



## Active on Paper, Passive in Practice: Local Government and the Challenges of Disaster Management in South West, Nigeria, 2010-2018

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### Abstract

*The National Disaster Management Framework of Nigeria stipulates among other things that State Governments should formulate enabling laws for the establishment and functioning of Local Emergency Management Authority. Therefore, in consonance with the spirit and letter of the local government as the closest administrative unit to the people, it is widely regarded as the most immediate public service provider and the first responder to any disaster. Despite this, the posture of the local government in Nigeria's disaster management system is not desirable, as it has been a passive player. This undesirable development raises the question of disaster management policy implementation in the country. Taking a cue from incidents of flooding particularly those of 2011 and 2012 in South West, Nigeria as case studies, the paper examined the posture of the local government within Nigeria's disaster management policy framework. With a view to achieving the objective of the paper, a field survey was carried-out in six purposively selected local areas in four of the six states in South West, Nigeria. Interviews were also conducted with relevant key informants. The study found-out among other things, that States in the South West region are yet to comply with the provision of the National Disaster Management Framework to establish Local Emergency Management Authority at the local government level. Instead, the responsibility is still not acceptable to many state-owned emergency management outfits; a situation that poses a great danger to the achievement of the overall policy goals of disaster management in Nigeria. Knowing the importance of the local government in disaster management, the paper recommends among other things that financial and political autonomy of the local government would re-position it as an active player.*

**Keywords:** Local Government; National Disaster Management Policy Framework; Autonomy; South-West, Nigeria.

### Introduction

Natural and human-induced disasters happen within the confines of a geo-political space and often with adverse effects on human, economic, social and political activities. Many times, these occurrences place a lot of burden on government spending; destroy public utilities and jeopardize development efforts. It is worthy of note that between 1900 and 2003, natural disasters killed over 62 million people world-wide (OFDA/CRED, 2003). This, according to Cohen and Werker (2008) is approximately the same number as all those killed in the two World Wars, yet scarce attention has been paid to natural disasters in the economics and political science literature, while dozens of articles on conflict are published each year. More recently in 2016, disasters including storms and earthquakes caused \$175 billion damage, besides the death of 8,700 people (Munich RE, 2016).

It is important to state that the prevalence of disasters has posed a challenge on one hand and a compelling need on the other to governments around the world in finding means of reducing their effects on the human race. Therefore, various plans, strategies and policies, both at the international and domestic arena have

been formulated, in a bid to coordinate and integrate all activities necessary to build, sustain and improve the capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to and recover from threatening or actual natural or human-induced disasters. The formulation and establishment of these plans and policies are essential to the attainment of the overall goals of disaster management. Nick Carter put it in a clearer perspective when he explicated that:

Clear definition of national disaster management policy is essential if a country is to establish and maintain adequate arrangements to deal with all aspects of its disaster threat. This applies to all levels of the national structure and organization—that is, from the national government to the local government or community level. If such a policy does not exist, arrangements to deal with disaster will be ill-defined and inadequate. Consequently, loss of material and human resources will arise; the nation, as a whole, will suffer (Carter, 2008: 25).



History of Disaster Management in Nigeria predates independence with the establishment of the Fire Brigade in 1906 (NDMF, 2010). Subsequently, the National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA) was established in the 1970 in response to the devastating drought events of that period. NERA only functioned as a mere relief-giving agency. In 1999 however, NERA transformed to National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) with the broad objective of formulating and coordination of disaster-related policies and events in Nigeria.

In order to achieve a holistic disaster management system in Nigeria, NEMA in 2010, proposed the National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) to replace the National Response Plan (NRP); which was only limited to the phase of disaster response. In a bid to achieve its numerous objectives, the NDMF mandated all 36 states in the country to replicate NEMA at their various state levels as State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). The Policy Framework also encouraged states to formulate enabling laws for the creation of Local Emergency Management Authority at the local government level with the responsibilities to coordinate disaster management activities and response to disaster events in local government areas (NDMF, 2010). However, the local government has been a passive player in the arena of disaster management in Nigeria.

To this end, this paper examines the place of the local government in the overall disaster management scheme in Nigeria with particular focus on the South West region of the country. This study also examines lessons from the patterns of local government involvement in disaster management in certain countries with a view of establishing gaps in the pattern in Nigeria.

Structurally, this paper is divided into six parts: the first is the introduction while the second presents the theoretical framework under which institutionalism and *ecologism* are discussed. The third examines discourse on local government and conceptual literature on Disaster/Emergency Management. The fourth aspect considers lesson from local government involvement in disaster management in certain countries, while fifth part presents local government and the challenges of disaster management in Nigeria, while the final part concludes and presents the way forward.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To further analyze the dilemma of the local government in disaster management in Nigeria, this study subscribed to the use of two theories. They are: institutionalism and *ecologism*.

### **Institutionalism**

Institutionalism simply means the study of government institutions and how they contribute to both political and public policy processes. An institution according to Gauba, is a set of offices and agencies arranged in a hierarchy, where each office or agency has certain functions and powers (Gauba, 2007:87). Each office or agency is manned by persons within definite statuses and roles; other persons also expect them to perform these roles (Gauba, 2007: 87). In a similar vein, Dyke (1960) describes an institution as any persistent system of activities and expectations, or any stable pattern of group behaviour.

It is important to state that government institutions have long been at the heart of political science and political analysis. However, a comprehensive and systematic study can arguably be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, particularly in the work of Max Weber. Weber focused on the organizational structure (i.e. bureaucracy) within the society and the institutionalization created by means of the iron cage organizational bureaucracies create. Due to the 'rigidity' and narrowness of Weber's idea on government institutions, various works emerged to expand the frontiers of institutionalism. Prominent among such works is John Meyer's "Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society and Individual" in 1987 and Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell's influential work entitled: "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional *Isomorphism* and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields".

These intellectual efforts culminated in the emergence of new or neo-institutionalism which emphasises the rational and defining role actors that play in government institutions. New or neo-institutionalism can further be examined under various strands including; Rational Choice institutionalism, actor-centered institutionalism, constructivist institutionalism and feminist institutionalism, among others. For instance, James March and Johan Olsen who are foremost proponents of the New or Neo-Institutional approach opine that institutionalism holds that the "logic of appropriateness" guides the behaviour of actors within an institution, while the norm and formal values of institutions will shape the actions of those acting within them (March, 1994: 57-58).

Generally, the institutional approach underlines the importance of government institutions in the overall processes of public policy. Thomas Dye has observed that:

Traditionally, political science was defined as the study of government



institutions- Congress, the presidency, courts, bureaucracies, states, municipalities and so on. Public policy is authoritatively determined, implemented and enforced by these institutions (Dye, 2005).

Proponents like Thorsten Veblen (*The Theory of Leisure*, 1899) and John Roger Commons (*Organization theory of Institution*, 1990), have proceeded to study the organization and functioning of government, its various organs and how they affect public behaviour; political parties and other institutions affecting politics and public administration. Dye (2005) explains that there is an intricate relationship between public policy and government institutions so much that a policy does not become a public policy until such policy is adopted, implemented and enforced by government institutions. For instance the constitution of a federally structured-political system recognizes at least two levels of government (the federal or central government and the state/regional government) and in some cases; the local government is recognized as the third tier of government; with each level of government having specific but overlapping functions.

This approach is relevant to the study and analysis of modern political systems and public policy processes as it affords a quick identification of which institution performs what function(s). Dye explains that government institutions give public policy three distinctive characteristics, namely: legitimacy, universality and coercion (Dye, 2005: 13-14). Gauba (2007) adds that the institutional approach is targeted at giving an elaborate description of facts; hence, it exemplifies a shift from the normative to the empirical approach and from a historical to a contemporary concern within the purview of traditional approaches.

Despite the attractions and relevance of the institutional approach, it has majorly been criticized for its preoccupation with institutions, largely at the expense of individuals that occupy and function in and at various institutions of government. Even the "logic of appropriateness" postulated by the new or neo-institutional approach is perceived as idealistic, as the rationality of actors largely determines the viability of government institutions. In other words, institutionalism is structurally-biased and fixed.

Nevertheless, institutionalism is of relevance to the study of local government and disaster management. This is because, the first major step at managing disasters is to formulate institutions and set agenda

for their operation (Sentra, 2013). In the case of local government, the institution has been recognized as having perhaps the most important role to play in disaster management. Studies including (but not limited to) O'Leary (2004); Dynes (2006); Col (2007) and Samba (2010) have shown that the local government is the first responder to disasters when they occur. Hence, institutional approach is of importance to this work as it will explain the theoretical and statutory functions of the local government as an institution in the domain of disaster management.

### **Ecologism**

*Ecologism* is adopted as the second framework of analysis for this study. The word 'ecology' has its root in a Greek word *oikos*, depicting 'living place' and used extensively in the Nineteenth Century by Charles Darwin to explain how organisms live and adapt to their environments (Stillman, 1996: 84). *Ecologism* is described as the study of all processes influencing the distribution and abundance of organisms and the interaction between living things and their environments (Wright and Boorse, 2011:51; Sabratalmany and Sambanurty, 2013). The concept later found its way into the discipline of Sociology in the 1920s and was used to explain the interdependence of human life within increasingly complex organic systems and the tendency of humans to move towards an equilibrium or stability (Stillman, 1996: 84).

Ecology later entered the lexicon of Public Administration through the pioneering work of John M. Gaus (1894-1969), the late Harvard Professor in 1945. According to Gaus (1945),

Ecology deals with all interrelationships of living organisms and their environment. Thus, the ecological approach to public administration builds quite literally from the ground up; from the elements of place-soils, climate, location, for the people who live there...

Articulating Gaus' views, Stillman explains that:

For Gaus, administrative systems were intricately intertwined with the fabrics of society. In particular, he delineated several important elements that he found useful "for explaining the ebb and flow of the functions of government: people, place, physical technology, social



technology, wishes and ideas, catastrophe and personality (Stillma, 1996: 84).

Simplifying the concept, Olaleye (2001: 18) argues that the idea of ecology of Public Administration refers to the environment: political, social and economic, within which a particular administration exists. It is important to note that no administration is independent of its socio-political environment. To that extent, administrations assume the nature of their environmental indices. A conscious awareness of ecological factors encourages administrators to respond more wisely to the demands and challenges of the external environment of their organizations (Stillman, 1996: 84).

Within the context of this discourse, the local government in Nigeria is a product of Nigeria's intergovernmental system which Agagu describes as 'chaotic' (Agagu, 2011: 155). It is important to state that the ecology of the local government system in Nigeria is ridden with endemic constitutional instability, incessant reforms, political power-play particularly between the federal and state governments, the question of autonomy, financial recklessness, local government control etc. All these factors have impinged on the operations of the local government and have threatened with its survival and functioning at one point or the other.

*Ecologism* is particularly relevant to this study as it would explain why the local government as a public institution saddled with the responsibilities to coordinate and monitor disaster management activities and response to disaster events in local government area has not been able to do so effectively.

### **Local Government**

Over the years, series of arguments and a plethora of discourses have emerged from both within and outside the academia to justify the creation and relevance of the local government. Prominent among these arguments, is the notion that local government will prevent the danger of 'absolutism' which may emanate as a result of over centralization of governance. This position is advanced by Belmont (1966:35):

There is the idea that local government stands as a hedge against undue centralization which might have become dangerous to liberty or bury the state under the load of an excessive amount of business in the centre. The idea of decongesting the national government is a most practical issue. At an age when the function of government is

continually expanding and when government is continually being pressed to regulate more and more of human life and behaviour and when the welfare state is becoming more and more universal in concept, it seems impractical to concentrate all functions in the hands of one government be it central or intermediate. Decentralization is a bulwark against emergence of absolutism.

Besides preventing the emergence of absolutism, another argument in favour of local government is that the local government platform is a veritable recruiting ground for upper levels government and hence promotes greater participation in governance. This forms the major tenets of the Democratic-Participatory school of local government. According to the proponents of this school, local politics like politics at all other levels deals with conflictual situation and their management (Ola and Tonwe, 2003). Therefore, at this level, citizens are consciously taught to make choices among competing and conflicting opinions; defend their choices and accommodate other contrary opinions. Ola and Tonwe (2003: 25) put the argument even further by stating that local government motivates the citizens by engaging them in political education and political participation.

No doubt, political socialization and recruitment are part of the output functions that any political system is expected to perform in order to preserve its existence (Almond and Powell, 1966). One viable way to attain this is to encourage active participation of majority of the citizens of a country in the governing process especially in democratic systems. In addition, the local government firstly reduces the workload of the national government; lessen the spate of conflicts at the political level, reinforce political pluralism and expand the opportunities for learning and practice in the way of democratic government.

Provision of essential services is another justification for establishing the local government. As Tarr (1983: 1) has remarked local government is one institution which has the highest profile for the common man on the street. The local government is the closest level of administration to the people. Given this attribute, Olugbenga (2010) expresses the view that the local government is equipped to impact more directly on the lives of the citizenry than any other level of government because it is



purposely created to perform specific functions and achieve particular objectives that are local or primary in nature.

### **Disaster/Emergency Management**

Disaster management is defined as those measures which are aimed at impeding disaster occurrences from having effects on communities (Omotoso, 2010:136). The above conception describes the duties of emergency management to mitigation which is just an aspect of the activities associated with disaster management. Disaster management includes a network or a body of policy or policies that regulates the operation of emergency management bodies.

Agagu (2010:156) opines that “emergency management requires the ability to anticipate, preparedness skills in acting with dispatch and effective skills in coordinating the efforts of the various institutions, professionals, actors and stakeholders”. These no doubt are the major features of a modern emergency management system. Firstly, the advancement in technology has made it possible to predict and determine the gravity of natural disasters like earthquakes, thereby giving room for effective evacuation of residents of such areas. Secondly, since the task of managing disasters has gone beyond the responsibilities of a constituted emergency management authority/agencies, but requires concerted efforts by all stake-holders including the inhabitants of such areas, there is the need for effective co-ordination of such activities so as to make maximum impact.

Kasperson and Pijawka (1985:8) describe emergency management as the purposeful activity through which society informs itself about hazards, decides what to do about them, and implements measures to control them, or mitigate their consequences. These activities are said to have two major functions namely, intelligence and control. While intelligence provides the information needed to determine whether a problem exists and to define choices and to determine whether success has been achieved, the control function has to do with the design and implementation of measures aimed at preventing, reducing and redistributing the hazard, and/or mitigating its consequences. Oruonye (2012:2) affirms that “disaster management is the process of addressing an event that has the potential to seriously disrupt the functioning of a society. He adds that:

Disaster management is similar to disaster mitigation; however it

implies a whole of government approach to using community resources to fight the effects of an event and assumes the community will be self sufficient for periods of time until the situation can be stabilized. Disaster management can help minimize the risks of flood disaster through early warning, provide developmental plans for recuperation from the disaster, generate communication and medical resources, and aid in rehabilitation and post disaster reconstruction.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (2005), disaster management is the body of policy, administrative decisions and operational activities required to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and repair the effects of natural or man-made disasters. Indeed, disaster management has to do with a full range of activities that are done in security and natural hazard events. Also, disaster management is the coordination and integration of all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover from threatening or actual natural or human-induced disasters (NDMF, 2010:2). It is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, and multi-service initiative. Commenting on the overall role of an emergency management agency/organization, Oruonye (2012:2), opines that the role of any disaster management authority all over the world is to regulate, coordinate, develop systems and train technical manpower for disaster management. It is as a result of this that the federal government of Nigeria for example established National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) under Decree 12 of 1999 with the broad mandate of coordinating the management of disasters in the country.

Likewise, during the Cold War in Russia, the country had a strong emphasis on civil protection because of the threat of nuclear attack from the U.S. Nuclear fall-out shelters and evacuation procedures were emphasized because of the immediate crisis and threat of mutual destruction (Porfiriev, 1999: 1). As Cold War hostilities dissipated, Russia began to produce legislation to revamp emergency management. This is in total realization by the Russian government that effective emergency management required a structured, developed system. Russia is now integrating additional mitigation and preparedness measures into its



programmes, thus becoming more pro-active than reactive in their strategies (Porfiriev, 1999:1).

Within the context of the various statutes, regulations and ordinances, Petak defines emergency management as the process of developing and implementing policies that are concerned with:

Mitigation – Deciding what to do, where a risk to the health, safety, and welfare of society has been determined to exist; and implementing a risk reduction program; Preparedness – Developing a response plan and training first response to save lives and reduce disaster. It also includes identifying critical resources among responding agencies, both within the jurisdictions and with other jurisdiction, Response – Providing emergency aid and assistance, reducing the probability of secondary damage, and minimizing problems for recovery operations; and Recovery – Providing immediate support during the early recovery period necessary to return vital life support to minimum operation levels, and continuing to normal.

### **Local Government and Disaster Management**

The primary responsibility of a government is the welfare of its people. Thus, the standard of merit of any government can be judged by the adequacy with which it performs the chief functions of government: the protection of its people from internal and external threats to their survival. Hence, it becomes expedient for any serious government to constitute agencies, institutions and policy frameworks that would aid the attainment of the overall goals of government. In the arena of disaster management, the government is expected to take the lead in implementing preventive actions by directly allocating public resources and indirectly by showing people how to protect themselves against occurrences of disaster (Bertilaso, 2010). In doing this, all hands must be on deck and should cut across all levels of government especially at the grassroots that is, local government. This is informed by the need to decentralize power as a result of complexities surrounding the modern day government.

In democratic settings, the local government is a government by popularly elected bodies charged with administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place. In disaster management, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk (2010) expressed the functioning of the local government as central to the achievement of a virile disaster management system. According to the strategy:

As the most immediate public service provider and interface with citizens, local governments are naturally in the best position to raise citizens' awareness of disaster risks and to listen to their concerns. Even the most sophisticated national disaster risk reduction measures (such as early warning systems) may fail if communities are not properly informed and engaged. Likewise, community preparedness measures are sometimes as effective as costly public investments in reducing casualties from disasters, and local governments should play a central role in community education and training (UNISDR, 2010).

Justifying intergovernmental cooperation and the involvement of the local government in disaster management, studies like Drabek and Hoetmar (1991), O'Leary (2004), Dynes (2006), Col (2007), Mener (2007), Bob (2008), UNISDR (2010), NDMF (2010), Gireesa (2011) and others have presented strong cases for decentralization of emergency activities. According to these studies, it would bring about better and a more efficient service-delivery.

For instance, Col (2007) argues that although all levels of government are generally involved in disaster management, the role and actions of the local government are particularly critical. For O'Leary (2004:1), virtually all disasters are experienced at local level where many communities can be expected to be on their own for the first seventy-two hours after disaster impact.

Theoretically, the local government can get involved in disaster management in these two ways: Comprehensively, when it conducts the four phases of Emergency Management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. On the other hand, local government can get involved by conducting, planning strategy/framework of hazard



assessment, resource mobilization and operation with other entities both internally and vertically (Drabek and Hoetmer (1991). In similarly vein, the UNISDR (2010) opined that:

*The role of local governments in dealing with risk reduction have been recognized as key factors to build resilient communities and nations since the beginning of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 considers that both communities and local authorities should be empowered to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources and authority to implement actions.*

In the United States of America, disaster management is backed up by several legislations which respect the federal structure of the country (Mener, 2007). In addition, there are sovereign jurisdictions with specific and reserved responsibilities established in the U.S Constitution. Although, the functions of sub-state levels of government depends entirely on each state's constitution with responsibilities differing among states, local government is responsible for all phases of disaster management (Col, 2007). It is worthy to note that local authorities played massive roles (although still considered inadequate) at the event of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans in the United States of America, as about 80 to 90 percent of inhabitants were tremendously assisted by all levels of government beginning from the local before, during and immediately after the deluge (Onwubiko, 2012:3). Similarly, commenting on the 2007 California Wildfire, Mayer, Salmon and Weitz (2008) submit that:

*The most notable characteristic of the 2007 California wildfires' response and a pivotal factor in its success was the proactive nature of the state and local responses. California wildfire was state- and locally driven, not federally driven. State and local leaders made a vigorous effort to take charge and avoid visible infighting.*

*In the case of Australia, disaster management (DM) is organized under a tiered, "all agencies" framework that involves all levels of government*

*(EMA, 2004). At the state level in particular, the local government plays pivotal roles in disaster management. As observed by Bajracharya, Childs and Hastings (2010:1-2), the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (2008), the Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework (2005) and associated guidelines, identify the local government as the key management agency for local disaster events. The local government has significant and wide ranging responsibilities that include but are not limited to developing and maintaining a local disaster management plan, establishing a local disaster management group (LDMG), and engaging the community in disaster management (COAG 2009; Bajracharya, Childs and Hastings, 2010:1-2). In practice, local government authorities have been the vanguard for disaster management in Australia. For instance, during the Victoria Wildfire of 2009, the local government supported emergency services by providing vital resources and local knowledge of vulnerable communities, property and infrastructure (ALGA, 2009). In addition, local councils were responsible for establishing relief centres for displaced and stressed members of the community and coordinated counselling and other personal support services (ALGA, 2009).*

In India as observed by Gireesan (2011), the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments in India enables the local government with power, authority and resources to function as units of self-government through varying levels of initiatives, drives, interest, intensity and diversity of operations in practice. In addition, local government authorities do have more important roles in disaster preparedness, disaster management as well as in meeting the post-disaster situation.

Historically, in China, the country has been divided into several political sub-divisions. Today, it has five levels of government below the national government: provinces, prefectures, counties, township and villages (Col, 2007). The real local level of government in China is the county which 3,000 nationwide (Col, 2007). It is important to note that at the event of the Tangshan earthquake of 1976 that killed an estimated 246, 000 people and destroyed 180 buildings, there were no recorded deaths in the Qinglong County as a result of the massive role the Qinglong County Authority played before, during and after the event. Col (2007) stressed that:

*More than 246,000 people were killed in the 1976 Tangshan*

Earthquake. In Qinglong County, despite the collapse of 180,000 buildings, no deaths were attributable to the earthquake and its aftershocks. The case of Qinglong County illustrates excellent co-ordination among public administrators, scientists and citizens and features pro-active policies, local government initiative, thorough implementation, delegation, information sharing, and citizen participation.

**Local Government and Disaster Management in Nigeria**

The National Disaster Management Framework, which is Nigeria’s disaster management policy document, stipulates that the state reserves the exclusive right to ensure the creation (and by extension, the functioning) of Local Emergency Management Authority which in turn would be referred to as the Local Emergency Management Committee (NDMF, 2010). The Section further states that:

- ii. Monitor and provide feedback to SEMA on the status of preparedness of all organizations and agencies which may contribute to disaster management within the local government Area;
  - iii. Collect and collate data on disaster and disaster risk areas in their respective Local Governments, and share same with SEMA;
  - iv. Mobilize support and resources from the SEMA when damages and need assessments are considered beyond the capacity of the Local Government to respond; and
  - v. Establish and development Disaster Management capacity of community structures.
- Taking a cue from the 2011 and 2012 flood incidents in the region under review, public perception of the local government within Nigeria’s disaster management framework and its involvement in managing disasters was embarrassing. A total of 180 questionnaires were administered in seven localities of Owode-Onirin-Ikorodu and Aboru-Iyana-Ipaja (Lagos); University of Ibadan, Agbowo and Oke-padi-Ogunpa (Oyo); Sango-Ota (Ogun); and Ajilosun-Ado-Ekiti (Ekiti). All the communities were selected purposively due to the frequency of flooding in the localities.

State	Very Poor	Poor	Good	Very Good	No Response
Lagos	7 (14%)	27 (54%)	16 (32%)	0 (0%)	-
Oyo	11 (22%)	23 (46%)	13 (26%)	4 (8%)	-
Ogun	22 (55%)	18 (45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	-
Ekiti	4 (10%)	13 (32.5%)	16 (40%)	5 (12.5%)	2 (5%)

It is important to state that while the federal and perhaps state government had a measure of involvement before, during and after the flood incidents, the local government which is widely acclaimed as the closest to the people and the first service-provider in any emergency, was totally absent. Data below explains this further:

Table 1: Showing respondents’ rating on the performance of government (Federal, State and Local) in the management of disasters particularlyly flooding in South West, Nigeria

State	Very Poor	Poor	Good	Very Good	No Response
Lagos	7 (14%)	11 (22%)	32 (64%)	0 (0%)	-
Oyo	4 (8%)	28 (56%)	13 (26%)	5 (10%)	-
Ogun	20 (50%)	20 (50%)	10 (0%)	0 (0%)	-
Ekiti	4 (10%)	24(60%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)

**The Federal Government**  
 Source: Fieldwork by the Author, 2014.

**Table 2: The State Government**

Source: Fieldwork by the Author, 2014.

Under the same policy framework, the LEMC shall perform the following functions:

- i. Co-ordinate disaster management activities and response to disaster events in local government area;



**Table 3: The Local Government**

State	Very Poor	Poor	Good	Very Good	No Response
Lagos	12(24%)	29 (58%)	9 (18%)	0 (0%)	---
Oyo	10 (20%)	27 (54%)	10 (20%)	13 (26%)	---
Ogun	20 (50%)	20 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	---
Ekiti	5 (12.5%)	25 (12.5%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)

Source: Fieldwork by the Author, 2014.

Results from the key informant interviews conducted with selected stakeholder that included; Head of Operations and other top officials of NEMA, Ekiti Operation Office; the General Manager of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA); General Managers of Ekiti, Osun, Oyo and Ogun States SEMA and other stake holders, show that almost all local governments particularly in South West Nigeria are yet to have LEMA as stipulated in the NDMF. The situation is even worse in Ondo State which is yet to establish its SEMA not to talk of LEMA/LEMC (NEMA, 2017).

In the case of Ekiti State, the General Manager of the State’s emergency management outfit stated that in place of LEMA, Desk Officers were appointed and stationed under the Department of Community Development in secretariats of the 16 LG. In similar vein, the General Manager of Osun State SEMA explained that only one of the thirty LGAs of Osun State – Olorunda LG, has established its LEMA and LEMC. In Lagos State, liaison offices have been created in some LGAs of the state. Data gathered from key informants (General Managers) at Oyo, Lagos and Ogun SEMAs show that the situation in these States are similar, as there are no LEMAs in these States. In the case of Oyo, the General Manager of Oyo SEMA argued that it is not the responsibility of the state to establish LEMA as local governments in the State are independent although under Care-taker Chairmen. He stressed that the duties of LEMA are performed by Health Inspector Officer popularly called ‘*Wole-wole*’.

On the side of the local government, key informant interviews were conducted with the Executive Secretary of Oye LGA; the Branch Chairman of the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Ijero-Ekiti LG; and an official of the Department of Work, Ado LG, shows that oblivion of the provision of the NDMF is more pronounced at the local government level. Although, it was confirmed that LEMA/C does not exist at the local government level, the Secretary of Oye local

government in Ekiti State whom himself is a

Political Scientist, described this as a policy issue that concerns the State. The NULGE Chairman of the Ijero-Ekiti Branch, Mr. Owodunni explicitly stated that:

There is nothing like an emergency/disaster management structure at the local government level in Ekiti state; although, we often receive reports of wind/rain storms from different communities in Ijero LG. The complaints received are treated directly by the Chairman of the Council himself, who in return allocates relief items received from the federal (NEMA) through the state (SEMA) to victims of wind and rain storms. By implication, relief administration is done according to the whims and caprices of the Chairman and not by an structure, authority or committee.

(Excerpt from the interview conducted with Mr. Owodunni, the Branch Chairman of the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Ijero-Ekiti LG at his residence on Sunday, 16/9/2018.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to ask why states in South West, Nigeria which is the focus of this study have not complied with the provisions of the NDMF. Proffering an answer to this question, Onwubiko (2012) attributes it to the lack of autonomy of the local government and failure by State Governors to respect Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which affirms the institutionalization of democracy at the grass root level (Onwubiko, 2012:3).

Indeed, true democracy has largely eluded the local government system in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Appointments into many local government systems has been on patronage basis, as State governors have appointed their party faithful as Care-taker heads of local governments. In Ekiti for instance, under the Fayemi first Tenure (2010-2014), there was not a single election conducted into the local government councils for four years. Even in States where elections into the local government were conducted, they were done for the fun of it as the dominant party in such States swept all the available seats.



Another obvious reason LEMA/LEMC has not been created in many states in Nigeria and the South West region in particular, is the lack of political will on the part of state governors to constitute the body. This has rather led to bulk-passing. According to the head of Oyo SEMA, it is the responsibility of local governments to create their own version of LEMA at the local level. With specific references to Ekiti State, the Act that established its SEMA stated that the LEMA/C shall be constituted by the Office of the Deputy Governor. Besides, both SEMA and LEMA shall be funded directly through the State's share of the Ecological Fund. Reports from the Agency revealed that the between October 2014 and October 14, 2018 under the administration of Governor Ayodele Fayose, LEMC was not constituted. Even the State's SEMA received a laughable monthly running grant of 60,000 naira (Fieldwork 2018). Consequently, the Agency had to largely depend on NEMA.

### Conclusion/Way Forward

This paper has presented one of the undesirable features of Nigeria's inter-governmental relations as it affect the local government in the country's disaster management system. It was established in the study that the local government should be at the forefront of disaster management, being the closest government to communities where disasters occur most. Cases were cited from certain countries where the local government institution plays pivotal roles in the planning, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery phases of disaster management. The situation in Nigeria with particular focus on the South West region of the country is not desirable as the local government has been passive in the overall management of disaster.

Despite the fact that the National Disaster Management Framework (2010), the blue-print for disaster management in the country stipulates that States should formulate laws that would ensure the establishment of Local Emergency Management Agencies in all the local government areas of each State. Besides, States are direct beneficiaries of the Ecological Fund which is meant to take care of disaster management-related cases. This undesirable development raises the question of public policy implementation in the area of emergency management in Nigeria. More often, the policy implementation stage constitute the grave-yard of many well-formulated policies in Nigeria (Olugbenga, 2013). It also raises the need for the local government to be politically and financially

independent of the two other tiers of government: the federal and state.

To this end, this paper recommends that the local government as the third tier of government in Nigeria be granted full political and financial autonomy. This would better position the institution to play active parts in disaster management.

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#### **List of Interviews**

Telephone Interview with Olanrewaju, T. the General Manager, Osun State Emergency Management Agency on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2017.

Telephone Interview with Osasona, F. the General Manager, Ekiti State Emergency Management Agency on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2017.

Telephone Interview with Mr. Makinde, the General Manager, Oyo State Emergency Management Agency on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2017.

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Telephone Interview with Mr. Olatubosun, the General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2017.

Telephone Interview with Hon. Chief Bodunde Daramola, Secretary, Oye Local Government, Ekiti State on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2017.

Interview with Mr. Owodunni, the Branch Chairman of the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Ijero-Ekiti LG at his residence on Sunday, 16/9/2018.

Interview with Mr. Jide Borode, the General Manager of Ekiti SEMA from November 2017-October 31, 2018 when the interview