Agriculture	FAO/WFP
Camp Coordination & Camp Management (CCCM)	NEMA	UNHCR/IOM
Early Recovery	NEMA	UNDP
Education	Fed. Min. of Education	UNICEF/Save the Children
Emergency Shelter	NEMA/ Red Cross	UNHCR/IFRC
Health	Fed. Min. of Health	WHO
WASH	Fed. Min. of Water Res.	UNICEF
Social Protection	NHRC	UNHCR
Nutrition	FMO Health	UNICEF
Information/Communication	FMO INFO/ COMM.	OCHA/UNICEF/WFP
Security	Police/NSCDC	UNDSS

NEMA (2010)

- a. National organisations under the leadership of the Director General of NEMA, and coordinated by National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
 - b. UN system and the INGOs under the leadership of the Head of country team and coordinated by UNOCHA.
- Based on the above arrangement, Eleven (11) humanitarian sectors were created with national organisations as leads and international organisations as co-leads. This is based on the UN resolutions 46/182 which confers on the state, the right to lead every humanitarian response.

Layers of humanitarian action coordination

There are four levels of humanitarian coordination at the national level in Nigeria, namely:

1. Ministerial committee
2. The Humanitarian consultative forum
3. Inter sector working Group
4. Humanitarian Sectors

The ministerial committee is managed by the Ministry of Humanitarian affairs, disaster management and social development, while the National Emergency Management Agency manages the Humanitarian Consultative Forum and the ISWG is a collection of sector leads and co-leads who work together to ensure that cross sectoral issues are effectively handled.

Inter sector Coordination

The inter sector coordination function serves to provide the Humanitarian Consultative Forum (HCF) with a collective operational perspective on the humanitarian situation. It is also there to improve sectors individual effectiveness through its collaboration with others especially in handling cross cutting issues that may require the contribution of more than one sector to resolve. This brings to the fore the importance of coordination in any given system.

This group while assisting to maintain group synergy performs the following roles in the system;

- a. Keep the HCF informed of any operational response issues and requesting strategic level decisions when necessary
- b. Sharing information among sectors (when, where, what, who, sitreps, mappings) on presence, operational and protection issues.
- c. Agree on common approaches in the response and issues to advocate on.
- d. Planning and responding – joint assessments, joint analysis, joint planning, joint monitoring etc.

- e. Identify criteria for prioritizing funding and identify funding gaps.
- f. Ensure protection is mainstreamed into the response.

COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Humanitarian action as part of emergency management begins from the response stage and ends with recovery, entails a lot of activities which covers many disciplines and sectors. This being the crux of the matter, a whole range of persons, organisations and groups are involved in accomplishing these activities. To be able to execute these functions, the engagement of various activities is required, which in turn necessitates effective coordination of activities between the various activities and organisation.

Communication is very important in humanitarian activities as this is the only means through which information is exchanged between stakeholders and actors in the field. It is a necessary ingredient in the vertical and horizontal coordination of activities. The use of this variable in conjunction with cooperation is the major one that coordination can be effectively utilized in humanitarian action.

The major link between organisations and stakeholders is the ability of focal organization to effectively coordinate the other organisations that are involved in the administration of disaster management activities.

Barriers to effective coordination

The coordination of humanitarian activities in any country is affected by some barriers both at individual and organizational levels. The following variables can be regarded as barriers to effective coordination

1. Organisational Pride/ego/personality: One of the major barriers to coordination in the humanitarian sector is organizational pride and the

- challenges from the officers representing such organisations in meetings and joint activities. Many organisations believe that in the order of things in the country or sector, they should be given priorities or so much respect and such look down on others and find it difficult to follow laid down processes and procedures.
2. Conflicting mandate/goals/agenda and priorities: Organisational mandates and statutory functions sometimes overlap in a sector and therefore make coordination very difficult especially in a joint assignment. Sometimes, this happens in the security sector in the humanitarian action response where the police and Road safety commission and NSCDC have challenges as to who would handle security when an incident occurs on the highway and requires cordoning off the incident location.
3. Hidden agenda: When various organisations do not approach their responsibilities with a clear purpose especially when their approach is targeted at making the focal organization fail at the achievement of the intervention's objective, then, that agenda which it is executing becomes a hidden agenda. This can actually derail the multi-stakeholder intervention and would make the achievement of the objective almost impossible.
4. Mistrust or lack of confidence in coordinators: The focal organization would need to show the highest level of competence to gain the confidence of its stakeholders, and exhibits a clear understanding of its coordinating role as this will improve the response of the stakeholders towards the intervention that they are working towards. The confidence building process is very important if the stakeholders will have no mistrust and actually bank on the competence of the stakeholder whenever they meet before, during or after an intervention
5. Considered waste of time/time consuming: Coordination becomes an uphill task when the stakeholders believe that attending meetings or engaging in other group activities is mere waste of time or is very time consuming and infringing on their very important time schedules.
6. Probable loss of power/autonomy/identity: The organizational or individual feeling of power loss, or loss of authority or identity may lead to the organization not finding it easy to subjugate itself to the leadership of another organisation, when it comes to group or multi- organisational relationship. This constitutes one of the major reasons why most organisations find it difficult to abide by protocols in a multi organizational setting.
7. Differing focus/mandates/methodologies: The focus of every organisation is based on the mandates or legal frameworks establishing it. It is therefore customary for organisations to hold on tight to their normal focus or mandates and peculiar approaches to solving problems even when they find themselves in groups where a standard operating procedure is adopted. This lack of adaptability is a major challenge in group activities.
8. Inadequate top-level (leadership) support: When organisations by reason of national policy or plan are given certain responsibilities, it is imperative that management support is given in terms of budgetary provisions and access to facilitate that function or responsibility. Where appointed representatives are always having challenges obtaining

- permissions to attend meetings, raising funds to attend meetings and training programmes, then it becomes difficult for the organisation to partake in required activities, hence frustrating coordinating efforts of the coordinating agency.
9. Ignorance or lack of defining policy documents: In situations where defining policy documents are unavailable it becomes challenging for both focal organisations and stakeholders to ascertain effectively what their roles are in every activity or response. It therefore pertinent that laws, policies, plans and procedures should be adequately provided for the any group activity where leadership is important and participation of stakeholders necessary.
- Addressing barriers to effective coordination**
- To resolve these barriers to effective coordination, the focal organisation has to ensure that human and material resources have been effectively harnessed to improve the coordination of organisations.
1. Report to superiors when you face challenges with organisations that are collaborating with yours so that the differences can be resolved and nipped in the bud. It is often very apt to engage properly with your stakeholders, so you don't have a lot of gray areas in your discussions and other meetings and activities.
 2. Side door discussions: These are often very ideal in building organizational relationships, as this assists in strengthening existing relationships. This strategy encourages informal meetings and engagements which reinforces the formal relationships existing in the group.
 3. Respect for procedures and protocols: There is need for the observance and respect for existing organizational protocols to avoid conflicts and undue interpretations from stakeholders. This will also entail proper identification and assignment of roles according to statutory mandates and effective adherence to the incident command system as applicable to the nature of incidents being responded to.
 4. Share credit: At the end of any joint response or activity, the organisations should as a matter of great responsibility acknowledge the presence and contributions of other stakeholders especially during end of intervention press conferences, reports and meetings. Doing this improves the relationship between actors in the field and creates synergy whenever a joint activity is required.
 5. Share resources: Resources for the humanitarian interventions need to be provided by the relevant organisations and shared in joint activities, this is a clear evidence of coordination and collaboration in a joint intervention. It is very advisable for stakeholders to have a common use of resources to achieve intervention objectives from joint assessment to joint evaluation.
 6. Request mediation: When challenges emerge in the course of normal joint activities, seek mediation and ensure all sides are satisfied and issues resolved. This will enhance the working relationship between the organisations that are working together in these joint activities.
 7. Influence and encourage participants and other relevant organizations: There comes times during joint activities when it is difficult to continue, a little encouragement and persuasion will rekindle interest and

- help build up interest in further activities.
8. Understand their point of view and be responsive; There is always need to be empathic and responsive both at the individual and corporate levels to enable you understand the challenges of other organisations such as budgetary issues and challenges of facilities and logistics during interventions.
9. Provide information-invite to meeting despite resistance (keep door open): The role of the coordinator is to ensure that all stakeholders receive appropriate information through the right channels even if the relationship does not seem smooth. Adequate invite should be provided for all stakeholders and ensure that all information is promptly disseminated, and feedback received.
10. Show positive results-demonstrate advantages of coordination: Successes of coordinated assignments and interventions should be made public and the successes shared amongst the stakeholders. This encourages all participants to further cooperate in future assignments.
11. Assign key roles and ensure that statutory mandates are adhered to when assigning responsibilities and where are joint mandates, it should be made clear and assignments properly demarcated and regular review carried out to ensure that each organization adheres to its assigned responsibilities.
12. Discuss, negotiate, persuade and barter to ensure that inter stakeholder relationship is maintained and nurtured to optimal levels to enable the group achieve its organizational objectives.

Advantages of coordination in management of humanitarian action

1. Limits confusion and chaos: Coordination makes the management of stakeholders very smooth and simple and eliminates the challenges of role ambiguity and conflicts of mandates in any multi-stakeholder intervention. It ensures that all stakeholders are aware of their roles and the organisations that have similar roles and simulates those roles before such incidents occur thereby creating room for good relationship and partnership in real incident situations.
2. Improves credibility (donors, public, media etc.): The humanitarian activities in any nation is mostly donor driven and as such demands a lot of credibility from the stakeholders. This variable can only be assured through transparent and accountable coordination of all affairs of the process. So, a credible coordination process reassures the donors and the public of the capacity of the stakeholders to accomplish and subsequently provide the prompt responses that are required in attending to disaster incidents.
3. Improves economy: Effective coordination improves the economy of the sector by reducing wasteful activities and conserving resources, as all the units understand what their responsibilities are and try to execute promptly. This also reduces duplication of efforts, and unnecessary conflicts that result in poor management of human and material resources.
4. Wider coverage of the assistance (TEAM): The effectiveness of team work leads to a larger reach in responses due to effective coordination. When team members fully understand their responsibilities and the focal organization is

- responsive in handling its coordinating role, functions and roles are delivered promptly and effectiveness in performance is achieved.
5. Knowledge of who has what competence: Effective coordination brings about proper competency mapping and through that process identifies the gaps that exist in the structure. This process ensures organisations are allowed to perform functions where they have competitive advantage in the execution of interventions.
6. Timeliness in delivery: Prompt responses and delivery of relief materials are ensured through effective coordination. Considering that timeliness is the hallmark of humanitarian action, it is imperative that organisations ensure that their level of preparedness ensures prompt and efficient delivery of services.

Trending issues in Humanitarian Coordination in Nigeria

1. Strengthening the Coordination sector: There is need to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian action in Nigeria. With the establishment of the ministry of humanitarian affairs, disaster management and social development, the coordination structure may need rejuvenation, and recalibration to ensure that both the national and international organisations will be properly coordinated and the rules of engagement established for humanitarian action in the country.
2. Re-inventing the National organisations' coordination: The national government needs to make a conscious effort to include the national NGOs in her coordination architecture by providing ways of engaging them in the delivery of

humanitarian services, unlike what is obtained now where it is basically the international organisations that use the NGOs in the delivery of their services, while the direct funding goes to the international organisations. If the NGOs can get a minimal financial and service patronage from the ministries, departments and agencies, their services will go a long way to strengthening the humanitarian services in the country.

3. Driving coordination efforts to the state and LGA levels: While the coordination at the national levels are being fine-tuned, there is need for the coordination at the state levels to be rekindled to ensure that the preparedness and mitigation reaches the local level promptly. This is more critical in the states that have not established the state emergency management agencies even in 2020 with all the disaster incidents occurring in the country and the world at large. The legal framework needs to be strengthened to create the impetus for the states to urgently strengthen disaster management at the state and local government levels.

4. Creating a better coordination for the HNO/SRP process: The formulation of a country's Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for humanitarian response and Strategic Response Plans (SRP) requires an organized and articulated input from the country in focus and would be very meaningful if the country is given a free hand to make such inputs whenever the UN System desires to generate such fund raising documentation. This will ensure that this document when produced has a complete buy in of all stakeholders in the country and is able to address the issues using the local context.

5. Making the HCF more regular and functional: The Humanitarian Consultative Forum is the most active humanitarian coordination platform which actually puts together information from the coordination group for national decision making in the humanitarian sector. This group which brings together all sector leads and co-leads in the country epitomizes the coordination of humanitarian action in Nigeria and should be more regular and well attended especially now that disaster situations in the country has not abated.

Conclusion

One of the most complex roles in any system is the management of several independent organisations that have different mandates, independent structures, various sources of power and funding, but who once in a while come together to achieve one general objective. The bringing together of these various organisations would naturally require the best of coordination. The structure of the disaster management system must be streamlined to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts, agencies, and organisations to make coordination a very rewarding exercise.

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