

Research article

An Appraisal of Disaster Relief Agency Operations in the States of African Sub Region

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ABSTRACT

The challenge posed by the population growth and violation in infrastructural development in the rural and urban areas show several potential hazards it poses daily. The federal and state Government in anticipation has established emergency relief agencies and hazards prevention sector operators with the hope to sustained natural and manmade structures. Environmental pollution is the major problem associated with rapid population growth, industrialization, urbanization and rise in living standards of people. For developing countries, infrastructural development and industrialization was must and still this activity very much demands to build self reliant and in uplifting nation's economy. However, industrialization on the other hand has also caused serious problems relating to environmental disaster. This study was undertaken to appraise the performance and to explore the readiness of State Emergency Relief Agency. An attempt is also made to suggest strategies to reduce the excess death and suffering from disaster. In this study a descriptive survey research design involving the collection of disaster response data from the Red Cross, Police, Fire Service, Road Safety Corps, Anambra State Emergency Relief Agency, Anambra State environmental Market was adopted. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The data collected and the results obtained were analyzed by converting the frequencies to percentages. The major findings of this study are that the state relief agency is not operational ready to meet the exigencies of relief operations because they are not effective. Moreover, there are no logistics in place that could be used during an emergency. Therefore, the state is not in any way prepared to deal agencies responsible for disaster relief are not properly co-ordinated. This has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the relief system. Thus the agencies should be overhauled and the necessary facilities and infrastructures put in place to ensure prompt response to disaster events. **Copyright © AJEPR, all rights reserved.**

Key words: disaster, Emergency Relief Agency, Exigencies, Hazard

1. Introduction

Disaster management (or emergency management) is the discipline of avoiding and dealing with both natural and man-made disasters. It involves preparedness, response and recovery plans made in order to lessen the impact of

disasters. An 'emergency' is 'an unplanned event that can cause deaths or significant injuries to employees, customers or the public; or that can shut down your business, disrupt operations, cause physical or environmental damage, or threaten the facility's financial standing or public image' (FEMA, 1993). Emergency management can be further defined as "the discipline and profession of applying science, technology, planning and management to deal with extreme events that can injure or kill large numbers of people, do extensive damage to property, and disrupt community life" (Boin, et al 2008). Disaster management does not necessarily avert or eliminate the threats themselves, although the study and prediction of the threats is an important part of the field. The basic levels of emergency management also include the various kinds of search and rescue activity. All aspects of disaster management deal with the processes used to protect populations or organizations from the consequences of disasters. This can be seen through government publications such as the National Strategy for Homeland Security which detail how individuals and varying levels of government respond during the different phases of a disaster.

'Emergency planning should aim where possible to prevent emergencies occurring, and when they do occur, good planning should reduce, control or mitigate the effects of the emergency. It is the systematic and ongoing process which should evolve as lessons are learnt and circumstances change' (Office, 2013). Emergency events can include terrorist attacks, industrial sabotage, fire, natural disasters (such as earthquakes, severe weather, etc.), public disorder, industrial accident, communications failure and loss, or corruption of critical information. Emergency planning should be viewed as part of a cycle of activities beginning with establishing a risk profile to help determine what should be the priorities for developing plans and ending with review and revision, which then restarts the whole cycle' (Office, 2013). In order to avoid, or reduce significant losses to a disaster, it is essential that emergency managers identify, anticipate and implement processes to respond to critical risks, in order to reduce the probability of their occurrence, or the magnitude and duration of impact. It is essential for them to not only have controls in place to handle the emergency, but they should also have plans to ensure disaster continuity of critical operations post-incident. The implementation of an emergency plan involves much more than just its preparation. It must be regularly maintained, in a structured and methodical manner, to ensure it remains up to date and fit for purpose in the event of an emergency. Emergency managers will generally follow a common process to anticipate, assess, prevent, prepare, respond and recover from an incident.

Emergency management plans and procedures should include the identification of appropriately trained member/s of staff responsible for decision making, perhaps in consultation with others, when an emergency has occurred. Training plans should not only consider internal people who have a role in the emergency plans, but it should also ensure contractors and civil protection partners are involved. The plans themselves should explicitly identify the nature and frequency of training and testing required. An organisation should regularly test the effectiveness of their emergency plans by carrying out test exercises, ensuring all key staff involved in the planning, or response. It may be necessary for multiple organisations to develop a joint emergency plan, with a formal set of instructions to govern them all, in order for a successful combined response.

Natural disasters can be categorized as "acute" or "slow" in their onset. They are predictable because they cluster in geographic areas. Natural hazards are unpreventable and, for the most part, uncontrollable. The severity of damage caused by natural or technological disasters is affected by population density in disaster-prone areas, local building codes, community preparedness, and the use of public safety announcements and education on how to respond correctly at the first signs of danger. According to Geis (1996) a disaster is a tragic event that disrupts the normal routine of life, causing loss of property and life and suffering. Recent report and images of the havoc done by flood in South Africa and that of hurricane in Mozambique are blood chilling. These incidences were accompanied by over flowing of River Limpopo, which left thousands of people dead, with hundreds of thousand others rendered homeless. There was also an incalculable damage to property. All these however, have brought to the fore the big question about how prepared Anambra State is should we be faced with some unforeseen disaster.

Recently in the Southern part of the country, there are reports of great havocs done too many homes by rainstorms. Reports about a minor earth tremor in Ondo State a few years ago should give us a cause for concern, more so as a similar thing was said to have occurred some year back in Ogun State. The establishment of an effective and efficient disaster relief system would eliminate delays associated with response time and ensure immediate and coordinated efforts to restore normalcy to the affected communities and individuals. This is the sole aim of this research work. In the developed world such as the United States of America, the society is built on a foundation of

optimism. The people expect the American State to work always in pursuit of the common good. Every American administration takes this to heart as the substance of its contracts with the people.

Regrettably, this correspondence between the state and the people is often lacking in Nigeria. For example, it was reported that during the September 11, 2001 tragedy in America, the Nigerian Embassy in New-York was slow in helping to identify the Nigerian Victims and their families and offering them any assistance. In the same vein, on January 27th 2002 when a bomb blast occurred in Ikeja Lagos, the capacity of the relevant authorities to respond to the emergency was slow and uncoordinated. A year after America is still conducting Laboratory research and other investigations to get to the root of the September 11 2001, debacle. Here in Nigeria such tragic occurrences are quickly forgotten and treated for the most part, like a distraction.

The fact is that, while in America, there is the expected thinking that every American life is worthy of protection, here in Nigeria, the reverse is increasingly the case, as there is so much alienation between the state and society; If any other thing stands out in bold relief, following any incidents, it is government's lack of capacity for dealing with emergencies. It continues to happen again and again in a fire accident, a plane crash, multiple road accidents, bomb explosion, etc. In every instance, official response has been and even when the relevant agencies finally bestir themselves, the available capacity is inadequate. Nigeria is not in any way prepared to tackle emergency rescue operations, if the need arises. This is in spite of the fact that we have in place a National Emergency Relief Agency. If there is an Ocean surge today which threatens Victoria Island or if the Ogunpa Stream in Ibadan burst its banks again as it has done before, or in the event of either in Rima River or River Niger overflowing their banks and bring major flood disaster or the Jesse town oil pipeline fire tragedy how do we response quickly such that the causality figure would be minimized.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

II. THE STUDY AREA

The study area is Anambra State; Anambra is a state in south-eastern Nigeria. Its state theme is "Light of the Nation " Its boundaries are formed by Delta State to the west, Imo State to the south, Enugu State to the east and Kogi State to the north. The origin of the name is derived from the Omambala River -which is easily called Anambra River depending on which dialect used in pronouncing it. Omambala River is on the northern part of Anambra state and stretches to the famous River Niger. The main towns of Anambra state are Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, Ogbunike, Obosi, Ihiala, Ekwulobia (Aguata), Uli, Abagana. Other significant communities include Ogidi, Aguleri, Umueri (Umuleri), Umuoba-Anam, Nmiata-Anam, Awkuzu, Nsugbe, Ichida, Alor and Atani. There are 21 Local Government Areas in the state: Aguata, Awka-North, Awka-South, Anambra-East, Anambra-West, Anaocha, Ayamelum, Dunukofia, Ekwusigo, Idemili-South and Idemili-North. Others are Ihiala, Njikoka, Nnewi-North, Nnewi-South, Ogbaru, Onitsha-North, Onitsha-South, Orumba-North, Orumba-South, and Oyi. Most of the population of Anambra State is members of the enterprising Igbo ethnic group who are renowned for their resourcefulness and spirit of entrepreneurship. The Anambra Igbo are ubiquitous and can be found in all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, as well as in virtually every region of the world. Wherever they find themselves, the entrepreneurial skills of the Igbo stand them out in all their fields of endeavour. Indeed, Anambra State is a very exciting place to visit by anyone who wants to experience the vibrancy of authentic Africa.

The state comprises numerous thickly populated villages, a number of small towns and a few major towns; some areas are so thickly populated that the estimated density is 1500-2000 persons living within every square kilometre. Most of the population is rural, although over the last two decades the rural-urban migration has stretched the meagre urban services to a breaking point. This pattern of human migration has posed serious problems for the state's resources, fragile infrastructure, environmental sanitation, erosion control and social services.

Onitsha North and South and Awka South was specifically selected and chosen. Onitsha has the largest market in Africa while Awka is the state capital, the seat of the government. Onitsha comprises Onitsha North and South Local Government Areas. They are one of the towns in the former Eastern Region of Nigeria. They benefited from colonial Administration. Onitsha and Awka town grew rapidly from small to large towns because of the main market and the University Community respectively. They have population of about 1,850,406 people. This information was gathered from "Anambra State, Annual Bulletin of the Local Government Service Commission,

First Edition, 2000, and Page 28". Onitsha is about 45 kilometres from Enugu and lies on the shore border of the River Niger and on the Northern boarder of the state while Awka is about 40 kilometers from Enugu and lies on the central part of the state. Onitsha and Awka is on an elevated ground with hilly projections. The areas have tropical type of climate. The soil is very fertile and the inhabitants produce a lot of food items even though most of the inhabitants are businessmen.



Figure 1 Map of Nigeria showing Anambra State

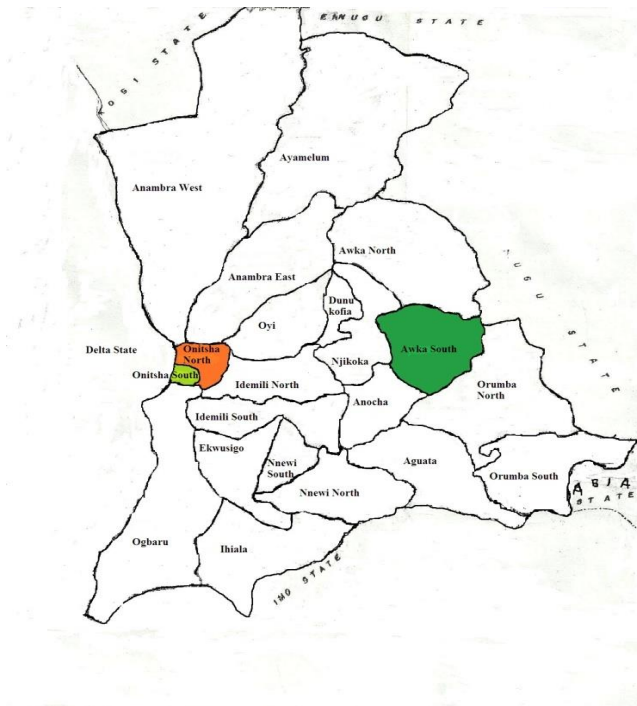


Figure 2 Map of Anambra State Showing the Study Areas

III. Field Sample Selection

In this study a descriptive survey research design involving the collection of disaster response data from the Red Cross, Police, Fire Service, Road Safety Corps, the Anambra State Emergency Relief Agency and Anambra State Environmental Protection Agency was adopted. Specifically, the survey seeks to evaluate the relief system in Anambra State. Some population would be studied and a finding from is these parts is expected to be generalised to the entire population.

IV. Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. It was designed to measure the effectiveness of disasters relief system. The questions are thirty-three questions in all. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A requires the respondent to give his/her personal data. Section B and C contain the main items for which the research is designed. In carrying out the operation of the reliability of the instrument, the researcher applies the technique of test-retest. This means that the researchers administers constructed questionnaire to the same sets of individuals on two occasions and the results are compared and obtained similar answers.

V. Statistical Analysis

The categories of the response in a rating scale were quantified by assigning numerical values to categories of responses. The data collected and the results obtained were analysed by converting the frequencies to percentages. The percentages were calculated as the number responses gathered from the respondents divided by the total number of questionnaires collected multiply by one hundred over one.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Results

From figure 3 above it could be seen that 96 out of 100 respondents representing 96 percent said they have experienced one form of disaster or the other. While 4 percent respondents said they have not. The Figure 4 shows that one hundred persons out of 100 respondents representing 100 percent said they have never received various forms of help from the state government. The figure 5 above shows that out of 100 respondents, one percent said that the total cost of damage ranges between 50,000—100,000 while ninety-nine percent respondent said that the total cost of damage experienced ranges between N151,000.00 anti above. Figure 6 presented the data that 8 out of 100, respondents representing eight percent said they will consult the police when there is a disaster. Forty-five percent of the respondents said they will consult the fire service while forty percent respondents said they will consult the Anambra State Environmental Protection Agency and three and four percent of the respondents said they will consult Anambra State Emergency Relief Agency and Red Cross respectively. From figure 7 data shows that 100 respondents representing 100 percent said the response of disaster relief agencies is not effective.

From the data in figure 8, 100 respondents representing hundred percent said emergency relief agencies office are located at the state capital, Awka while zero percent respondents said the offices are located at the community and zero percent respondents said the offices are located at the ward level. The Figure 9 shows that 5 respondents out of 100 respondents representing five percent said only Anambra State Emergency Relief Agency exist in the state. 3 person representing three percent said only police is a disaster relief agency that exist in the state while 8 respondent representing eight percent said only Red Cross is the disaster relief agency that exist in the state, and eighty percent of the respondents said all the agencies mentioned above exist in the state. The data in figure 10 shows that 7persons out of 100 respondents representing seven percent said they will inform police when there is disaster. Twenty-five percent of the respondents said they will inform fire brigades, while one percent of the respondent said it is the Red Cross Red that will be informed and sixty-seven percent of the respondents said they will inform in the ANSERA when there is disaster. Figure 11 shows that 8persons out of the 100 respondents representing eight percent said it is the police that provided assistance during their disaster experience, 20 persons out of the 100 respondents representing twenty percent said the agency that provided them assistance is the Anambra State Emergency Relief Agency, 32 persons out of the 100 respondents representing thirty-two percent said the agency that provided them

assistance is the Red Cross while 40 respondents representing forty percent of the respondents said it is the fire service that provided the assistance during their disaster occurrence.

The data in figure 12 indicates that seven percent received 61 percent and above of their loss, ten percent received 41 to 60 percent of their loss, forty percent received 21 to 40 percent of their loss while forty-three percent received 1 to 20 percent of their loss to disaster. Figure 13 shows that 98 respondents out of 100 respondents representing ninety-eight percent said the compensation is not effective while two percent of the respondents said the compensation is effective. Figure 14 shows that 88 respondents out of 100 respondents representing eighty-eight percent said the emergency disaster relief agencies respond to disaster event between 3-5 hours of the incident while twelve percent of the respondents said it is between 6 hours and above. Findings from figure 15 indicate that 83 respondents out of 100 respondents representing eighty-three percent said they build according to regulation to reduce disaster occurrence. Ten percent of the respondents said they provide fire extinguisher to reduce occurrence while seven percent of the respondent said the provision of only drainage system help to reduce disaster

The figure 16 indicate that 2 agencies out of 8 agencies representing 25 percent said it is only access road is the logistic in place during an emergency while 6 percent representing 75 respondents said it is just human and material resources are the only logistics in place during emergency. The figure 17 indicate that 2 out of 8 respondents representing 25 percent said that it is only the trained officers and availability of necessary materials are the disaster mitigation arrangement in place while 6 representing 75 Percent respondent said there is no disaster mitigation arrangement in place. The Figure 18 indicates that I out of 8 respondents representing 12.5 percent said the response of state disaster agency to disaster events is effective. I respondent representing 12.5 percent said very effective and fairly effective respectively while 5 respondents representing 62.5 percent said the response of state disaster agency to disaster events is not effective. Figure 19 shows 23 percent of the respondents said all above are the State disaster team. Figure 20 shows that 7 out of 8 respondents representing 87.5 percent said the teams know their roles and the roles of others in emergency situation while I respondent representing 12.5 percent said the teams do not know their role and the role of others. From the figure 21, indicate that 4 out of 8 respondents representing 50 percent said that the emergency relief team receives their support from the government while 3 respondents representing 37.5 percent said they receive their support from private sector and I respondent representing 12.5 percent said the team does not receive their support from any of them. From the figure 22, I respondent representing 12.5 percent said search and rescue is the role of the agency; and Treatment of Victims respectively while 2 respondents representing 25 percent said Distribution of aids and advocacy for compensation and Evacuation is the roles of the agencies respectively. The figure 23 shows that 2 respondent representing 25 percent said the communities are mobilized during emergency situation through the village heads while I respondent representing 12.5 percent said the agency mobilized the community through the town union Leaders. 2 representing 25 percent said the communities are mobilized during emergency situation through the age grades and 3 respondents representing 37.5 percent said the agency mobilized the community through the town criers.

11. Discussion

The state disaster relief agencies respond to disaster events is not very effective. This finding agrees with Sanya (2000) observation who stressed that no disaster management agency is in any way prepared to tackle emergency rescue operations if the need arises. This is despite the fact the agencies exist in most part of the country. Considering the individual items it was observed that all the response from the study instrument asked to verify the operational readiness of the agency in tackling emergency situation was in the negative this shows that the state disaster relief agency is not operational ready to meet the exigencies of relief operations. According to Obiakor (1991), "the last Onitsha main Market fire outbreak was not tackled by Anambra State disaster relief agency". He said, it was a neighbouring state Delta State disaster relief agency that rescued them from the predicament. According to him, during the emergency, the state disaster relief agency when contacted said their machines and equipments were grinded. It is clear from the individual question that the agency has in principle various methods of mobilizing and involving the communities during disaster relief process, however the communities usually mobilize themselves. After the main market fire disaster, the victims never received any relief from the relief agency rather the individual through their relations, club and organization raised fund for them to start afresh. According to Okundejo (2002) it was co-operate bodies, individuals and groups that made donations during the bomb blast

disaster at Lagos. There are few search and rescue outfit scattered across the country, there are agency outpost in about four major towns in the state but there are no disaster mitigation and preparedness measure in place.

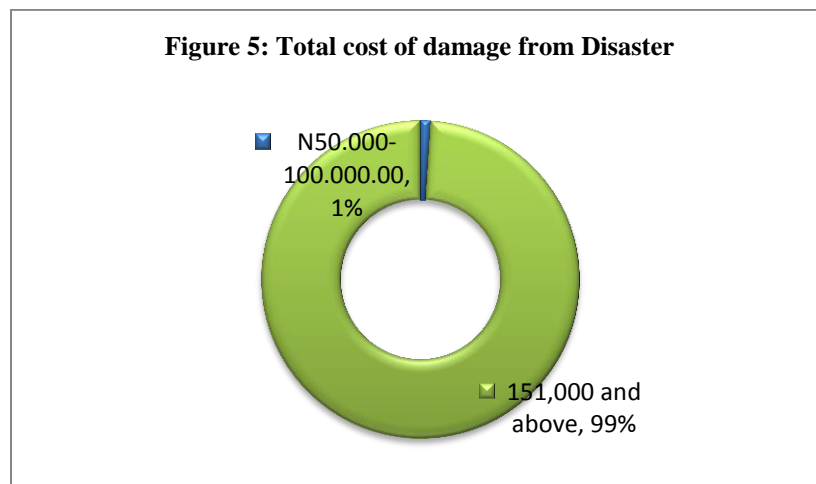
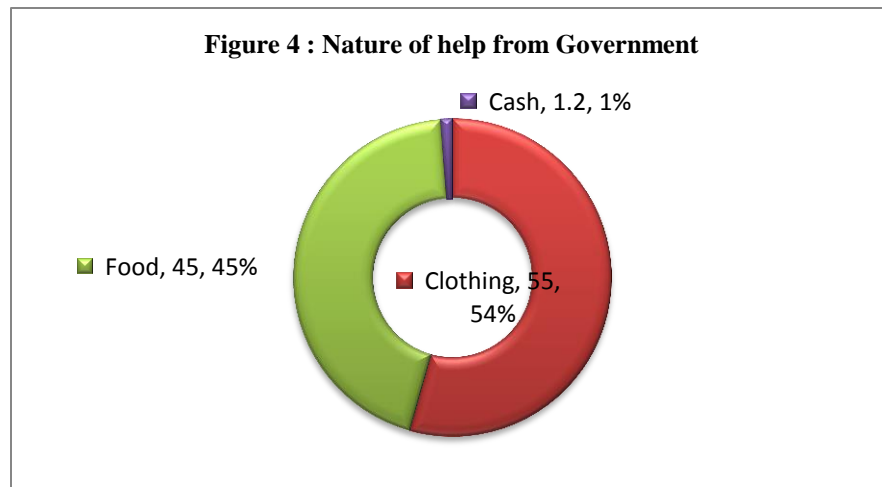
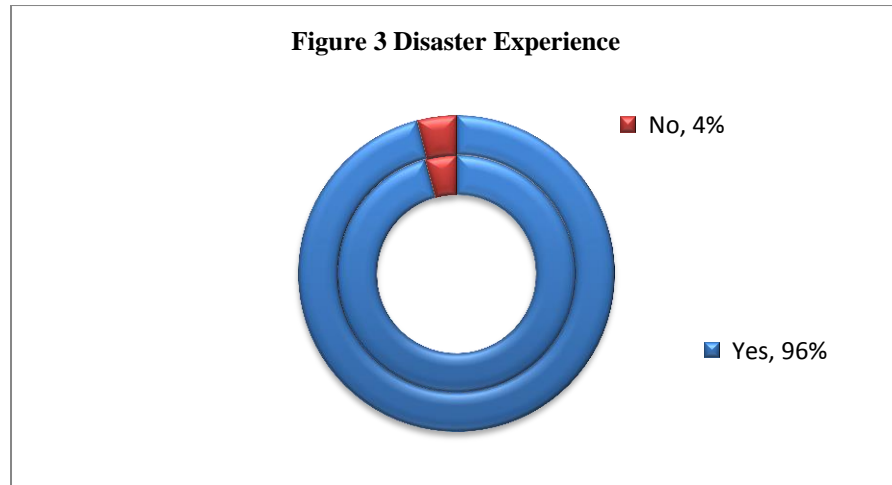
The agencies of disaster relief services agree that they are aware of their role and roles of other disaster relief organisations. Thus, it shows that in emergency situation the agencies knows what they are expected to do complement the effort of the other agencies. Chiebonam (1991) observation that all organs of state charged with the responsibility of medical help provision of accommodation, food, relief materials, financial assistance and compensation were clearly identified and aided in resettlement efforts and properly coordinated to avoid over-concentration in some areas. Emergency relief agencies are not established and rooted in the local government areas however it was observed that the masses knew the agencies exist but they are mostly located at the state capitals.

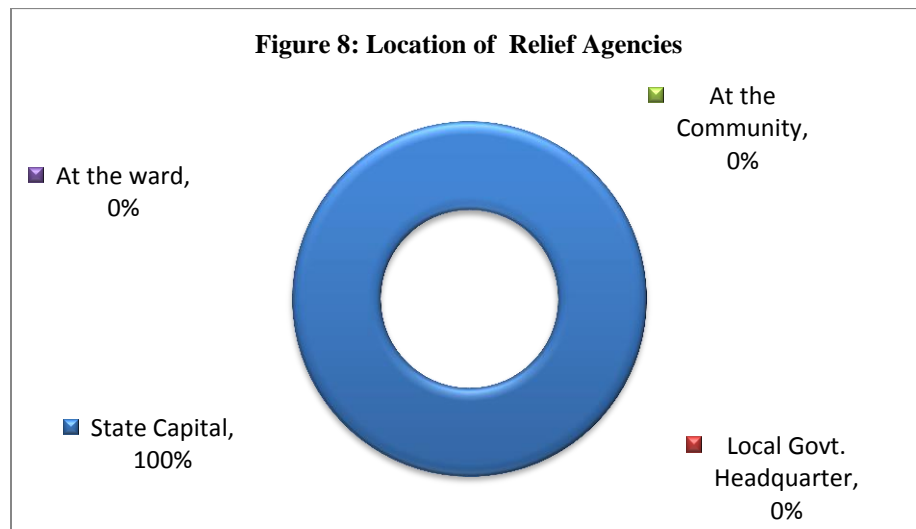
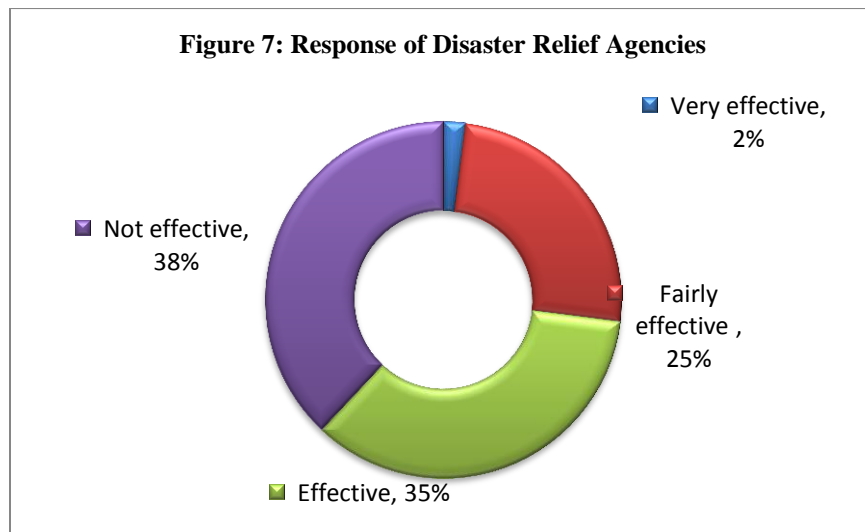
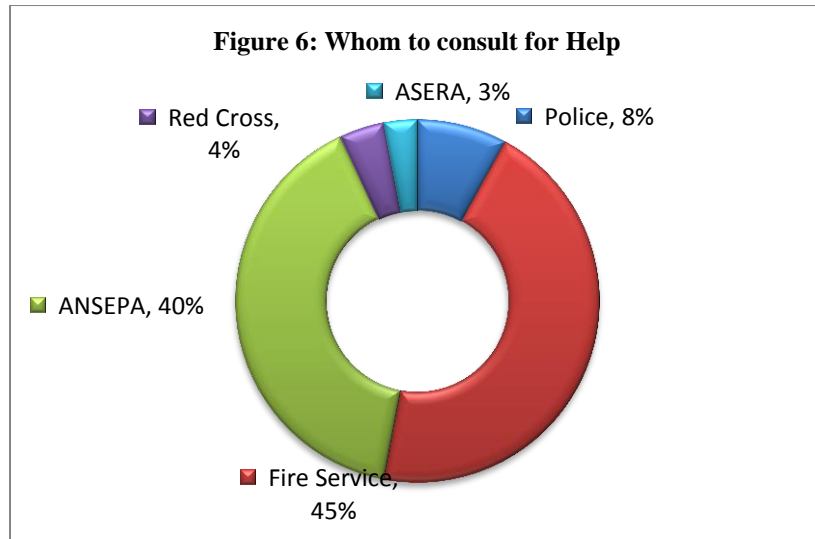
111. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

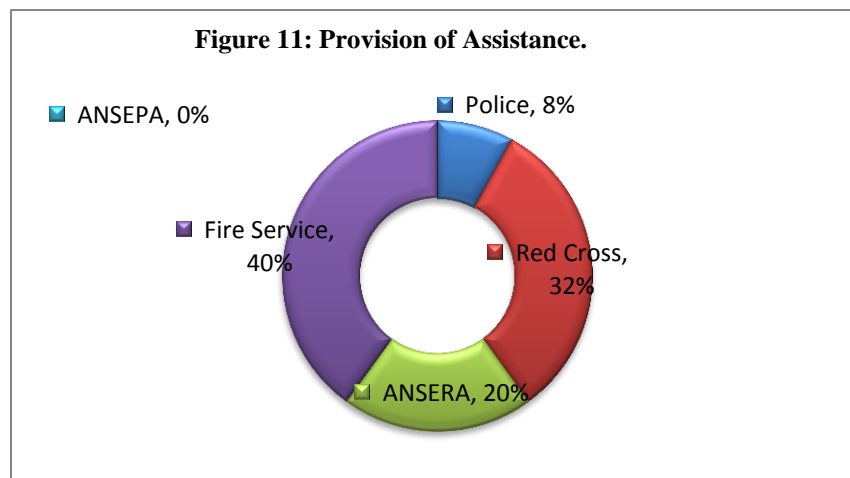
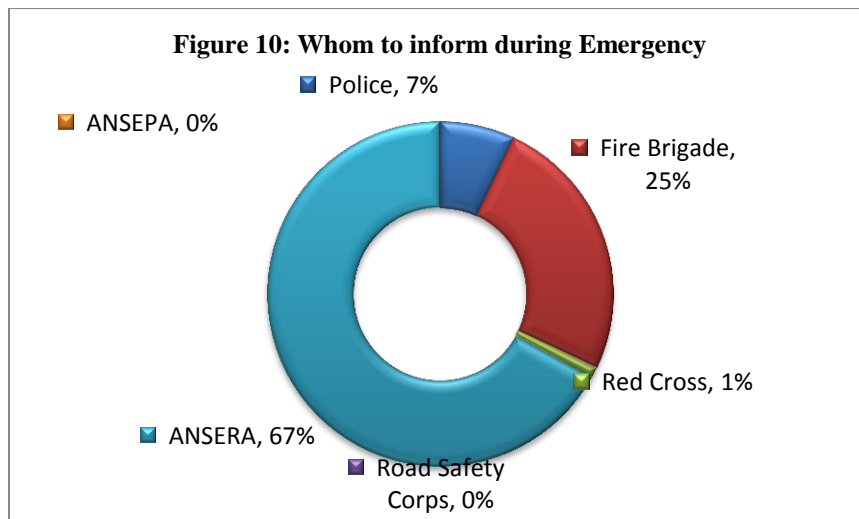
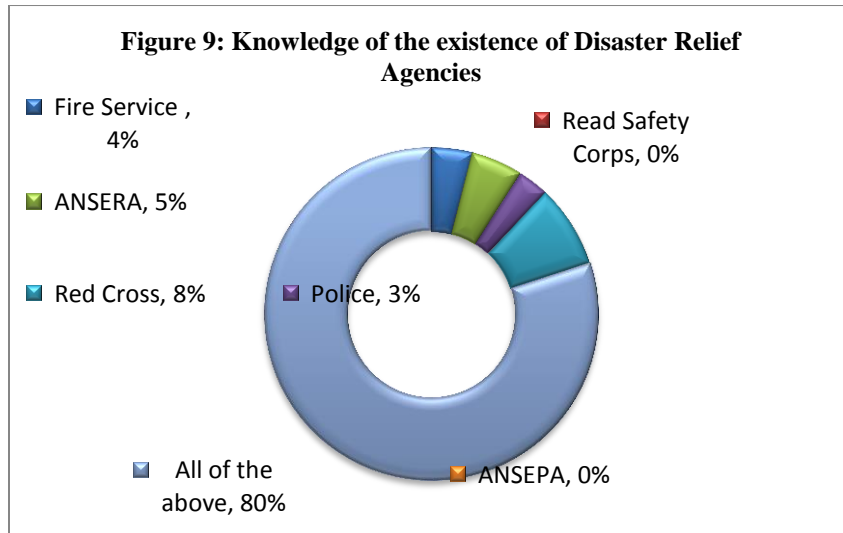
The state disaster relief agency is not operational ready to meet the exigencies of relief operations because they are not effective. Moreover, there are no logistics in place that could be used during an emergency. Therefore the state is not in any way prepared to deal effectively with any form of disaster should it occur. The various agencies responsible for disaster relief are not properly coordinated. This has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the relief systems. Thus the agencies should be overhauled and the necessary facilities and infrastructures put in place to ensure prompt response to disaster events.

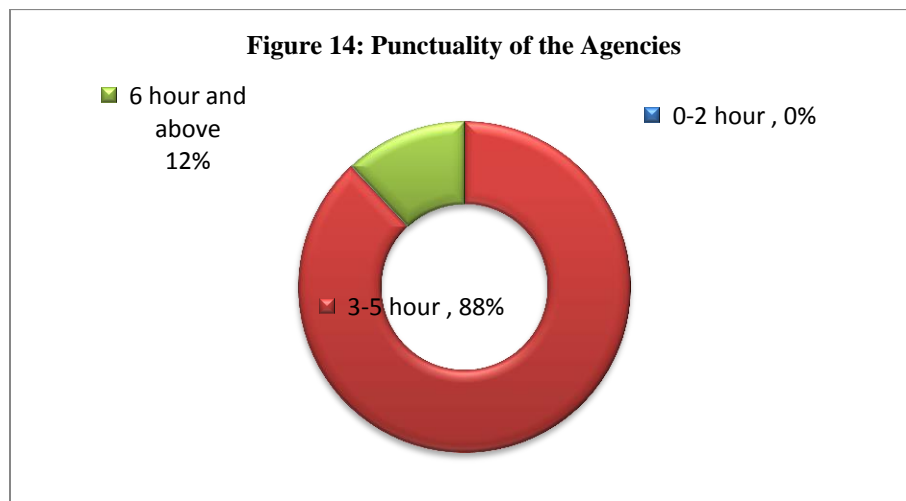
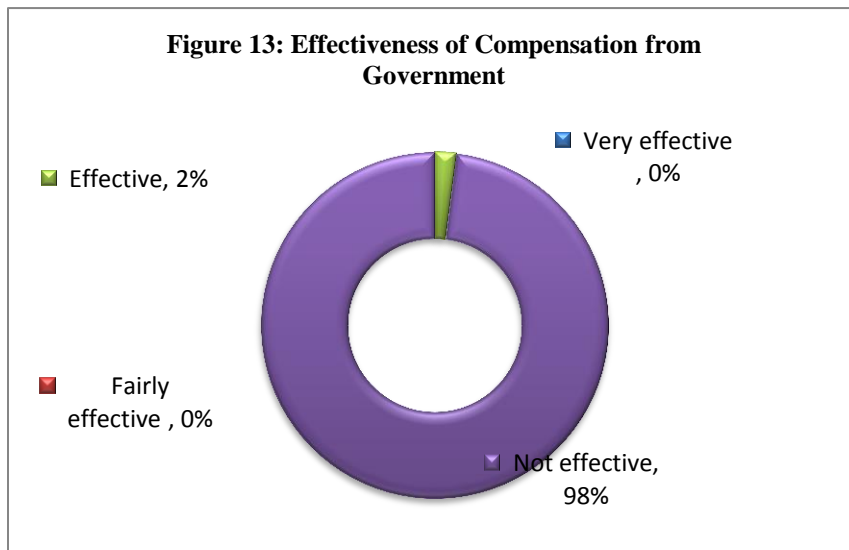
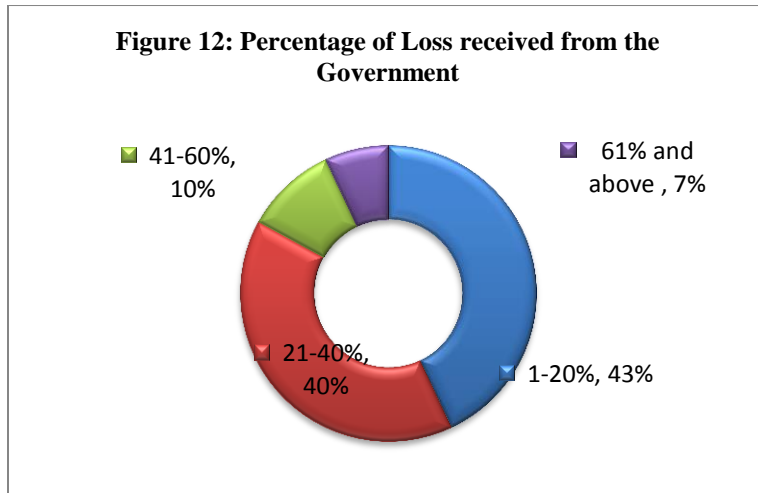
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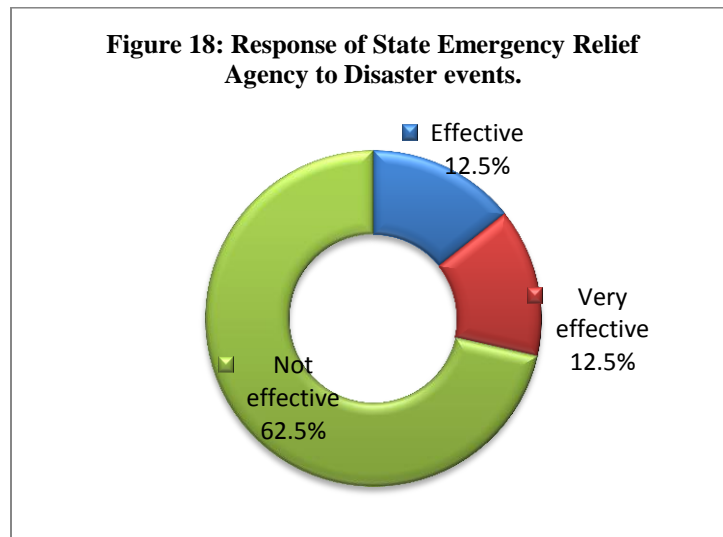
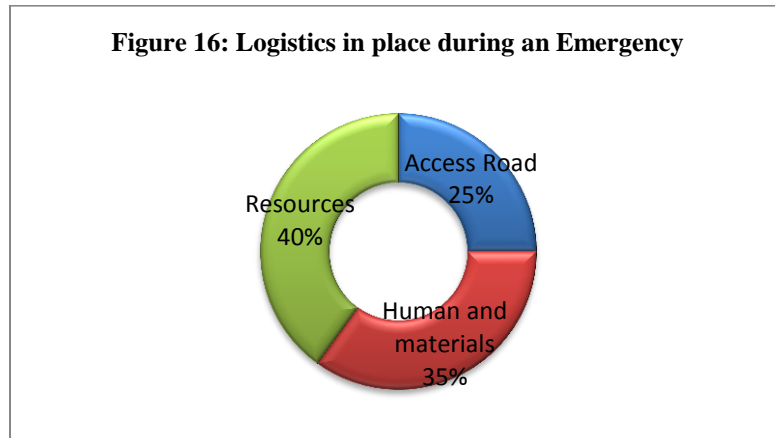
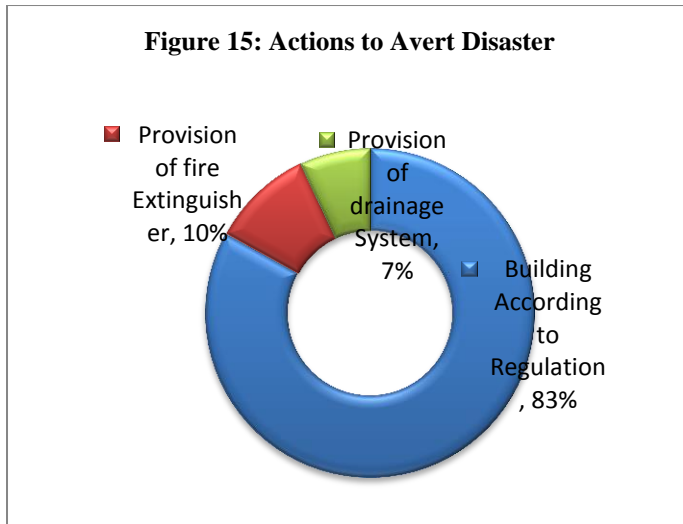


Figure 17: Disaster Mitigation arrangement in place.

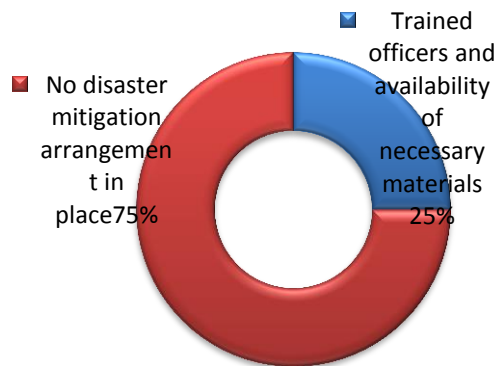


Figure 21: Emergency Relief Team Supports.

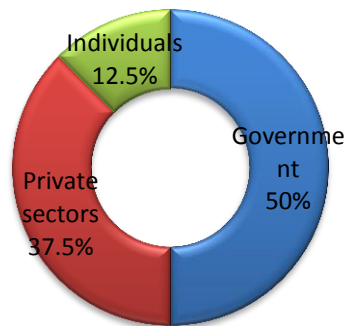


Figure 22: Roles of the Agencies.

