

Collaboration between State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and Other Agencies towards Disaster Management: A Study of Selected Communities in Sokoto State

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ABSTRACT

This work focused on the impacts of formal collaboration between the Sokoto State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and other governmental/non-governmental organizations on disaster management in the state. Disaster usually refers to an event, natural or man-made, which impacts with such severity that the affected community or individual has to respond by taking exceptional measures. This paper highlighted the nature of Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other actors and its impacts on the management of disasters. The study was grounded on Systems Theory of Disaster Management due to its relevance to the research, the theory advanced by Comfort (1999) focuses on immediate and urgent needs for interconnection, coordination and strong collaboration within and among the key players towards handling the emergency and disaster events. This paper also applied qualitative method in which firsthand information was obtained from the officials and disaster victims. Data from the field work has revealed certain disasters that are frequent and often devastating in Sokoto state are floods, boat mishaps, drought, famine, fire among others. Therefore, management of such disasters required multi-faceted activities (of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigating) and support from all stakeholders. Despite widespread recognition of their importance, it was found that collaboration and coordination among these stakeholders remain underdeveloped. However, it was found that while SEMA has engaged with NEMA, humanitarian NGOs, and community-based organizations, the evidence demonstrates that such partnerships are often fragmented, episodic, or undermined by duplication and competition for visibility. This had further diluted the effectiveness of SEMA towards disaster management in Sokoto. In view of that, the study recommended among others that: the Sokoto state government should formalized coordination frameworks and structured disaster response and recovery outcomes; and to ensure adequate and predictable funding to the agency. The research applied qualitative method, in which 66 respondents were purposely selected from the top officials of Sokoto SEMA, Sokoto Central Market (SCM), State Fire Service, Rabah, Shagari, Sokoto-North local government areas and Representatives of Sokoto state government for an interview via In-Depth Interviews (IDIs); while the victims of fire and heads of communities and marketers' association formed the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as a primary source of data. As well, secondary source of its data relied on documentary sources; especially the most relevant academic journals, articles, newspapers, official and non-official reports, and database document among others. Moreover, data collected was thematically analysed.

Key Words: Sokoto SEMA's collaboration, Disaster, Disaster Management, and Stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other stakeholders in the management of disaster in the state, especially in the affected communities of the three selected local government areas of Rabah, Shagari and Sokoto Central Market (SCM). Sokoto SEMA as one of the Sokoto state agencies is mandated with the certain responsibilities. Similarly, disaster management is rarely to be the responsibility of a single agency; rather, it involves multi-sectoral coordination between government agencies, security institutions, civil society, traditional authorities, and the affected communities themselves. Therefore, Sokoto SEMA requires unwavering support from the said (governmental and non-governmental) agencies to achieve its mandate in management of

emergencies and disasters in the entire state. Moreover, **section 5 sub-sections c, f, h and j** of enacted law of 2011 has explained expected areas of collaboration between Sokoto SEMA and other agencies/organizations. The law had specifically focused on the collection of relief supply; emergency relief operations; assessment and monitoring of distribution of relief materials and above all receiving financial or technical aid from anyone among others (SEMA Enacted law, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

It is pertinent to know that in spite of its annual budget, special fund allocation and support from the state government, Sokoto SEMA office has established cordial relations and formal collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental organizations within and outside the state in order to achieve its target goals based on the established law set by state. This form of relationship is captured under Sokoto SEMA's statutory mandates, section 5 (h) where it stated that "there is need for Local Government Emergency Management Committee (LGEMC), NEMA, NGOs and International Bodies on emergency management to assess and monitor distribution of relief materials to disaster victims in the state". It is further explained that it is within the power of the Sokoto state governor through the relevant MDAs in the state to form collaboration with any agencies or organizations either within the state, National or International level (SEMA Enacted law, 2011).

Furthermore, an official of the state official mentioned key organizations that are essential toward management of disasters in the state namely: National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Red Cross Organization, Daily Supreme Council (DRC) and International Office for Migration (IMO). Others are Action Against Hunger (ACF), COOPI/Christian Aid, Life Helpers among others. More so, he stated that these organizations usually donate funds and necessary items to the victims of disasters and emergencies, depending on the forms and magnitude of disasters in order to compliment the mandate of Sokoto SEMA (IDI, Staff Sokoto SEMA, 2024). Disasters such as floods, drought, fire, and human displacement and boat mishaps are the most common incidents in Sokoto state; these events have also devastating consequences that could not be handled by single agency or person but required multi-actors. In view of that, therefore, Sokoto SEMA need to collaborate with other relevant stakeholders including individuals, formal agencies or organizations toward management of all disasters not only in the selected communities of Rabah, Shagari and SCM but also in the entire state.

Objectives of the Study

In view of the above, this paper aimed to investigate the nature collaboration between Sokoto SEMA and other stakeholders/agencies on disaster management in the state. However, this study is sought to specifically achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the nature of Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other key actors in management of disaster in the state
2. To analyze the statutory functions of Sokoto SEMA towards collaborations with other agencies
3. To investigate the issues affecting the SEMA's performance in Sokoto state?

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted qualitative approach in which In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were utilized as instruments of data collection from sixty-six (66) respondents purposely selected from the three communities under study. In brief, 16 respondents for IDIs were representatives of Sokoto state government, three (3) selected local government areas, officials of state fire service, SEMA and SCM; these respondents were the key players in disaster assessment and response in the state under study. While 50 respondents for FGDs were distributed selected from the actual victims of disasters in Shagari, Rabah and SCM; these category are in better position to provide the required first hand information. This work is also a case study by design, which investigated the nature of Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other agencies toward

management of disasters in Sokoto state. Hence, the study only focused on the issues related to the performance of SEMA in the affected area of study.

However, this paper utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was collected through observation, In-depth Interviews with the SEMA staff, and representatives of the government from various MDAs; and Focus Group Discussions with key stakeholders from the disaster affected community. In view of that, this study has relied on IDIs and FGDs as instruments of which was used directly to collect data from the field through interviews and observation from sampled population in Rabah, Shagari and Sokoto North local government areas. While secondary data collection are usually texts found in relevant academic journals, articles, newspapers, official and non-official reports, database document among others in order to extract information that are relevant to this study. The obtained data was carefully examined and analysed based on themes and sub-themes, which may be corroborate or diverge with the existing literature reviewed.

Sokoto State

The areas of present Sokoto state were home to many empires and kingdoms of the pre-colonial Western Sudan, these include Gobir, and Kebbi Kingdom as well as the world-renown Sokoto caliphate which is the spiritual and political capital is the Headquarters of the state. The state is named after its capital Sokoto, a city with a long history and the seat of the Sokoto Caliphate situated in the North Western corner of Nigeria. Sokoto state occupies 27,825 square kilo meters. Sokoto shares its borders with Niger Republic to the North, Zamfara state to the East, Kebbi state to the South-east and Benin Republic to the west (Ibrahim, 2013).

Sokoto state as at 2022 has a projected population of about 6.3million according to Nigeria metro area population. Sokoto comprises of two major ethnic who are the Hausas and Fulanis. Apart from these two, there are also some other minority ethnic groups which includes the Zabarmawa, Gobirawa, Zamfarawa, Arawa, Kabawa, Adarawa and Tuareg. These entire ethnic groups speak Hausa as their common language. The Fulani on the other hand are two main groups, the town Fulani and Nomads. The town Fulani comprises of Torankawa, the clan of Shehu Danfodiyo, Torankawa and Zoramawa, the Torankawa are the aristocratic class since 1804 Yoo (2004). Sokoto state consist of 23 local government areas namely: Binji, Bodinga, Dange/Shuni, Gada, Goronyo, Gudu, Gwadabawa, Illela, Isa, Kebbe, Kware, Rabah, Sabon Birni, Shagari, Silame, Sokoto North, Sokoto South, Tambuwal, Tangaza, Tureta, Wamakko, Wurno and Yabo. Moreover, Sokoto state has a total of 84 districts scattered all over the 23 local government areas in the state Ibrahim (2013).

Review of Terms/Concepts

Disaster

Disaster is the catastrophic event shocking the whole world and making the humanity to feel very sad and depressed. All life and life-support systems are also affected by these unexpected incidences. What is required ultimately is to minimize the effects of these disasters by the application of certain disaster management practices (Balsubramanian, 2014). Disasters are natural or man-made, which impacts with such severity that the affected community or individual has to respond by taking exceptional measures; these phenomenon has become an issue of growing concern throughout the world (NEMA,). Disasters are typically large scale and cross geographic, political, and academic boundaries, it also requires a level of response and recovery greater than what local communities can provide. In brief, disaster is simply refers to anything dangerous that can exposes people to monumental damage and lost of life.

Disaster Management

Disaster management was defined as the organization and management of required resources and responsibilities for dealing with all aspects of emergencies, particularly preparedness, response, and recovery to lessen the impact of disaster UNDRR (2015). This definition highlights the comprehensive nature of disaster management, encompassing both pre-disaster and post-disaster activities. It also defined as the systematic process of using administrative directives, organizations, and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies, and improved coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster

Folorunsho & Adeola (2016). This explanation underscores the administrative and strategic elements crucial for effective disaster management, emphasizing the need for a coordinated approach.

The scope of disaster management can include all disaster-related activities. These activities are categorized as disaster preparedness, disaster response, disaster recovery, post disaster epidemiological surveillance, environmental management and disaster mitigation Bello and Yusuf (2020). The disaster management is aim to reduce (or avoid if possible) the potential losses from hazards; assure prompt and appropriate assistance to victims when necessary; achieve rapid and durable recovery. The aim of disaster preparation is to be able to reduce the immediate mortality and morbidity with a better prepared, well equipped service. Moreover, Ogunleye (2022) defined disaster management as continuous and integrated process of planning, organizing, coordinating, and implementing measures which are necessary or expedient for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery from disaster. This broad definition covers all phases of disaster management, emphasizing its dynamic and ongoing nature.

SEMA (State Emergency Management Agency)

The State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) was defined it as an agency of the state mandated to plan, coordinate, and implement disaster risk reduction activities, ensuring that communities are prepared for emergencies and can recover quickly from disaster impacts Okeke and Nwosu (2021). This definition focuses on SEMA's mandate to enhance community preparedness and resilience. SEMA is nothing rather than a state-level agency responsible for coordinating disaster management activities within a specific state in Nigeria. More so, Folorunsho and Adeola (2023) defined SEMA as "an agency dedicated to the comprehensive management of disaster risks at the state level, implementing policies and practices that reduce vulnerabilities and enhance the capacity to respond to emergencies." This highlights SEMA's role in risk reduction and capacity building. Eventually, Ahmed and Ali (2019), defined SEMA as "a government agency established to oversee the implementation of disaster management policies and programs at the state level, ensuring preparedness, response, and recovery efforts are effectively coordinated." This definition emphasizes the agency's role in policy implementation and coordination.

The Statutory Functions of Sokoto SEMA

Sokoto SEMA was established by an act of legislation and signed into law by the then executive governor Aliyu Wamakko in 2011. According to the law, the main functions of SEMA is to intervene in all emergencies and disaster activities in the state which include; the effective collaboration and proper coordination to ensure synergy with other stakeholders such as individuals, governmental (like NEMA) and non-governmental (like Red Cross) agencies in the management of disaster in the state (IDI, Staff, SEMA Sokoto, 2024). Other fundamental roles of Sokoto SEMA as a governmental agency are support of victims of disaster with relief materials from either the state government or any donor agencies; to be proactive in management of disaster through public enlightenment and advocacy visits to the areas that are prone to disaster; and to be very responsive whenever disaster occurred. These roles can be achieved through SEMA's effective preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation (IDI, Staff, SEMA Sokoto, 2024).

However, the official document obtained from Sokoto State House of Assembly (SSHA) has specifically enlisted the statutory functions of the Sokoto SEMA based on the law enacted and signed on 21st day of September, 2011 under section five (5); some of the key functions are:

First and foremost, to notify the state government of any disaster occurrence in the state or any part thereof; SEMA under this law is mandated to as a matter of urgency communicate with state government on any disaster, through Secretary to the State Government (SSG) by Director General (DG) and Special Adviser (SA) who is the overseer of the agency (SEMA Enacted Law, 2011).

To coordinate the activities of all voluntary organizations engaged in emergency reliefs operations in all parts of the state. Under this provision, Sokoto SEMA is solely responsible to bring all other voluntary organizations under its watch and supervision; this is aimed sanitizing the relief operation in order to avoid illicit activities by unsuspected organizations under the cover of assistance (SEMA Enacted Law, 2011).

Upon a strong synergy SEMA is empowered to collect emergency relief supply from individuals, institutions, organization, federal government, states in the federation, NGOs and international agencies. Sokoto SEMA is also mandated to determine the priority of all emergency management operations in any part of the state; it is further saddled with responsibility to carry out all the disaster management activities in the state. Therefore, to effectively carry out its functions, SEMA is granted to receive all forms of assistance offered to it in order to achieve its designed objectives based on the priority of emergencies and/or disaster in the state (SEMA Enacted Law, 2011).

SEMA should also provide rapid response and emergency management activities in the areas affected by disaster in the state. Sokoto SEMA according to this sub-section should be responsible to mobilize the special team under Head of Search and Rescue Unit that will quickly reach the scene for necessary response in collaboration with other agencies within and outside state (SEMA Enacted Law, 2011).

More so, another SEMA's statutory role is to evaluate and assess the extent of damage caused by disaster in any part of the state for the purpose of providing assistance to the victims. This section shoulder basic responsibility to the SEMA to form a committee of trusted persons to visit the community and scene of disaster in order to come up with the genuine report, containing the number of the affected people and the level of damage or lost as a result of disaster for necessary assistance (SEMA Enacted Law, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory of Disaster Management

This paper has adopted Systems Theory of Disaster Management for its relevance. Systems theory views disaster management as **a network of interconnected actors and processes** (Comfort, 1999). Effective management depends on coordination, communication, and feedback loops across these systems. The case of Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other agencies demonstrates a breakdown in this system, in which SEMA, NEMA, NGOs, local governments, and communities all operate within the disaster management ecosystem. However, their lack of synergy, duplication of efforts, and poor information-sharing reveal a **systemic failure**. Thus, was captured the systemic weakness that everyone comes with their own approach, and there is no one plans. Victims then get multiple promises, but little concrete help (Official, 2024). The Sokoto experience therefore illustrates what Comfort (1999) described as **"loose coupling"** in disaster systems actors exist within the same space but lack effective integration, undermining resilience.

Eventually, it is imperative to understand that this theory is very relevant to this study. Hence, its major tenets have focus on immediate and urgent needs for interconnection, coordination and strong collaboration within and among the key players towards handling the emergency and disaster events. In connection to that, the major focus of this work would solely be on the Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other stakeholders towards effective disaster management and other related issue in the state.

SEMA's Collaboration with other Agencies in Management of Disasters in Sokoto state.

Discussion of Findings

This section discussed the major findings of the study in relation to the study's objectives, which is the collaboration between SEMA and other stakeholders towards discharging its lawful duties. It was reported that agencies like Red Cross, Nigeria Police Force, NEMA, Nigerian Airport Authority, individuals and private companies were supporting the Sokoto SEMA in management of some disaster across the state (FGD, SCM). Specifically on the issue of boat mishaps, SEMA in collaboration with NEMA, NIWA and Red Cross have embarked on several search and rescue operations in some local government areas in the Sokoto state. For example, in the recent boat capsizing in Shagari, Goronyo and Sabon Birni LGAs; the above mentioned agencies and organizations have supported Sokoto SEMA on search and rescue operations (Ashenews, and Vanguard, August 2025). On the other hand, Sokoto SEMA used to seek for reinforcement from NEMA, Nigerian Airport Authority and Federal Fire Service on the course of firefighting when there is fire incident and other non-financial contributions to the victims of fire disaster as in the case of fire disaster in SCM and beyond (IDI, Staff

Sokoto SEMA, 2024). Similarly, it was elaborated that management of SCM usually seek the assistance of military and Para-military personnel in order to safeguard the people's properties from thieves and other criminals; especially during and after the sad event (IDI, Staff SCM, 2024). This statement was further supported in a claim made by fire station officer in SCM as he added that there is good understanding between our office and other security formations in the state when there is fire outbreak. These security agencies used to assist our personnel while fighting the fire to safeguard and protect the properties of both the affected victims and expected one. This is how we go about, not only in the critical place like SCM where properties worth billions of naira are kept but also in most of the residential areas in the Sokoto metropolis and beyond (IDI, Fire Officer, 2024).

Respondents consistently highlighted collaboration between Sokoto SEMA and the NEMA than any other agency. In many cases, SEMA serves as the first responder at the state level, after which NEMA is notified to provide additional support (FGD, Shagari, 2024). One of the state officials further revealed that *"SEMA cannot handle disaster alone. We often send reports to NEMA, and they provide additional relief materials, sometimes technical support, and help in large-scale responses"*. This demonstrates a vertical form of collaboration, where state-level structures depend on federal counterparts for reinforcement.

However, some respondents expressed concern that NEMA's response is often delayed due to bureaucratic bottlenecks (FGD, SCM, 2024). Some respondents mentioned that Sokoto SEMA occasionally collaborates with faith-based organizations, NGOs, and volunteer groups, particularly in urban areas. For example, some argued that both religions especially Christian charity organization (Christian Aid) used to provide additional food and clothing during disaster; however, it was noted that such collaborations are not consistent or institutionalized (IDI, SCM, 2025). This suggests that civil society collaboration exists but is often ad hoc.

Nevertheless, while respondents acknowledged multiple forms of collaboration, some also pointed out gaps and weaknesses. For example, bureaucratic delays, duplication of roles, and weak coordination mechanisms were mentioned. One respondent argued that the problem is not absence of collaboration but lack of proper coordination. Sometimes SEMA and local governments response and distribute materials meant for victims separately, which causes confusion and complaints (IDI, Rabah LGA, 2024). This have also reflects a broader critique in the literature, where poor inter-agency coordination has been identified as a recurring challenge in Nigerian disaster management (Bello and Yusuf, 2020).

The findings further indicate that SEMA collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders. However, collaboration is often **reactive, informal, and poorly coordinated**, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficiencies (Bello, 2022). Similarly, evidence from the field corroborated that while collaboration exists in principle, it is weak, fragmented, and often undermined by duplication of roles, poor communication, and competition among agencies (FGDs, Rabah/Shagari/SCM, 2024).

Result

This research discovered that the Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other stakeholders within and outside the state is real, hence that NEMA, security agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other notable donor agencies are partially liaising with SEMA in some of the emergencies and disasters management in Sokoto state; especially banditry activities. However, it was discovered that on the effort to tackle the issue of boat mishaps in the state; the Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other stakeholders has yield no result. Since no any organization or agency provided the communities in question with modern or new boat/canoe to ease their activities and save their lives from excessive incidents. These findings have validated the popular assumption that inadequate synergy between SEMA and other stakeholders are largely responsible for weak disaster management outcomes in Sokoto State.

More so, the evidence from the field demonstrates that even where multiple actors are present, the absence of structured coordination frameworks reduces the effectiveness of interventions. For example, the Red Cross distributing aid independently may temporarily help victims but weakens institutional accountability and coordination which is very essential. Similarly, while community associations such as GYCDA contribute significantly to awareness and prevention, they often lack formal recognition and support, instead of leaving them isolated from state structures. This mismatch between theory and practice suggests that collaboration in

Sokoto is more ad hoc and fragmented than systematic and institutionalized, thereby undermining the potential for a holistic disaster risk reduction strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, it is evident that Sokoto SEMA's collaboration with other stakeholders requires formal coordination and standard operating procedures; disaster management likes comprehensive reforms that strengthen institution, and improve coordination. These recommendations that are explained below would provide a roadmap for enhancing the capacity of the Sokoto State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).

1. Institutionalize Multi-Stakeholder Coordination Frameworks

To overcome duplication and rivalry among disaster management actors within and outside the state, Sokoto SEMA should develop a institutional coordination framework that includes NEMA, NGOs, state MDAs, local governments, traditional institutions, and community-based organizations. This could take the form of a state disaster management council chaired by SEMA but inclusive of all key actors. State government should further establish standard operating procedures for collaboration will improve accountability and allow partners to complement, rather than duplicate, each other's efforts.

2. Expand Partnerships with Private Sector and International Agencies

Disaster management requires resources and expertise that exceed the capacity of the state government alone. Sokoto SEMA should therefore cultivate partnerships with private sector actors such as telecommunications companies (for SMS-based early warnings), construction firms (for resilient infrastructure), and insurance companies (for risk transfer mechanisms). International organizations such as UNDP, UNDRR, and the Red Cross Movement can provide technical support, funding, and training. Such partnerships should be formalized through memoranda of understanding that align external interventions with state priorities.

3. Strengthen Institutional Capacity of SEMA

The foremost priority is to strengthen Sokoto SEMA's institutional capacity by expanding its technical and human resources. This involves SEMA's recruiting its additional qualified staff in areas such as disaster risk assessment, modern equipment, emergency logistics, public health, and community engagement. Institutional strengthening also requires granting SEMA greater operational autonomy to implement its mandate without undue encroachment and political interference. By ensuring that SEMA is staffed with well-trained personnel and has the authority to act independently, the agency will be better positioned to manage disaster comprehensively.

4. Ensure Adequate and Predictable Funding

The chronic underfunding of Sokoto SEMA and limited amount to spend undermines its performance. There is an urgent need for government to allocate a larger and more predictable budget to the agency. This could be achieved if the Sokoto state government would establish a disaster management trust fund, supported by both state resources and contributions from private and international partners, could provide a sustainable financial base.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the study found that multi-actor engagement involving NEMA, humanitarian NGOs (including the Red Cross), local government authorities, fire services, and community-based organizations existed but that coordination remains fragmented. Lack of synergy makes operational linkages often ad hoc driven by the exigencies of particular events rather than by formalized protocols, and are periodically undermined by duplication of effort, poor information-sharing, and competition for visibility and donor resources. Grassroots associations have stepped in to fill gaps, demonstrating local adaptive capacity, yet these community initiatives

remain insufficiently institutionalized or integrated into formal planning processes. This pattern reflects systemic coordination problems reported in the literature on Nigerian and sub-Saharan disaster governance.

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