

NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION
IN NIGERIA.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF
NIGERIAN IDNDR COMMITTEE.

Nigeria is located on the Western Coast of Africa with a geographical area of about 923,768 square kilometers and a population of 88.5 million (1991). The Federation is made up of 30 States and the Abuja Federal Capital Territory. The nation operates a freemarket economy that is highly dependant on oil and agriculture. Nigeria was admitted into the United Nations on October the 7th 1990 and has ever since been a very active member.

In pursuance of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/236 of 1989, which declared the 1990's as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and which urged nations to establish focal point to coordinate activities of the Decade, the Federal Government of Nigeria inaugurated its national IDNDR Committee on the 28th of August, 1990.

The Committee was charged with responsibility of coordinating the activities of the Decade in line with the recommendation of UNGA Resolution. Membership of the Committee is as given below:

1. The Presidency, Political Affairs Office - Chairman
2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
3. National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI),
4. Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services,
5. Federal Ministry of Information and Culture,
6. Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development,
7. Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs,
8. Federal Ministry of Transport,
9. Federal Meteorological Department,
10. Nigeria Institute of Oceanographic and Marine Research (NIOMR),

11. Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER),
12. National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA),
13. Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps,
14. Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB),
15. National Insurance Company of Nigeria (NICON),
16. Nigerian Red Cross Society,
17. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA)
18. Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN),
19. Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) - Secretariat.

Committee Meetings:

Apart from the organisational and inaugural meetings, seven substantive meetings of the committee have been held to discuss various issues ranging from public enlightenment to the evolution of a national plan of action for natural disaster reduction.

Priority Natural Hazards in Nigeria:

At its first substantive meeting the Committee deliberated on natural hazards prevalent in Nigerian and came up with the following 10 phenomena as priority:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Drought | (f) Wildfires |
| b) Desertification | (g) Pest Invasions |
| c) Erosion | (h) Disease Epidemics |
| d) Landslides | (i) Earth Tremors |
| e) Floods | (j) Volcano. |

The Situation Of Disaster Preparedness In Nigeria In Brief:

As in most Sub-saharan African countries, Nigeria has a very low level of disaster preparedness. Knowledge of hazards and vulnerability is scanty and fragmented. The people display fatalistic attitudes towards natural disasters and emergency planning is rudimentary.

Nigeria has a sizeable scientific and technological community comprising of a National Academy for Science and Engineering Infrastructure as well as dozens of professional bodies, universities and research institutes. All these are engaged in one form of environmental issues or the other. There had been very little coordination in their disaster - related activities. Operational units such as the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, The Nigeria Police Force, The Nigeria Fire Service, The Nigeria Red Cross and Crescent Society do exist and assist at times of disasters. Their operations however are haphazard and follow no scheme. Development and financial agencies hardly consider vulnerability to natural disasters in their investment plans nor do insurers provide coverage for natural disasters. Only the government owned National Agricultural Insurance Corporation insure farmers against such disasters as drought, wildfire and pestilence.

Forecasting and early warning facilities are not well developed. The Federal Meteorological Department and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture Water Resources and Rural Development have a reasonable number of hydro-meteorological stations around the country. These stations however are not adequately equipped or serviced. Seismological centres or stations are not known to exist nor do any early warning devices. A plan is at an advanced stage to establish a satellite station in the country.

Among the institutional provisions made specifically for natural disasters by the Federal Government of Nigeria are the following:

- a) The National Committee On Ecological Problems established in the 80's and covering Drought, Desertification, Flood and Erosion.
- b) The National Technical Committee On Earthquake Phenomena: Established following the earth tremors experienced in the South West of the country in 1984.

c) The National Emergency Relief Agency:

Established under the Presidency and charged with the responsibility of shocking and disbursing relief material at times of disasters.

d) The Ecological Fund:

Established under the Presidency and into which 2% of oil revenue is appropriated for ecological problems resulting from natural and technological disasters.

e) The National IDNDR Committee:

Established under the Presidency and charged with the responsibility of coordinating activities towards the achievement of the goals and objective of the IDNDR in Nigeria.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION IN NIGERIA

To achieve the goals and objective of the Decade in Nigeria the Committee adopted the strategy of evolving a national plan of action. Having identified the priority hazard phenomena in Nigeria, sub-committees/working groups were established. It was resolved to be more convenient to form the sub-committees along the line of the hazards than along mitigation activity areas. Membership of the sub-committees was based on speciality of the constituent organisations. The following sub-committees were established:

1. Desertification, Drought and Wildfires:

Membership:

- a) Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development - (Chairman)
- b) National Agency for Science and Eng. Infrastructure,
- c) Federal Meteorological Department,
- d) Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA)
- e) NERA
- f) NISER
- g) Civil Defence.

2. Erosion, Landslides and Earthquakes.

Membership:

- a) National Agency for Science & Eng. Infrastructure - Chairman
- b) Nigeria Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR)
- c) Federal Ministry of Works and Housing
- d) Federal Ministry of Transport
- e) Civil Defence Corps
- f) NICON
- g) NIDB
- h) FEPA
- i) NERA
- j) Red Cross.

3. Flood, Wind and Rainstorms

Membership:

- a) Federal Meteorological Department - Chairman
- b) Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- c) Federal Ministry of Transport
- d) Civil Defence Corps
- e) F M W & H
- f) NIOMR
- g) NICON
- h) FEPA
- i) NERA
- j) Red Cross.

4. Epidemics and Pest Invasion.

Membership:

- a) Federal Ministry of Health Services - Chairman
- b) Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development,

- c) Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs
- d) National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure
- e) Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- d) Red Cross
- g) NICON
- h) FEPA
- i) NERA.

5. Information and Public Enlightenment:

Membership.

- a) Federal Ministry of Information and Culture (Chairman)
- b) Federal Environmental Protection Agency
- c) Federal Ministry of External Affairs
- d) Red Cross
- e) NISER
- f) NICON
- g) Civil Defence
- h) N T A
- i) FRCN.

The national secretariat developed a guideline for sub-committee activities in line with STC/IDNDR recommendation and gave them the terms of reference below:

- i) Collating existing information on natural disaster phenomena and mitigation and preparing a reconnaissance report.
- ii) Undertaking country visits/study.
- iii) Generating information through research to fill missing links and to provide update.
- iv) Processing and analysing data for documentation.
- v) Making recommendation to guide Government on natural disaster reduction.

SUB-COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Despite financial constraints the sub-committees have been working hard. Some of the sub-committees have completed their reconnaissance reports. The reports cover the situation of the respective disaster phenomena. Information was obtained from conference proceedings, research papers and from inventories maintained by ministries and agencies. The sub-committees have also submitted budgets for country studies and other aspects of their activities.

IDNDR DAY OBSERVANCE

The sub-committee on Public Enlightenment and Information was charged with the responsibility for organising activities for the Day's observance. With the support of the secretariat FEPA, the sub-committee has successfully observed all three occasions since 1990 by holding press briefings, symposium, exhibitions and displays, posters as well as radio and TV jingles.

CONSTRAINTS

Disaster reduction is a new endeavour to most African Countries.

The governments are busy battling with the provision of basic human needs in the face of poverty and deepening debt crisis. Providing additional funding for the environment and for emergency planning is no small challenge for these nations. Support is therefore required from the international community in order to arrest the vicious cycle associated with natural disasters which keep disrupting and undermining economic development. Technical assistance in the form of capacity building and technology cooperation should be extended to developing countries through bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the IDNDR Secretariat. Efforts should be made to expand the coverage of international demonstration projects to as many developing nations as possible.

Nigeria is seeking assistance from the IDNDR Secretariat in the following areas:

1. Inclusion in the following demonstration projects:
 - a) GSHAP
 - b) Drought and desertification, and
 - c) Tropical storms.
2. Assistance in the execution of the country studies and the evolution of national plan of action for natural disaster reduction.
3. Sponsorship to conferences and meetings organised by the IDNDR.