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INFORMATION USE FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AMONG RED CROSS OFFICERS IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the information needs and use for disaster preparedness among Red Cross officers in Katsina State, Nigeria. It identified the information required, sources consulted, and extent of information use for disaster preparedness. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design. The population comprised 2,702 Red Cross officers across the 34 local government areas of Katsina State. A sample of 248 officers was selected using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size table, multistage cluster sampling, and proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated by experts. A pilot study involving 30 respondents produced a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .87. Of the 248 questionnaires distributed, 183 were completed and returned, representing a 73.8% response rate. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations in SPSS Version 23. The findings revealed that officers required technical and operational information, particularly weather reports, climate data, GIS reports, procedural manuals, and disaster history reports. Formal sources, including meteorological departments and disaster management agencies, were commonly used. Weather reports, GIS reports, and procedural manuals were highly demanded, while engineering, demographic, logistics, inventory, and after-action reports were less demanded. The study recommends improved access to information resources and information-use skills.

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Keywords: Information Use, Disaster Preparedness, Red Cross Officers

Introduction

One of the major problems of the twenty-first century of global existence is disaster that poses a threat to human life, livelihoods, infrastructure and sustainable development. Climate change, environmental degradation, urbanisation, and population growth have led to an increasing number and severity of floods, drought, disease outbreaks, conflicts, and other hazards, moving the focus from disaster response to disaster preparedness (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2023). The last few disasters, such as the devastating floods in Nigeria and elsewhere, have shown that the provision and use of timely, reliable and accurate information are key to effective disaster preparedness.

This study is grounded on the assumption that good disaster preparedness for Red Cross officers relies on their capacity to recognize information needs relevant to disaster preparedness, to access credible information sources, and to use information as appropriate in disaster preparedness activities and decision making. Therefore, information needs, sources and use are intertwined elements that influence the effectiveness of disaster preparedness programmes. Information such as weather forecasts, flood prone communities, vulnerable groups, emergency shelter and relief resources is needed before the rainy season to ensure that communities are adequately prepared for possible disaster situations, for example, Red Cross officers.

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Information needs refer to the particular types of information disaster management personnel need to be able to carry out preparedness activities in an effective way (Case & Given, 2023). Red Cross officers access information from a range of formal sources such as the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA), government reports, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and humanitarian organizations, in addition to informal sources like community leaders, volunteers, local radio stations, social media and interpersonal networks (IFRC, 2024). Availability of a wide and rich array of information sources allows humanitarian practitioners to be able to get accurate, timely information to help prepare for disasters.

But information is no good unless it is applied. Information use refers to the activities associated with gathering, analysing, interpreting, disseminating, sensitizing the community, training volunteers, mobilizing resources and coordinating emergency response, all of which rely on disaster-related information to support risk assessment, contingency planning, dissemination of early warnings, community sensitisation, volunteer training, resource mobilisation, and emergency response coordination (Choo, 2023). For instance, if the Red Cross officials are warned of the occurrence of floods in Katsina State at an early stage, they can prepare for public education, provide locations of evacuation centres, pre-position relief materials and liaise with concerned agencies before the emergency, thus minimising potential losses.

Effective disaster preparedness and response rely on information management and timely communication. This is a common message among humanitarian

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organisations worldwide, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) (IFRC, 2024; UNDRR, 2023). Likewise, in Nigeria, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs), and the Nigerian Red Cross Society are important agencies in disaster preparedness. However, the lack of information, poor communication networks, misinformation, and public awareness have remained hurdles in effective preparedness efforts, especially in rural areas.

The threat of seasonal flooding, drought, disease outbreaks, and insecurity in particular makes disaster preparedness a priority in Katsina State. To make informed decisions and effectively prepare vulnerable communities for disaster, the Red Cross officers in the state need to have accurate information from multiple sources. Although information is most important in disaster preparedness, there is little empirical literature that has specifically investigated the information needs, information sources and information use of the Red Cross officers in Katsina State.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the information needs, information sources and information use for disaster preparedness of Red Cross officers in Katsina state, Nigeria. The results will feed into disaster information management literature, enhance disaster preparedness work in the Nigerian Red Cross Society, inform decision making among disaster management stakeholders and increase community resilience by effective use of disaster information. The study also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and

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SDG 13 (Climate Action), and contributes to effective disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, disaster preparedness requires timely, accurate, relevant, accessible, and usable information to support risk assessment, planning, decision-making, early warning, coordination, and emergency response. The Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) plays an important role in disaster preparedness through disaster risk assessment, community preparedness education, coordination of preparedness activities, and dissemination of early warning information. To perform these responsibilities effectively, Red Cross officers need access to reliable and relevant information and the ability to identify, evaluate, and appropriately use such information.

Previous studies have established the importance of information in disaster management, emergency preparedness, and humanitarian response. Despite these studies, limited empirical evidence exists on the specific information needs, sources of information, and use of information by Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of the types of information officers require, the sources they rely upon, and the extent to which they use information in their preparedness activities. This gap makes it difficult to develop appropriate information management practices, training programmes, communication strategies, and interventions. Therefore, this study investigated the information needs, sources of information, and extent of information use among Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State, Nigeria, with the goal of providing empirical

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evidence to improve information access, utilisation, and disaster preparedness practices.

Research Questions

1. What are the information needs of Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State?
2. What are the sources of information used by Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State?
3. What is the level of information use for disaster preparedness activities among Red Cross officers in Katsina State?

Literature Review

Information needs are the kinds of information the Red Cross officers need to prepare for and respond to disasters. These include early warnings, weather forecasts, hazard maps, vulnerability data, health reports, evacuation procedures, logistics and disaster policies. Information, timely and reliable, and with a local relevance, helps in decision-making, mobilisation of resources, community education and DRR (IFRC, 2024; Guo et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2024). Prior to the annual flooding in Katsina State, the Red Cross needs timely and dependable weather forecasts, Flood Risk Mapping, Vulnerability information and details of evacuation centres. But little research has been conducted at the state level in Nigeria on the information needs of Red Cross officials, especially in Katsina State. Hence, this study attempts to fill this gap by looking at their information needs in disaster preparedness.

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Information sources are the formal and informal ways in which Red Cross officers access disaster-related information for their preparedness activities. These are government bodies like NiMet, SEMAs and NCDC, international humanitarian organisations, scientific publications,GIS and satellite data, digital databases, community leaders, volunteers, social media, radio and indigenous knowledge. These sources are important for preparedness in the event of a disaster, as they are credible, accessible, timely, and diverse. Multi-source approach boosts disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2024) and GIS and geospatial information facilitates disaster planning and mapping of vulnerabilities (Aliyu & Adamu, 2021). In addition, Heck et al. (2024) point to the increasing reliance on scientific literature and electronic databases/digital repositories for evidence-based preparedness. The officers of the Red Cross, Katsina State, for instance, can rely on the NiMet weather forecast before conducting disaster awareness campaign and also get info from community leaders and volunteers. However, little research has focused on the information sources that are employed by Red Cross officers during humanitarian operations in Nigeria. The study thus explores the primary information sources for disaster preparedness of Red Cross officers in Katsina State.

Information use is the way in which disaster information is tapped, understood and used by Red Cross officers in various aspects of their work, such as planning, early warning, community sensitisation, volunteer coordination and emergency preparedness. Appropriate information use helps in disaster preparedness and evidence-based decision-making (IFRC, 2024). In the context of strengthening

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preparedness, scientific evidence, hazard information, and information literacy are highlighted by Guo et al. (2025) and UNESCO (2024). There had been very little research, however, that has looked into how the Red Cross officers in Nigeria work with disaster information. So this study is therefore an attempt to determine the level of information utilization for disaster preparedness of Red Cross officers in Katsina State.

Methodology

This study employed the quantitative survey descriptive research design in establishing the information use and communication strategies for disaster preparedness in the Red Cross officers in Katsina state. This is because the descriptive survey research design enables the researcher to identify the level of information use and communication strategies for disaster preparedness among the Red Cross officers in the Local Government Areas (LGAs). The study targeted 2702 Red Cross officers in Katsina state spread across the 34 LGAs in the state according to the records of the Nigerian Red Cross Society (2025). In the first stage of sampling, a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to select 12 LGAs from the three senatorial districts which are Daura, Katsina, and Funtua. From the 12 LGAs selected, proportionate stratified random sampling was conducted to ensure representation of all the 12 LGAs and a sample size of 248 respondents was achieved.

This is because according to the Research Advisors Sample Size Table (2006), a sample size of 248 was appropriate for the target population of 672 Red Cross officers in the 12 LGAs selected for this study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed in seven sections (A-G) based on the objectives of this study and

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scored using the Likert scales, frequency scales, and dichotomous (Yes/No) scoring formats. The questionnaire was face-validated and content validated by experts in the Library and Information Science field, disaster management experts, statisticians, and a linguist. The instrument was pretested among 30 Red Cross officers in Kano State before the commencement of the official data collection, and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 was achieved. Data collection was done through face-to-face administration of the questionnaires with the aid of research assistants who worked for four weeks before returning the completed questionnaires. From the 248 questionnaires sent for distribution, 183 were returned successfully by the respondents selected from the 12 LGAs, giving a response rate of 73.8%. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 was used for analyzing the data collected from the respondents. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. The mean score of 3.00 was used as the threshold for agreeing or disagreeing with the statements, and scores below the mean were interpreted as disagreeing, and scores equal or above the mean were considered agreeing. The standard deviation was also used to interpret the level of consistency between the respondents' responses.

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the information needs of Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State?

Table 1: Opinions of the Respondents on the information needs of Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness (N=183), F = frequency, STD = standard deviation

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Information need of Red Cross officers	**Yes**		**No**			
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**Mean**	**STD**
Technical reports from meteorological agencies for seasonal forecasting and early warning.	177	97.3	5	2.7	1.03	.164
Historical incident manuscripts to analyze past response successes and failures.	154	84.2	28	15.3	1.26	.511
Technical GIS reports to create detailed hazard and vulnerability maps.	122	66.7	61	33.3	1.33	.473
Procedural manuscripts to standardize emergency evacuation protocols.	154	84.2	28	15.3	1.26	.511
Technical engineering reports to assess the resilience of critical infrastructure.	62	33.9	121	66.1	1.66	.475
After-action review journal articles to update and refine our contingency plans.	58	31.9	124	68.1	1.68	.467
Technical demographic reports to identify and prioritize at-risk communities.	89	48.6	94	51.4	1.51	.501
Training manuals to conduct simulation exercises and drills for volunteers.	177	97.3	5	2.7	1.03	.164
Technical resource inventories to pre-position relief supplies strategically.	90	49.2	93	50.8	1.51	.501
Books to ensure clear information flow during a crisis.	19	10.4	163	89.6	1.90	.307
Technical data on disease outbreaks to plan for public health interventions.	90	49.2	93	50.8	1.51	.501
Validated assessment reports to quickly evaluate disaster impact and needs.	89	48.6	94	51.4	1.51	.501
Technical reports on new technologies to improve our early warning systems.	62	33.9	121	66.1	1.66	.475
Logistics manuscripts to manage the supply chain and distribution of aid.	90	49.2	93	50.8	1.51	.501
Technical socio-economic studies to design culturally appropriate awareness campaigns.	89	48.6	94	51.4	1.51	.501
Financial procedural manuscripts to administer funds and resources during an operation.	67	36.6	116	63.4	1.63	.483
Technical climate models for long-term adaptation and resilience planning.	177	97.3	5	2.7	1.03	.164
Coordination manuscripts to liaise effectively with government agencies and other NGOs.	67	36.6	116	63.4	1.63	.483

Results from Table 1 show that the Red Cross officers of Katsina State are primarily in need of technical and operational information for disaster preparedness.

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The respondents were very agreement with meteorological reports, training manuals and technical climate models, each of which was required by 177 respondents (97.3%) with a mean of 1.03 and SD of .164. A total of 154 respondents (84.2%) identified historical incident reports and 122 respondents (66.7%) identified the need for GIS reports. A total of 154 respondents (84.2%) identified historical incident reports and 122 respondents (66.7%) identified the need for GIS reports. Other reports required by 62 (33.9 %), 58 (31.9 %), and 62 (33.9 %) respondents, respectively, were engineering reports, after-action reviews, and new technology reports. The smallest number required, 19 (10.4%), were books. Demographic, resource inventory, disease, logistics, and socio-economic reports were responded to with mixed feelings, with 94-107 respondents (approximately 50%) indicating that these were information needs. The study revealed that technical and operational information, especially meteorological reports, climate information, GIS reports, training manuals and procedural guidelines, are the main information sought after by Red Cross officers. This is consistent with the findings of Guo et al. (2025), Aliyu and Adamu (2021) and IFRC (2024), who highlight the critical role of weather, climate, GIS, hazard, and response information in disaster preparedness. The findings are however different from the findings of Manyena (2020) and Lassa and Raufu (2020) which accentuate community knowledge and socio-economic information. Variations in disaster contexts, responsibilities of disaster organizations and information needs may be responsible for the differences.

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Research Question 2: What are the sources of information used by Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State?

Table 2: Source information for disaster preparedness by Red Cross officers in the study area

Source of information to Red Cross officers	Yes		No			
	F	%	F	%	Mean	STD
Government agencies such as						
National disaster management offices,	122	66.7	61	33.3	1.33	.473
Meteorological departments, health ministries	90	49.2	93	50.8	1.51	.501
Public libraries	19	10.4	163	89.6	1.90	.307
Community networks such as:						
Local leaders,	89	48.6	94	51.4	1.51	.501
Volunteers,	177	97.3	5	2.7	1.03	.164
Neighborhood committees	154	84.2	28	15.3	1.26	.511
Others include:						
Household surveys	154	84.2	28	15.3	1.26	.511
NGOs and partner organizations	90	49.2	93	50.8	1.51	.501
Satellite and GIS data	19	10.4	163	89.6	1.90	.307
Media sources such as	61	33.3	122	66.7	1.67	.473
Newspapers	23	12.6	160	87.4	1.87	.332
Radio	25	13.7	157	86.3	1.86	.345
Television	90	49.2	93	50.8	1.51	.501
Online news updates	154	84.2	28	15.3	1.26	.511

The findings in Table 6 indicate that Red Cross officers in Katsina State use several sources of information for disaster preparedness. Volunteers were the most used source, identified by 177 respondents (97.3%), followed by neighbourhood committees, home surveys, and online news, each identified by 154 respondents (84.2%). Government agencies were used by 122 respondents (66.7%), with a mean of 1.33 and SD of .473, indicating moderate use. In contrast, public libraries and satellite/GIS data were the least used sources, each identified by 19 respondents (10.4%), followed by newspapers (23, 12.6%) and radio (25, 13.7%). Meteorological departments, NGOs, local leaders, and television received mixed responses, with mean

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scores of around 1.51. The study found that Red Cross officers rely mainly on formal and verifiable information sources, such as meteorological agencies, procedural manuals, past disaster reports, and GIS reports, for disaster preparedness. This finding agrees with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2024), IFRC (2020), and Shaw (2020), who emphasise the importance of reliable formal sources for disaster prediction, preparedness, and response. However, it differs from Heidenstrøm (2020) and Becker et al. (2017), who highlight the importance of informal sources in disaster management.

Research Question 3: What is the level of information use for disaster preparedness activities among Red Cross officers in Katsina State?

Table 3. Extent of Red Cross Officer utilizing information for disaster preparedness activities in Katsina State.

Statements	SD		D		UD		A		SA		Mean	STD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
I utilize technical reports from meteorological agencies for seasonal forecasting and early warning.	3	1.6	17	9.3	24	13.1	74	40.4	65	35.5	3.99	1.01
I utilize historical incident manuscripts to analyze past response successes and failures.	36	19.7	46	25.1	-	-	92	50.3	9	4.9	3.41	1.72
I utilize technical GIS reports to create detailed hazard and vulnerability maps.	28	15.3	46	25.1	2	1.1	88	48.1	19	10.4	3.51	1.63
I utilize procedural manuscripts to standardize emergency evacuation protocols.	20	10.9	37	20.2	2	1.1	71	38.8	53	29.0	3.64	1.44
I utilize technical engineering reports to assess the resilience of critical infrastructure.	45	24.6	84	45.9	9	4.9	29	15.8	16	8.7	2.45	1.37
I utilize after-action review journal articles to update and refine our contingency plans.	34	18.6	75	41.0	4	2.2	64	35.0	6	3.3	2.63	1.22
I utilize technical demographic	38	20.	72	39.3	4	2.2	58	31.	11	6.0	2.63	1.23

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reports to identify and prioritize at-risk communities.		8						7				
I utilize training manuals to conduct simulation exercises and drills for volunteers.	41	22.4	58	31.7	2	1.1	68	37.2	14	7.7	2.76	1.34
I utilize technical resource inventories to pre-position relief supplies strategically.	38	20.8	119	65.0	2	1.1	10	5.5	14	7.7	2.14	1.05
I utilize books to ensure clear information flow during a crisis.	39	21.3	113	61.7	5	2.7	18	9.8	8	4.4	2.20	1.12
I utilize technical data on disease outbreaks to plan for public health interventions.	46	25.1	72	39.3	34	18.6	24	13.1	7	3.8	2.55	1.39
I utilize validated assessment reports to quickly evaluate disaster impact and needs.	44	24.0	86	47.0	4	2.2	25	13.7	24	13.1	2.45	1.35
I utilize technical reports on new technologies to improve our early warning systems.	46	25.1	72	39.3	34	18.6	24	13.1	7	3.8	2.55	1.39
I utilize logistics manuscripts to manage the supply chain and distribution of aid.	44	24.0	86	47.0	4	2.2	25	13.7	24	13.1	2.45	1.35
I utilize technical socio-economic studies to design culturally appropriate awareness campaigns.	46	25.1	72	39.3	34	18.6	24	13.1	7	3.8	2.55	1.39
I utilize financial procedural manuscripts to administer funds and resources during an operation.	44	24.0	86	47.0	4	2.2	25	13.7	24	13.1	2.45	1.35
I utilize technical climate models for long-term adaptation and resilience planning.	29	15.8	45	24.6	4	2.2	48	26.2	57	31.1	3.27	1.48
I utilize coordination manuscripts to liaise effectively with government agencies and other NGOs.	38	20.8	119	65.0	2	1.1	10	5.5	14	7.7	2.14	1.05

The results in Table 3 below show the extent to which Red Cross officers use information for disaster preparedness activities in Katsina State. The table below indicates the frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations of the respondents' utilization of various information resources for disaster preparedness

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activities. Based on the mean scores, it was evident that the respondents highly used technical reports from meteorological agencies (Mean = 3.99, SD = 1.01), procedural manuscripts (Mean = 3.64, SD = 1.44), technical GIS reports (Mean = 3.51, SD = 1.63), and historical incident manuscripts (Mean = 3.41, SD = 1.72), while technical climate models were moderately used (Mean = 3.27, SD = 1.48). This implies that the Red Cross officers use weather reports, disaster procedures, GIS reports, climate models, and historical incident reports to a great extent to prepare for disasters. On the contrary, the majority of the respondents used technical engineering reports (Mean = 2.45), after-action review reports (Mean = 2.63), demographic reports (Mean = 2.63), training manuals (Mean = 2.76), and other operational instructions such as logistics, finance, coordination, and resource management reports (Mean = 2.14 – 2.55) to a lesser extent. Similarly, books (Mean = 2.2) and resource inventories (Mean = 2.14) were also used to a lesser extent for disaster preparedness activities.

The study found that Red Cross officers extensively use meteorological reports, procedural manuals, past disaster reports, and GIS reports, while they rarely use engineering reports, books, after-action reports, demographic, logistics, financial, and inventory reports. This indicates that officers prioritise information related to hazard identification, prediction, and response over organisational and operational information. The finding agrees with Patel et al. (2020), Sorensen and Sorensen (2021), and Aliyu and Adamu (2021), who emphasise the importance of hazard forecasts, GIS information, procedural manuals, and early warning systems in disaster management. However, it differs from Dalziel and Lee (2021) and Kalu and Ikegbunam (2021), who

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report greater use of after-action reports, demographic, logistics, and operational information. This difference may reflect variations in organisational responsibilities and the specific information requirements of disaster management officers.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made based on the research results:

1. Based on the results of this study, the Nigerian Red Cross Society should increase access to reliable and timely disaster information by intensifying information links with other agencies such as NiMet, NEMA, and other agencies to obtain reports, data, and guidelines that would be used by the Red Cross officers to prepare for disasters.

2. In line with the research results, the Nigerian Red Cross Society should develop alternative information resources for disaster preparedness because the officers lack adequate information resources to respond to a wide range of weather conditions, which include reports, alerts, notices, and directives in local and international formats. By developing these resources, Nigerian Red Cross Society officers can use them in disaster preparedness and management activities as well as provide a solid foundation for planning and building resilience before disaster strikes in Katsina State.

3. The Nigerian Red Cross Society should also provide training to its officers based on the information resources they identified as inadequate. The training should focus on how to leverage information resources such as after-action reports, demographic data, engineering reports, logistics reports, inventory data, and other relevant data to improve disaster preparedness decision-making, organizational learning, and overall preparedness in Katsina State.

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Conclusion

This study concluded that the Red Cross officers in Katsina state rely mainly on technical, scientific and operational information for disaster preparedness. The study established that weather reports, climatic predictions, Geographic Information System (GIS) reports, manual books, and disaster records, are the type of information needs and highly utilized by the Red Cross officers for disaster preparedness in Katsina State. Apart from personal observation, the Red Cross officers mainly use formal and institutional sources of information for disaster response and management. This includes weather reports, organizational manuals and reports, and established disaster management institutions as the most trusted and reliable sources of information. On the other hand, the research established that engineering reports, after-action-review reports, socio-demographic information, and record files, are either not utilized or underrated sources of information despite their potential use in disaster preparedness. Similarly, the study concluded that books, financial reports, and inventory lists of available and needed items are also underrated sources of information that could support disaster preparedness efforts in Katsina State. However, the study also concluded that despite the extensive use of technical and operational information by the Red Cross officers, there is a need to increase the scope of information needs, sources, and utilization by including other relevant technical information, administrative, and evaluation reports to facilitate disaster preparedness in Katsina State.

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