

## Spotlighting the Plights of IDPs in Kebbi, Niger States

# Travelogue: An Investigative Excursion To Banditry Zone

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi

### Background

In today's Nigeria, everyone knows that lingering insecurity seems to have defied all workable solutions. It seems to have no end in sight. And the rampaging activities of non-state actors such as Boko Haram insurgents, armed bandits, kidnappers, ethnic militias, ritualists, cultists, robbers, internet scammers, have only deteriorated the security situation in the country.



In particular, banditry and kidnapping for ransom have turned States in the Northwest into a no-go area. Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi and Niger, in the Northcentral, have since become a hub and safe haven for bandits and kidnappers, where they operate at will and with impunity.

In the aforementioned States, hundreds of thousands of people have been sacked from their ancestral homes, and now dwell in IDP camps. Worse still, valuable properties have been destroyed by bandits who have

maimed countless lives.

The terrorist elements, either in North East or Northwest or Northcentral, are holding many innocent citizens to hostage, with many of their captives not thinking of regaining freedom, anytime soon.

It is apt to state that most victims of banditry, in particular, lack communication channels to tell their stories about their plights. And this may be why the attention of critical



stakeholders has not been shifted to them, tremendously.

### **Conceiving the Idea**

It is on this note that PRNigeria under the leadership of Mallam Yushau Shuaib decided to take a bold step in changing the narrative. Initially, arrangements were in pipeline for me to travel to Gwada IDPs camp in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State to examine the predicaments of some victims of banditry, but it wasn't fated due to some reasons.

Thus, it was one Saturday's morning when myself and the boss were discussing in his office when a call came through his mobile phone which he did not hesitate to pick and equally put it on speaker mode.

The caller was an indigene of Chonoko town in Danko/Wasagu LGA in Zuru Emirates, Kebbi state. I am sure that the reader is aware that the Zuru axis is one of the banditry-ravaged areas in Kebbi state. You

can just tag it as a NO-GO territory.

In an agonizing tune, he was narrating to the boss how many villages around his community were sacked by bandits, thereby forcing the residents to swarm into Chonoko, a situation leading to humanitarian crises of great magnitude with a lot of ramifications. Alas, all those carnages that had happened were not covered by the media.

However, I was able to notice the justification for such under-reportage by the media after visiting the community, the reason which the reader would also get to know in the next part of this article.

In a nutshell, the caller was demanding for media intervention to come and cover their awful situation and tell the world about their 'sorry state' with a good hope that government relief agencies as well as local and international donor organizations would come to their aid, just as how they have been providing succor to the victims of insurgency

in northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe respectively.

Not to my surprise, Malam Shuaib response was positive as he granted the man's request, assuring him that PRNigeria will spotlight the issue to the public space. He [the Boss] then dropped his phone and said to me; "Mukhtar, you are going to cover this assignment"

which I boldly replied with "Yes Sir" while clearly knowing the kind of uncertainties and herculean task that awaits me in embarking on such an adventure.

Meanwhile, a lot of people will question my decision on why I advanced on such a risky mission without giving it a second thought, but to me I was just seeing it as a golden opportunity to have a grasp of what the fieldwork experience is all about, having craved for such opportunity for so long since ever when I joined media industry from my earlier science background.

## DAY 1

In a matter of few days, we were through with preparation, involving mapping and studying the routes to our study area as well as establishing a nexus between myself and some contact persons in Chonoko, i.e. the Village Head and the Ward Councilor.

That day has finally arrived, thus, on Monday, April 11, 2022, myself as the lead reporter and colleague, Salisu Muhammad Manager who served as the technical assistant, set out in the early morning and left Abuja for Suleja. On reaching there, we boarded a motorcycle that took us to a motor park called 'Kwamba Garage' where we are expected to get a vehicle that will convey us to 'Kontagora.'



After paying our transport fare to the park official and waited for not long before the vehicle was full of passengers and ready to take-off. At exactly 09:01am we zoomed out of the garage for a 398km journey to Kontagora which took not less than 5 hours of our precious time.

We passed through Minna, the Niger State capital before reaching 'Zungeru,' an ancient town which served as the seat of power to the first Governor General of Nigeria during the colonial era, Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard. It was also the capital city of the northern region during the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914.

Apart from that, I also heard so many vital facts about this important town, because the first northern military cemetery was established in Zungeru. It is also a town where some influential Nigerians including; Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first President of Nigeria and Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, the leader of the defunct Biafra nation were born.

As we are bidding farewell to the town, driving across a bridge, I sighted an ever-increasing water flow which is an extension of Zungeru Dam from which a 700MW hydroelectric power plant is being constructed, the second to the largest after Kainji Dam that provides 760MW.



sighted a military base with many armored vehicles ready for combat in order to beef up security around the community.

Next is Rijau LGA, another bandit-infested area where I also noticed a military detachment with many gallant soldiers at their youthful age who sacrificed their lives for us to live in peace.

From there we started heading toward the bandits-infested towns starting with Tgina. You can recall that, it is the same town where bandits stormed in August 2021 and abducted not less than 90 pupils from Salihu Tanko Islamiyyah.

However, I witnessed some level of security measures along the roads as there were presence of several checkpoints here and there manned by operatives who are monitoring the vehicles' movement.

As we are moving, the driver parked by the roadside to refill his gallon from an old historic 'Nagwamachi well' in Borgu LGA. According to one of the passengers, the well precedes Sokoto State. It was named after its founder who is also a warrior, but was ousted from his community in the northern part of present Sokoto. The remain of the warrior was said to be buried beside the well.

On reaching Kontagora, we prayed, rested a little and proceeded to Riba in Kebbi state, a 105km journey that took us more than 3 hours owing to the deplorable condition of the road.

We passed through Warari town where I

From there we bade farewell to Niger and crossed into Dirin Daji in Sakaba LGA, Kebbi state. Don't forget, that was the town where bandit-terrorists waylaid and killed not less than 63 vigilantes in their own pool of blood in early March.

From there we reached Riba town, a few minutes' journey to Chonoko, where we got a motorcyclist who transported us to the study location.

As we are heading to Chonoko, I kept on ruminating that today I passed through some of these bandits-infested areas which before I used to only hear about them in the news when terrorists launch an attack on such communities.

I just couldn't believe it. Meanwhile we had a short conversation with the motorcyclist where he revealed to us how the security situation deteriorated recently around Zuru Emirates due to incessant bandits' attacks.

The most eye-catching scene that caught my eyes on reaching Chonoko was the presence of overcrowded settlements made up of small rooms of considerable sizes. Guess what, they were all occupied by about



10,000 IDPs who were sacked from the neighboring villages by the bandits-terrorists.

### **Chonoko Palace**

We arrived at Chonoko palace a few minutes to Iftaar and luckily enough, the Village Head, Muhammadu Damisa Dudu was there to receive us. We waited so long for the arrival of Bamaiyi Bawada, the councilor of Chonoko who is our second contact person after the village head.

While we were discussing, they revealed to us how the bandits have been operating in the area with impunity where they sacked not less 42 communities around Chonoko, while utilizing some of the deserted villages as their safe haven where they fall back after carrying out their heinous acts around the area.

We spent a lot of time mapping out strategies on how to go about conducting our investigation starting early in the morning. They promised to accompany us to some of

the sacked villages whom they are sure of reasonable security that can guarantee our safety so as to witness some of the damages done on the communities by the bandits and equally grant interviews to some of the victims.

Alas, unknown to our knowledge, the councilor called and briefed the Chairman of Danko/Wasagu LGA of our arrival and the objectives we intend to achieve. Upon learning about the presence of journalists in Chonoko all the way from Abuja, the Council Chairman wasn't happy about it, emphasizing that our report might sabotage government policy.

During my lengthy phone conversation with him, I tried to sensitize his mind about our good intentions, saying; "We are here to help, not to undermine your efforts. We want to draw the attention of the world to know the kind of humanitarian crises that are happening here, hoping to attract reaction from donor agencies just like how they are providing relief to victims of insurgency in

northeastern states."

In spite of all these efforts, the Chairman remains adamant and refuse to shift ground about his earlier stand. After a while, the councilor upon discussing with his boss, turned to us and said; "You cannot start this work until you get clearance from the Chairman, let's wait for him tomorrow morning, he will come and join you. Feel free, you can spend as many days as possible here until you achieve your goals."

At this juncture, myself and the other colleague were very sure that the Chairman will not give us a nod to embark on such an investigation based on reasons best known to him. Therefore, we spent the night mapping out strategies on how to discreetly gather essential data regarding what we intended to achieve for establishing a presence in that community.

## **DAY 2**

Without notifying the councilor, we set out early in the morning and arrived at Chonoko palace and started granting interviews to some victims.

Surprisingly, our first interviewee was Tanko Magaze who doubled as the Chief hunter and leader of vigilantes in Chonoko town.

Tanko was among the few survivors when bandits ambushed and killed 63 vigilantes in Dirin Daji during the month of March.

He narrated the horrific experience they faced during the attack and how he and some of his few colleagues were able to escape by a whisker. He however blamed lack of sophisticated arms and informants who compromised their mission by giving intelligence to the terrorists about their movement.

During our lengthy up-close and personal with the Chonoko village head, he outlined in his sorrowful voice how the bandits have been attacking the villages, rustling cattle

and sheep, razing down shelters and plundering their valuable items for three years in a row without being confronted by security forces.

It is disheartening to also learn that, even the village head lost his son, who has filled an application form to join the Nigerian Air Force, to this carnage by bandits.

He mentioned several plights of the IDPs which I and my colleagues were able to notice for the short time that we arrived at the community.

These include but not limited to water scarcity, as there are only two boreholes meant to supply water to entire Chonoko community, in fact the IDPs used to queue from dawn to sunset in order to fetch water for domestic purposes; looming food crisis that is facing the community as many farmers were forced to abandon their vast hectares of land, thus drastically reducing the quantity of agricultural supplies. Many children observed have signs of malnutrition.

Other predicaments being faced by the displaced persons as mentioned by the village head are; insecurity as no any security forces was seen in the community; many schools remained closed while others were turned to IDPs shelter, thereby threatening educational status of the community; overcrowded settlement where disease can easily spread in the event of outbreak, lack of medical supplies and absence of relief agencies among others.

He also told us about how ladies were kidnapped from neighboring communities by the bandits and only released after payment of ransom.

Similarly, the two other interviewees briefed us on how they were dislodged from their villages, their relatives killed and properties carted away. To a 70-year old Mai Anguwa Mai Zuwa, his house was razed down including 70 bags of guinea corn, bags of

cements and 1million naira among other valuable items.

Meanwhile, Musa Kadebo has lost his eldest heir alongside other children to these wanton killings.

These revelations were only a tip of an iceberg of what we were able to observed.



The village head also decried how Zamfara government is not being cooperative with security forces in stemming the rising tides of the carnage.

### Security Threats

While in the middle of granting an interview to the village head, I received a call from the person who brought the idea of this investigation to our boss, which I didn't answer hoping to call him back later.

After about 15minutes, I checked my inbox only to have found a lengthy text message from him notifying us that henceforth we should not trust anybody in the community, not even the councilor and the village head.

In fact, he asked us to quickly leave the community right away and not to disclose any information regarding our next movement to anybody.

In a nutshell, I and my colleague were able to decipher the message and understood that we were being 'compromised'. Upon learning about this development, we diplomatically withdrew from that community and retreated to Zuru town, which is 30km away from Chonoko where we spent the night.

### DAY 3

The next day, i.e. Wednesday, April 13, 2022,

we were able to grant interviews through mobile phones to some IDPs in Chonoko with the help of some locals whom we established rapport with at the time we arrived.

They helped us in identifying some of the victims within the community comprising of females and children who told us about their plights and what they are expecting from the government and other stakeholders.

The gory tales of the victims of bandit attacks in Kebbi, and particularly, the communities we visited, are soul-touching.

Both the Kebbi Government and the Federal Government work do more, in concert, to ameliorate the plights of the displaced villagers of Chonoko.

The story of their wretchedness and haplessness in the aftermath of violent attacks targeted at them by bandits will definitely be served, in no mean time, by PRNigeria.

But the report of government's intervention to forestall a recurrence of the type of carnage at Chonoko, or perhaps to permanently end banditry, not only in Kebbi States, but across the North West and North Central is one juicy story PRNigeria will relish serving. Someday.

# Untold Story of IDPs after Bandits Killed over 200 People, sacked 42 Communities, Occupy Deserted Houses in Kebbi State

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi

Over the years, non-state actors including terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, armed robbers and host of other criminals have acquired dangerous weapons and operate with impunity thereby wrecking havocs on various vulnerable communities.

Many promising lives were cut short as a result of the resurgence of booming banditry and kidnapping industry in northwestern states of Nigeria. The heinous acts have equally led to wanton destruction of valuable properties including houses, food supplies, shelter, agricultural fields, business spots among others.

However, it is disheartening to learn that most of these atrocities perpetrated on some remote communities and villages are under-reported, thus disappearing in a thin air without the world knowing about the predicaments of those victims of carnages and devastations.

Kebbi is among the banditry-ravaged state in northwestern Nigeria that is hardly reported by the media. This is despite the fact that thousands of people have been sacked from their ancestral communities with a slim hope of ever returning.

Therefore, in this present investigation, PRNigeria's YA'U MUKHTAR MADOBI AND SALISU MUHAMMAD MANAGER took a risky adventure to one of the bandits-ravaged area in the northwestern Nigeria, CHONOKO Town in Danko/Wasagu Local Government Area, Zuru Emirates, Kebbi State and reports about the plights of over 10,000 Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs, who are taking refuge in that town after been sacked from about 42 villages by bandits who are still operating with impunity in that area.

## Encounter with Eyewitnesses

While narrating his ordeal to PRNigeria, a 70-year-



old Mai Unguwa Maizuwa who was sacked from his community in Zagami village, he stated that the bandits have been carrying out some serial attacks on their community for three years in a row since 2019.

The bandits have so far rustled all their cattle in the community and equally plundered their belongings, killed many people and equally sacked the entire village.

He said; "Presently in our town, they have been invading our community for three years in a row, they rustled all our herds of cattle. They did it two years ago as well as last year and this year when they came and found out that there were no more cattle to rustle again, they invaded our homes, killed two adults and burnt down our shelters. They also plundered not less than 19 new branded motorcycles in our town," Maizuwa said.

When the bandit-terrorists attacked his home, Maizuwa was fortunate to have barely escaped with his life. However, his well-furnished house, foodstuffs, money and other valuable items were destroyed completely.

"When they invaded my home, I was fortunate to escape. Of all the valuable items present in that home, I learnt that nothing was spared. They burnt down 70 bags of my guinea corn, soya beans, and



other varieties of food stuff.

Apart from that, Maizuwa told PRNigeria that other items including many bags of cements and some monies he saved hoping to do some business dealings which amount to N997,000 were lost during the invasion.



Maizuwa, who is a father to 20 children is currently living in agony in an overcrowded settlement as IDP in Chonoko town as he lost all his sources of livelihood.

Another victim who lost his son to these carnages, Musa Sarkin Makada, sacked from Kadebo village explained to PRNigeria how life has been difficult for them since their community was ransacked.

It was learnt that, since the attacks were carried out, his community was deserted and turned to like a town occupied by ghosts as women, children, elderly and even disabled who could not run were evacuated to Chonoko town for safety.

“On that fateful day, when they raided Dan-Kade, a neighboring town close to us, it is on that same day that those marauders invaded our community, but we were able to narrowly escape, Musa said as he narrated his ordeal during the attack.

“No life was lost for that recent attack, but for the previous years' attacks, a lot of people were wasted in our town, even my eldest heir was killed alongside many children.

“Everybody has deserted Dan Kade town, apart from Mango and other trees, nobody was left behind.”

Musa, in his sorrowful voice, has pleaded with the government to do everything possible to ensure their relocation back to their ancestral communities and with some adequate level of security.

“At Kadebo village, we don't know how to do any profession apart from farming. Although we do visit some markets, honestly we are in a difficult situation.” Musa said.

Imam Kabiru, is an Islamic cleric who fled to Chonoko from Tungan Dangula, alongside his two wives and 22 children after surviving bandits' attack.

PRNigeria learnt that, when the terrorists raided his village, they destroyed houses and food supplies, forcing the inhabitant to leave behind valuable items including monies, clothes, household materials in order to escape with their lives.

In his words; "I am a cleric, whenever I am invited for religious functions such as naming or wedding ceremony, I am always shy of attending, because I don't have proper attire to wear and present myself. I used to delegate somebody on my behalf.”

## **Chonoko Town Count Losses Due To Continuous Bandits' Attacks**

Though the ancient town of Chonoko which is considered as a 'safe haven' for the IDPs has never been infiltrated by the bandits, several villages around have come under serial attacks by the bandits in past years. Investigation by PRNigeria revealed that, not less than 42 communities were sacked and their valuable items plundered by these blood-sucking demons.

These communities are; Dan Kade, Warkata, Kurgiye, Ragam I,II &III, 'yar Kuka, Shangel, Tungan Dangula, Kahalmo I&II, Kadebo, Ched-Kubu, Yababa, Gimi, Ganyale I,II&III, Silabi and Digoga. The long list also include; Bankunatare, Bawada, Zagami, Turame, Gyado, Tungan Kwando, Ktare, Sebzama I,II&III, Dhilo and Duru. Others are; Tudun Wada, Digwengwe, Gaya, Saaki, 'Yar Buga, Dilanko, Zuttu and Irgaa.

According to documents sighted authoritatively by PRNigeria, about 203 unarmed people were massacred by bandits around Chonoko territory since the resurgence of the attacks from 2019 to date. A lot of children were turned to orphans and many women have become widows as well.

"Ibrahim Dakomi left behind 19 children and elderly father who is my peer, while Danlami from Dokan Kwaya whom they killed alongside his two brothers and equally rustled his 200 cows," a community leader who craved anonymity confirmed to PRNigeria.

It was also learnt by PRNigeria that, the remaining houses that were not destroyed during the attacks, are usually occupy by these bandits as homes.

Meanwhile, an estimated 1,515 cattle and 161 sheep were rustled from the possession of about 419 people of that area. In addition, many houses, agricultural fields, food supplies, motorcycles, among a host of others that could not be ascertained were equally lost during this trying moment.

### **Plights of the IDPs**

PRNigeria understands that the over 10,000 IDPs that are taking refuge within Chonoko town are suffering from untold hardships, which calls for urgent and serious humanitarian assistance from the government and other stakeholders. The predicaments cut across the following categories;

### **Bandits Attacks Threaten Agriculture And Food Security**

As a result of bandits' attacks, victims were left with no option than to flee their communities and equally abandon their vast hectares of land uncultivated. This seriously calls for a great concern as food supply will greatly reduce thereby leading to food crisis.

Chonoko settlers were famous for their obsession to farming activities and hunting, the duo which represents their symbol and pride. Most of the IDPs revealed to PRNigeria that they don't know how to do any business apart from farming.

"Honestly we don't know how it is going to turn out or whether we will be able to continue engaging in farming activities as we are in a serious difficult situation due to banditry.

"Some of our people who live and farm in Zamfara were now displaced, thus we have to share with them the few available farms that remain here in Chonoko," a community leader stated.

Some of the displaced farmers complained that even if they are opportune to return to their respective communities and continue their farming activities, they cannot be able to harvest one-tenth

of what they previously used to. This is connected to the fact that the cattle who facilitate their field works are no more, as they have been rustled by the bandits.

"We therefore solicited for the support of the government to help us with agricultural inputs as well as small machinery in the form of a loan so that we can be able to farm and pay in instalments because our land is very fertile and good for agriculture." Said, a community leader

### **Education At Stake As Schools Remain Closed, Others Turned To IDPs Camps**

Triggered by the influx of displaced persons from neighboring villages, some schools in Chonoko have been turned to settlement in order to accommodate the ever-trooping migrants. This has equally added to the number of out-of-school children present in Nigeria, a situation that poses grievous danger to the educational system.

A community leader told PRNigeria that; "There was a time when we had to shut down our entire schools due to overcrowding in order to pave way for the migrants to use the facilities as shelter, but still we manage to operate, so what can we do?"

"Before, all our schools were taken over by the IDPs. Even now, there is only a single primary and secondary school that is operational here in Chonoko."

Meanwhile, PRNigeria learnt that, all the schools in the sacked villages remain closed as well as those sited in far locations due to fear of attack by bandits.

### **Water Scarcity**

The problem of water scarcity is another canker worm that has been eating deep into the flesh of the IDPs residing in that environment. It was learnt by PRNigeria that there are only two functional boreholes that serve as the sources of water to the entire community.

However, considering the population of the IDPs, these water sources were nothing to write home about as people used to queue from dawn to sunset in order to fetch water for domestic purposes.

A community leader expressed his worry regarding this issue, revealing that most of the time they have to intervene among the IDPs who often engage in fracas with one another.

“As I am speaking to you, currently a female IDP is receiving treatment in the hospital and they have to amputate her finger as a result of injury she suffered at the borehole while fighting with another colleague.”

## Overcrowded Settlement Threaten Healthcare System

When PRNigeria visited the IDPs settlement, it was learnt that they are living in an overcrowded environment with little space which can easily facilitate the spread of disease should an outbreak emerge.

Maikusa Kabiru, a female IDP sacked from Tungan Dangula recounts how a problem of bed space is becoming like a dagger to their heart since they

**“There are 20 of us cohabiting in a single room and we sleep on a bare floor without even a mat. Our husbands also used to sleep outside.” Maikusa narrated as she continued, “we are experiencing a problem of maintaining health condition, our children suffer malaria and we couldn't get money to buy medicine for their treatment.”**

storm Chonoko.

“There are 20 of us cohabiting in a single room and we sleep on a bare floor without even a mat. Our husbands also used to sleep outside.” Maikusa narrated as she continued, “we are experiencing a problem of maintaining health condition, our children suffer malaria and we couldn't get money to buy medicine for their treatment.”

A community leader also corroborated that malaria cases and other opportunistic diseases are becoming prevalent in the settlement and without adequate medical supplies to suppress its effects.

Meanwhile, she stated that, their neighbors used to come to their aid to pay medical bills for their sick children, otherwise they leave their fate to God.

Malam Kabiru also stated that he and other adults have to sacrifice the little rooms for their wives and children, while they pass the night under a tree canopy.

## Relief/Donor Agencies Shun Ravaged Communities

In spite of the plights of these IDPs, further investigation by PRNigeria revealed that since the beginning of these attacks, there is hardly any government agency, local or international organizations that visited the community to provide relief materials. Similarly, other local or international donor agencies are also yet to establish their presence in this banditry-ravaged community of Chonoko where thousands of victims are taking refuge.

A 37-year old housewife, Mailadi Bomboi pleaded with the concerned authorities to supply them with relief materials such as “clothes, laundry soaps, cooking pots, household items and foodstuff including guinea corn, maize, rice and beans.”

Humanitarian emergencies remain one of the biggest development challenges of the 21st century. In Nigeria, government agencies and non-governmental organization are known to renders succor to Persons of Concerns (PoC) including IDPs, migrants, refugees, victims of human trafficking, vulnerable women and children in

Nigeria. These agencies include; National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and International Committee of the Red Cross(ICRC) among others.

Alas, it was gathered that the aforementioned agencies have hardly ever provided aid to victims of banditry in Chonoko town.

According to a community right activist, Hassan Nagoda “The only time NEMA came to our aid is when our community faced flooding last year. But they didn't provide us with any relief materials regarding these banditry incidents”

## Security Situation In Chonoko

One will begin to wonder why Chonoko, which is considered as 'safe haven' for over 10,000 IDPs, but lacked requisite security architecture to provide protection to that vulnerable community. When PRNigeria visited the town, no presence of any

security forces was sighted. Nonetheless, some locals revealed to our reporters during conversation, saying that the troops were stationed in an uncompleted hospital at Unashi which serves as a military base, while others are deployed to Bena.

In another development, the locals have alleged that the troops do not used to take the fight to the bandits' door step, but rather wait to repel whenever they [bandits] launch an attack.

"The troops are always on the defensive; they don't initiate an attack against the bandits even when they see them. Their fighting strategy is faulty and questionable," said a resident of Chonoko who does not want his name in the print.

Some IDPs revealed that bandits have now taken possession of their homes after sacking them and now they [bandits] are living comfortably without any challenge.

"Before we used to confront them, but we no longer do that as they overpowered us because we don't have weapons to protect ourselves, and we don't know from where they are getting those guns. Lack of weapons is the major weakness that let us down.

"We therefore beg the government to stop these miscreants who used to cross from Zamfara and conduct these carnages on us. We could not understand where they are stockpiling this wealth because nobody can tell you the exact number of cattle that were rustled from our community," said a community leader.

## Relief Agencies React

In another development, the spokesperson of NEMA, Manzo Ezekiel confirmed to PRNigeria via telephone conversation that their staff have previously visited Chonoko community for on-spot assessment about their situation with a view of providing relief materials.

"As I am speaking to you now, arrangements are being made to dispatch and distribute relief materials to IDPs in Chonoko and Sakaba communities in Kebbi state. They items are mostly foodstuff as preferred by the victims which we were able to understand during our assessment." Ezekiel added.

While commenting on the issue, the Federal Commissioner of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced

Persons, Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, lamented on the ever-increasing number of IDP camps across the country. She however, promised that the commission will jump into action to support the victims as soon as they receive details about the situation.

Similarly, when contacted, the International Committee of the Red Cross revealed to PRNigeria that as at present, their area of coverage is the insurgents-ravaged northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa and some northcentral states mainly due to budget constraints. However, they promised to extend their coverage to include other regions within a foreseeable future.

## Conclusion

PRNigeria learnt that there is great concern among Chonoko indigenes that those bandits terrorizing their communities used to cross over from neighboring Zamfara axis. Again, they also

***“The troops are always on the defensive; they don't initiate an attack against the bandits even when they see them. Their fighting strategy is faulty and questionable, said a resident of Chonoko who does not want his name in the print.*”**

complained that rustled cattle from Chonoko territories and other plundered valuable items are equally smuggled to Zamfara. In addition, they faulted the security strategies employed by Zamfara Government in check-mating the activities of these marauders, saying that he has not been doing the needful.

Therefore, the Government should take a step forward by outlining and implementing proactive measures aimed at returning normalcy to these ravaged communities before they embark on hostile relationships with each other.

Similarly, humanitarian crises are very rife around those communities, thus, we call on Government relief agencies as well as other local and international donor agencies to as a matter of urgency establish their presence by providing necessary aids to the victims of banditry in the affected communities.

# Kebbi Banditry:

## Gov Matawalle Stops Troops from Going after Bandits Operating from Zamfara

**G**overnor Mohammed Bello Matawalle is alleged to be 'aiding and abetting' the marauding activities of armed banditry afflicting Kebbi State, PRNigeria gathered from a traditional leader.



nation," he noted.

Damisa said that kidnapped residents of Chonoko and other parts of the state are taken to bandits' dens in Zamfara for detention.

He also added that bandits terrorizing many Kebbi communities often launched their attacks from Zamfara.

The traditional chief of Chonoko in Kebbi, Alhaji Muhammad Damisa Dudu, in an interview with two PRNigeria reporters on an investigative sojourn to his community last Month, said Governor Matawalle has refused to cooperate with the Kebbi State Government in tackling criminal bandits, terrorizing the two States and other parts of the Northwest.

Alh. Damisa, who died of Asthmatic attacks two weeks after granting PRNigeria a video interview in his palace in Chonoko, noted that the Zamfara Governor has been preventing troops deployed to fight bandits in Kebbi from entering his State in the pursuits of the terrorists.

PRNigeria had early published the first part of the report titled:

“PHOTOS/VIDEO: Untold Story of IDPs after Bandits Killed over 200 People, sacked 42 Communities, Occupy Deserted Houses in Kebbi State.”  
<https://prnigeria.com/2022/05/03/untold-story-bandits-kebbi/>

In this second part of the report, the late Chonoko traditional leader had told PRNigeria that, Matawalle did not allow soldiers chasing bandits fleeing Kebbi to enter Zamfara State.

“I think the essence of the Nigerian military is to serve the entire States in Nigeria. They are not to serve Zamfara, Kebbi, Benin or Lagos alone. The military is to serve entire Nigeria as a

He said: “On March 18, for instance, they abducted 12 ladies from the community. We had to pay N3million to rescue our female children from Zamfara kidnappers' dens.

“Chonoko people need help because the situation is beyond the control of the Kebbi State Government. In Chonoko, bandits have killed 203 people. Over 400 of our women are now widows.

“There was a time when members of my community decided to relocate to a neighbouring country. I quickly contacted some traditional rulers to calm their frayed nerves before they could shelve their plans.

# INVESTIGATION:

## How Banditry Affected Livelihood in Kagara, Niger State

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi



livelihood including agriculture, marketing and more importantly the education and healthcare system.

### Bandits Force Us to Offer Skeletal Service in Kagara General Hospital – Staff

A check by PRNigeria showed that, right from Birnin Gwari in Kaduna state, it is only in Kagara where a general hospital can be found. Going further, another one will be cited only in Minna, the capital city of Niger state. However, it is disheartening to learn that this medical facility has over the years been forced to offer skeletal service to the large population trooping on a daily basis to get treatment for various illnesses. This was as a result of fear of attack by bandits who continued to hold the surrounding communities by the jugulars.

The hospital, being managed by only one medical doctor and a handful number of nurses normally operates between 08.00am to 01.00pm except for exceptional cases where the time might be a little extended beyond that. Because of the lengthy procedures attached to the process, the hospital has since abandoned the idea of conducting surgical operations as patients were no longer admitted for that purpose.

A medical staff in the facility, who craved anonymity said to PRNigeria "If it is a major problem or emergency, sometimes we used to take risks to admit the patient and resuscitate him till 08.00pm. If he is stabilized, fine and good, else the treatment continues the next day. But for the

**S**ecurity challenges, mostly fueled as a result of banditry and kidnapping have continued hitting hard on various communities in Nigeria without sign of abating. PRNigeria's MUKHTAR YA'U MADOBI reports how banditry still remains a thorn in the flesh of Kagara communities thereby depriving them of a good healthcare system and sources of livelihood.

Kagara is the headquarter of Rafi Local Government Area (LGA) in Niger state. A check by PRNigeria revealed that the entire 11 wards that constituted the local council are overwhelmed by insecurity with kidnapping for ransom and banditry at the forefront.

An official of Rafi LGA who spoke to our correspondent noted that there is no exact data regarding the number of people either killed, kidnapped, raped or the number of animals rustled as the attacks continued to happen regularly. He noted that, the bandits who used to wreak havoc on Kagara and its environs are camped around Shiroro and Birnin Gwari forest reserve. More than 10,000 people have now become IDPs in Rafi as a result of banditry and kidnapping.

Therefore, the residents, in an interview with PRNigeria decried how these persistent security challenges have been threatening their main sources of

critical emergency cases, the patient will be referred to another hospital in Minna.”

The source also lamented how on several occasions, medical doctors and nurses [including Kagara indigenes] posted to the said health facility absconded citing insecurity as reason behind that decision.

“Another medical doctor was posted here but he declined because of insecurity. He said, provided it is Kagara, he would rather resign,” the source added.

Further investigation showed that there are no security forces to guard the hospital and the perimeter walls are not fenced, thus making the entire facility penetrable from every direction by all sorts of people which clearly raises security concerns.

Another hospital worker stated that they were only able to escape by the whiskers when the bandits stormed the facility at night, thus forcing them to cease night operations.

Amidst this backdrop, it was also noted that most of the structures in the hospital were in a dilapidated condition, not to mention furniture and other facilities necessarily needed for effective healthcare delivery.

“If you get inside into the children and male ward, you will be shocked about the dilapidated condition, it is unfortunate. The General hospital for Rafi Local Government Area didn't warrant to be in such condition.”

### **We Pay Levies to Bandits for Allowing Us to Work on Our Farms – Farmer**

Agriculture is another sector that is badly being affected in Kagara as a result of insecurity. This has

undoubtedly led to the deficit in the quantity of agricultural supplies thereby leading to food crises. This is not unconnected to the rustling of cattle by the bandits, who were very vital in assisting farmers in land cultivation.

Some of the residents who spoke to PRNigeria decried that people resorted to paying taxes to the bandits in order to allow them smooth access to their farms and cultivate. These taxes are being paid not only once but in batches right from the process of land preparation, planting, harvesting and transportation of the yields back to home. The bandits were also in the habit of confiscating agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, seeds and farm implements from the farmers which can later be retrieved in an exchange for money.

It is worrisome that these bandits will still later abduct these farmers thereby forcing them to sell the agricultural produce and send the proceeds to them as ransom to regain their freedom.

Idris Bawa is a farmer who is presently residing in Kagara after been dislodged from his ancestral community in Katunga village by bandit-terrorists. While discussing with PRNigeria reporter, he narrated his ordeal on how agriculture was becoming a difficult venture for them due to incessant bandits' attacks in spite of tax payment.

“When it is time to harvest, they will ask you to pay money for that and you will also pay an additional bill for transporting it to home.

If you refuse to pay, they won't allow you to harvest the crops, or they will set it ablaze whether it is maize, rice or any other. That is what they do.” Bawa said.

In a similar vein, a Rafi LGA official

also noted that the high cost of farm inputs is also a contributing factor to the decline of farming activities in the area.

### **Most of our Schools are Now Shut Down – Official**

On the other hand, findings by PRNigeria also revealed that out of the 127 public primary schools in Rafi LGA, not less than 78 were shut down as a result of persistent bandits' attacks. This was confirmed during an interview with an official from the Planning Research and Statistics (PRS) Section of Rafi Local Government Education Authority.

According to him, only schools cited along the roadsides are operational in most cases, while those located within villages were closed down. A situation that tremendously continued to affect the teaching and learning process within the communities.

He said; “When they chase people out of villages, they set some of these schools ablaze. Presently there are five schools that were burnt down by them [bandits] while some that remain closed for a long time have been gutted by fire that emanated from the surrounding bushes.”

### **Like Primary Schools, Like Secondary Schools**

Also, seven out of the fifteen secondary schools in Kagara are not operating, courtesy of lingering security challenges bedeviling the community. Schools located in remote areas are the ones mostly at the receiving ends of this calamity.

This has evidently caused overcrowding in the only two operating secondary schools presently operating in Kagara town. This was confirmed to PRNigeria by Kabir Yunusa, the principal of Salihu Tanko Day



Mohammed Mohammed, the Chief of Staff to the Rafi LGA Chairman, decried on how the continuous ugly trends of security challenges have almost affected every community in the 11 wards of entire Rafi LGA. When asked on how to end these killings, Mohammed emphasized that the federal government holds the key to restoring normalcy in these troubled zones as it commands all the security architectures including Military, Police, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps and the likes.

However, he lamented on how the difficult terrains of the area may hinder the success of military operation in the area.

“Our terrain is a difficult one, we expect the army to eliminate these bandits during the dry season and now we are in the rainy season, we have a lot of rivers, grassland, thick forest, valleys and mountains.

“These bandits are cattle herders, they mastered this terrain very well, they can ride on tall mountains with their motorcycles, they can speed on farm ridges, they can even cross rivers with motorcycles, and the military are not familiar with the terrain.” Mohammed added.

He therefore urged the government to use all the necessary methods including deploying technology to trace and take the fight to the bandits' enclaves who are having permanent camps in Dansadau forest of Zamfara axis and Shiroro LGA in Niger state.

PRNigeria gathered from locals that residents of some communities have now learnt to live with the bandits. They provide them with basic life necessities and cook for them under duress in exchange for their safety.

Secondary School, Kagara, one of the overcrowded schools while the other one being Ahmadu Attahiru Secondary School, Kagara.

It can be recalled that Government Science College, Kagara has been shut down for a longer time after bandits invaded the school and abducted no fewer than 280 students in February 2021. The school is presently being occupied by security forces where it serves as a Military base.

### **Quantity of Agricultural Commodities Drop in the Market – Resident**

Baba Jibo, a resident in Kagara also revealed to PRNigeria how this insecurity has affected the quantity of agricultural commodities being traded at Kagara market. Prior to this awful situation, marketers from neighboring Niger used to visit Kagara market and buy trailers of

grains including maize, the source stated.

“Every Tuesday, about 30-40 trailers of maize will be exported from Kagara, but with this insecurity, people were not even allowed to farm, not to talk of even conveying the produce to the market.” Jibo added.

It was learnt that there is serious decline in the business, as it is now difficult to even load up to three to four trailers of grains, thus causing decline in revenue generation. According to Baba Jibo, it is unfortunate that a large number of the sellers are doing that in order to raise money for ransom payment to the bandits in order to secure freedom of their relatives.

### **FG Knows Best How to End this Carnage – Rafi LGA Official**

While responding to PRNigeria on the security situation in Kagara,



# KAGARA AS MODEL:

## How Host Community Are Aiding Resettlement of IDPs In Niger State

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi

**H**undred thousand of people have been sacked from their ancestral homes as a result of persistent banditry and kidnapping activities that has been ravaging Nigeria, with Niger state as one of the epicenters of this ugly trend. These displaced victims were forced to settle in neighboring communities under abject poverty and untold hardship conditions.

However, it is against this backdrop that PRNigeria's **MUKHTAR YA'U MADOBI** reports how host communities are assisting displaced victims of banditry to resettle in Kagara, Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State in order to regain their normal life.

### From The Horses' Mouths

A 46-year-old Ado Makeri, who relocated to Kagara three years ago after bandits ransacked his village, 'Sufana' is currently serving as vigilante member and contributing his quota toward securing that very host community against the menace of non-state actors. He revealed to PRNigeria how the bandits massacred 10 members of his family with the last one been ambushed alongside the Nigerian Army.

Even though he is living in a rented house, Makeri told our reporter how the residents and the Local Government Official were very helpful in assisting their cause including the settlement of their rent fee to some extent.

"I was once served with a quit notice, but the Local Government



Chairman settled the bill." Makeri added.

Similarly, Shuaib Makeri, who is a blacksmith, did not abandon his inherited family business when he set foot in Kagara after fleeing Sufana village. When PRNigeria visited his cottage industry, he was busy making farm implements such as hoe, axe, rake, sickle, knife etc.

According to him, he earns his daily bread through that business as he is being patronized by community members without any form of discrimination.

### We Cater for Ourselves Through Farming, Community Support – Female Farmer

Hafsat Magaji who was displaced from Karaya village some months ago also narrated her story to a PRNigeria reporter when he visited her in a mud house where she lives.

"They {bandits}invaded our village early morning around 5 O'Clock. They suddenly appeared when we were sitting in

our homes. We left with our children helter-skelter and reached this town with some of us not even wearing shoes and a veil or Hijab.

She noted that they used to cater for themselves through farming activities they engaged under terrifying conditions and with some level of supports from the community.

"...They [community] give us detergent, soap etc. We used to get our livelihoods from the work we do, feed our children and equally take care of other basic necessities." Hafsat added.

### Community Leaders are Helping Us - Victims

Kabiru Musa from Unugu village who is a farmer and herbalist helps sick people in the neighborhood in Kagara with traditional medicine. He revealed that one of his children is still in bandits' den who are still demanding ransom for his freedom while the other one was able to escape and return home.

In a rented house, he stopped his children from going to school ever since they fled their ancestral community. Nevertheless, Mr. Musa told PRNigeria how the community including the traditional leaders were assisting him.

"The ward head has been very helpful with provision of food and other basic items. The Emir of Kagara has also even given me some clothes. The community members have been supportive," Musa said.

A 70-year-old Mai Unguwa Dangana with walking sticks who was sacked from Tashan Dogo community by bandits, disclosed how the Rafi LGA Chairman settled his family in a government building in Kagara town. He decried how terrorists kept chasing them away from their farms even though, farming is the only venture they are familiar with.

“As we go to the farms, the bandits keep chasing us away. Apart from abducting farmers they also collect ransom and levies. The farming activities are nothing to write home about.” Dangana added.

### **I sell Sachet Water, Soft Drinks in Kagara - IDP**

When Abdullahi Sarki and his family were dislodged from Sambuga village, he was left with no other choice than to relocate and settle in their inherited house in Kagara. Apart from engaging in small-scale farming, Sarki also had a small kiosk made up of zinc sheets along major road that passes through Kagara where he charges phones and sells sachet water as well as soft drinks.

“Community members used to patronize my business and our relationship with them is cordial, we live in peace and harmony.

Among other issues, Sarki revealed to PRNigeria how incessant attacks by blood-sucking bandit-terrorists compelled them to quit their community against their will.

“Whenever they invaded, we used to climb and hide on top of mountains until they finish their transgressions and leave, but now it has reached a point beyond hiding on the mountain, so we fled.” Sarki said.

### **We were Given this Land to Build Our House – Female Victim**

Aisha Shehu who was also sacked from Wayam village was met by our reporter in their newly built house which was acquired with the help of one philanthropist in Kagara. A 67-year-old Aisha was busy processing shea butter oil in company of her relatives when she was approached by our reporter.

“We migrated to Kagara after being dislodged by bandits three years ago. They invaded our homes and that is why we left.

“Malam Ado gave our husband this land and built this house, he helped us to settle when we arrived. Some of our colleagues are renting a house while others are given freely until they can afford their own.”

### **Why We Are Helping the Victims – Resident**

Abdullahi Tauhid Shehi is a resident of Kagara town who has over the years dedicated his energy and financial resources to helping the victims of banditry who swarmed Kagara in search of relief. He told PRNigeria how he has been providing shelter and some basic necessities of life to some Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are under his care.

Shehi also added how they were able to assist some of the victims to rediscover their skills and talents in doing businesses which actually facilitated their resettlement in the community while others have since returned to their communities.

“Well, wherever you see a migrant, you should help him because you don't know where you will also find yourself one-day. We considered them as our brothers and we found them in a situation that desperately needed help, that is why we embraced them, gave them shelter and asked them to settle with us until

God intervenes in this situation.

“Initially, when they first arrived, you know when you flee, you will not be able to carry your business materials with you. So, we started helping them with what we can afford up to the time when they became used to the community.

Majority of the victims are now able to take care of themselves, as confirmed by Shehi.

### **Security Situation in Kagara**

Reports indicated that Kagara town, the headquarter of Rafi LGA, Niger state was invaded by bandits on at least six occasions. The most disastrous attack happened in February 2021, when the terrorists in a night raid, invaded the Government Science College (GSC) Kagara and abducted about 280 students while killing another one on the school premises.

PRNigeria noted that there is decline in the rate of attacks by bandits within Kagara town, a development which is not unconnected to the presence of two military bases located at the then GSC Kagara and Ahmadu Attahiru Secondary School, Kagara respectively. The soldiers have been guarding the town against the activities of non-state actors.

However, there is corresponding spate in the level of attacks around Kagara villages as the bandits continued having their field day with impunity and unchallenged. Most of the abandoned houses in the sacked community are now occupied by the bandits.

It was noted that some of the communities have now learnt to live with the bandits by paying taxes in exchange for their safety and lives, meanwhile they equally relinquish the ownership rights of

their belongings including women to these marauders.

### **Give Us Sophisticated Weapons and See Wonders – Vigilantes Tell Government**

According to checks with vigilantes in Kagara, the local security outfits decried how lack of sophisticated arms has been truncating their efforts in containing the menace of the bandits around the territories.

Ado Bawa, popularly known as Na-Jalli is a vigilante who transferred his security services to Kagara after bandits ransacked his community in Sambuga village.

Na-Jalli told PRNigeria how the bandits are outsmarting vigilantes with superior weapons which forced some of the security volunteers to quit operations due to lack of adequate guns and ammunition.

“With their sophisticated weapons, the bandits attack our villages, burn our valuable items, sleep in our homes and kill innocent people.”

He however, emphasized that there is good collaboration between them and the conventional security forces which help a lot in suppressing the rampaging activities of the bandits, thus improving security around the territory.

“We work in synergy with Army, Police and Civil Defense. We have no problem with them and they are doing their best. “We gather and share intelligence and we quickly notify them of any development we hear about and they act responsibly.” Na-Jalli said.

Also on his part, the Commandant General of Vigilantes in Kagara, Isah Auta who is a retired police officer, confirmed to PRNigeria

that, it is only lack of weapons that always make them to be on the defensive side, other than offensive.

He said; “With sophisticated weapons, we are ready to take the fight to the bandits' dens.”

### **Government, Relief Agencies Should Look into Our Situation – Victims**

Though the majority of these displaced persons from villages around Rafi LGA who swarmed Kagara were able to resettle, others are still in the process of achieving that feat.

They however urged the government to roll out plans and implement measures that will put an end to this insecurity bedeviling their communities to enable them return to their ancestral homes.

A housewife, Hafsah Magaji from Karaya village said: “We appeal to the government to solve these insecurity issues. They should also help us with food, shelter, clothes, soaps because the bandits have plundered our homes when they attacked.”

On the other hand, the IDPs who are mostly farmers also seek for government intervention in provision of farm inputs such as fertilizer, chemicals, seeds and small farm machineries that will assist them in land cultivation since their cattle have been rustled.

In the same vein, other victims told PRNigeria that they hardly receive any kind of support from response agencies, be it either National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and the likes. They therefore, appealed to these authorities to look into their plights and provide them with relief materials.

Tauhid Shehi, a resident of Kagara who has been housing some of these IDPs noted that; “They [victims] need relief materials including mosquito nets, wrappers, mattress etc.”

### **Rafi LGA Official Reacts**

In an interview with PRNigeria reporter, the Chief of Staff to Rafi Local Council Chairman, Mohammed Mohammed, who spoke on behalf of his principal, Alhaji Ismail Musa Modibbo, lamented on how insecurities have overwhelmed the entire Rafi LGA and the neighboring communities.

According to him, none of the communities in 11 political wards and 10 districts of Rafi were affected by these security challenges. He also noted that there were more than 10,000 IDPs in various communities across Rafi LGA as a result of bandits' rampaging activities.

“We can't give specific statistics of IDPs because even if we say there are 10,000, we are just giving an understatement, they could be more.” Mohammed added.

When asked on how they take care of the displaced persons in the area, Mohammed stated that they provide support and relief materials for them with the help of able individuals, State Government and other response agencies

He said; “Normally we get support from the State government and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in the federal government and some well to do individuals in the society.

“At the Local Government level, we always take care of their hospital bills for those shot or raped.”

# REPORTER'S DIARY:

## Inside Kagara, the Niger Community turned 'Mecca' for Victims of Banditry

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi

**A**fter PRNigeria's last April expedition to Chonoko village in Zuru axis, Kebbi State, where my humble self and a colleague undertook an adventure to that bandits-infested territory and reported on the plights of more than 10,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in that area, my Editor saw the need for me to undertake another trip to another community. This time around it was Kagara Community in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State.

This aspect of Developmental Journalism by PRNigeria investigate the plight of IDP in the host community and the expected roles of the government at all level.

However, when I set foot in Kagara town, I found it necessary to expand the scope of my assignment beyond the initial objectives to include investigation on how banditry has affected agriculture, education, healthcare and marketing in that community.



### DAY ONE

On the wee hours of Saturday, July 02, 2022 I left Abuja for Suleja, specifically Kwamba garage but couldn't find a vehicle that was going to Kagara directly. So, I had to settle for a one that is traveling to Kontagora so that I can alight at Tegna and get another car that will finally convey me to Kagara.

Our car zoomed off by 10.20am where we passed through Minna, Zungeru and finally reached Tegna around 2.10pm. After some dilly-dallying, I boarded

another vehicle which took less than 30 mins to land us in Kagara.

After alighting at my supposed location, I felt very nervous, because apart from the Chonoko episode, I once again found myself in another bandits-troubled area. So, I quickly brought out my phone and reached one of my fixers (contact/local persons in Kagara) whom we had been communicating with since I left Abuja.

They were supposed to be my

eyes in Kagara, take me round the town and help me locate the faces of my report and also grant interviews which they ultimately did beyond expectations.

After a couple of minutes, Baba Jibo, one of the fixers, arrived on his motorcycle at the exact location which I described to him. We exchanged pleasantries and drove off to a quiet location where I prayed and rested for a while.

Baba Jibo is a critical stakeholder

and very resourceful to the security personnel in Kagara, especially in areas of intelligence gathering and information sharing about the movement of bandits within and around Kagara villages. Within the few days I spent with him, I noticed how he often received and also made calls on issues related to security.

Because of the time factor, I started my assignment on that very evening where I was first directed to a family house whose members were dislodged from their ancestral community in Sufana Village three years ago by bandits.

Ado Makeri, who now serves as vigilante in Kagara narrated to me how 10 members of his family were killed with the last one being ambushed alongside the Nigerian Army, while fighting to curb their menace. He explained how he is taking care of his family through the little farming he does and how the residents are helping them as well, especially in settling the bill for the rented house they live in.

I also sighted his elder brother, Shuaib Makeri, a blacksmith, who makes different varieties of farm implements. He alluded how the residents are patronizing his business and the kind of cordial relationship they share with them.

Next, it was Kabiru Musa, a farmer and a herbalist who migrated to Kagara from Unugu Village due to persistent bandits' attacks. He described how he was helped to resettle in Kagara with assistance from his ward head whom he said usually comes to his aid whenever necessary. He said that the Emir of Kagara also assisted him with clothes.

Sadly, one of his sons is still languishing in the bandits' den where they are demanding ransom in exchange for his freedom.

I also had the opportunity of interviewing Hafsat Magaji, an IDP who is also a farmer. She told me how they used to get their means of livelihoods from the little farming they do amidst threat from the bandit-terrorists who doesn't allow them spend much time on the farm. Nonetheless, she also attested the residents' efforts in aiding their resettlement in Kagara.

Similarly, the Mai Unguwa of Dangana, another IDP whom I met in an abode, a government building given to him by the Chairman of Rafi LGA. He commended the host community for providing food items and relief materials to the IDPs.

I was then taken round to the outskirts of the town through a major road which the bandits used to follow whenever they invaded Kagara town. A local told me that terrorists had invaded the town on several occasions. I also got to look at very deep trenches from a little far away which are very vital in preventing bandits from trespassing into Kagara. Beyond that trench, it is a NO GO area. In addition, I was also accompanied to a spot where bandits used to collect ransom in exchange for their abductees.

## DAY TWO

The next day, being Sunday I woke up early and continue with my interviewing procedure for the IDPs and residents within the community.

Along this process, I had an encounter with Tauhid Abdullahi Shehi, a Kagara-born philanthropist who has been sheltering many IDPs in his home for more than two years and helping them to hone their business skills for livelihood.

Some other IDPs I encountered are also involved in different kinds of businesses such as selling cold drinks and sachet water, phone charging, vulcanizing, car wash etc.

Furthermore, I expanded my investigation to General Hospital Kagara, although some part of the facility has been renovated, but the larger part of the structure is in a ruined and dilapidated condition.

Over the years, incessant bandits' attacks have forced the hospital management into offering a skeletal service to the community. According to a health worker I interviewed who craved anonymity, it was learnt that the hospital is operating only between 08.00am - 01.00pm except for emergency cases where the patient stay may be extended to 04.00pm.

I also spoke with Idris Bawa, a farmer, who narrated the ordeal they face with regard to conducting agricultural activities around the area. He lamented on how several communities resorted to paying levies to bandits in order to allow them work on their farms. It is unfortunate that, another money has to be paid before for harvesting and transportation of the yields to the home, otherwise the bandits will set it ablaze and equally abduct the farmers.

With regards to education, the level of damage done to the sector by bandits, just like agriculture, is beyond repair within the foreseeable future. During my encounter with the Head of Section, Planning Research and Statistics of Rafi Local Government Education Authority, Mohammed Saadu Gunna, he told me that 78 out of 127 public primary schools in Rafi LGA have completely shutdown due to fear of attacks by bandit-terrorists. Also, only 8 out of 15 secondary



Civil Defense, Department of State Service and other security institutions. Nevertheless, he mentioned that the difficult terrains of that area may limit the success of military operations as they are not familiar with it, while the bandits have since mastered the topography of the territories.

He emphasized how they used to help the IDPs with the support from the state government and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). At local government level, he stated that they used to settle the bill for those injured or raped by the bandits.

Like several other communities across the North Central and North East, villages in Kagara, have since resorted to paying levies to bandits in exchange for their lives, while at the same time relinquishing their valuables including women to these marauders.

There is need for government to act fast and come to the aid of victims of banditry in Niger State, generally.

I cannot overemphasize the need for emergency response agencies to do more in assisting these victims with relief materials, capital and other logistics to improve their businesses, while at the same time appreciating the efforts of the residents by helping them in any way possible so as to sustain their efforts.

The victims of banditry dwelling in Kagara must count themselves lucky. Because in the generous, hospitable, friendly and welcoming Kagara residents, they have found love, compassion and hope. And I saw it in many beautiful ways during my eventful trip to Kagara, a community that is becoming a haven for all internal refugees and displaced persons in Niger State.

schools are operating in Kagara.

Only schools located along the road are functioning, while those in the villages remain closed.

Gunna decried how in some instances, these bandits after chasing residents out of their villages resort to setting the schools ablaze. He stated that there are five of those schools that were burnt down by bandits while others were razed down by wildfire as a result of abandonment for a long time.

I also discussed with Baba Jibo on the business/economic activities in the town where he revealed to me that prior to the present security challenges, about 30 trailers of grains used to be exported from Kagara market to neighboring countries including Niger every Tuesday. However, the narrative has since changed as only 3-4 trailers can be loaded because the quantity of

agricultural supplies have greatly reduced as people were not allowed to work on their farms.

Meanwhile, the only bank that is operational in Kagara has since been ransacked by the bandit-terrorists, thus halting its continued service.

### DAY THREE

On the final day of my expedition, Monday, July 04, 2022, I was supposed to conduct an interview with the Chairman of Rafi LGA, but due to his unavoidable absence, he assigned his Chief of Staff, Mohammed Mohammed, who responded to my questions on his behalf.

Mohammed lamented the rampaging activities of terrorists at Rafi communities for the past few years. He however, challenged the federal government to do the needful in surmounting the security challenges since it is the one who commands the Military,

# ACTIVITY REPORT ON THE ROUND TABLE INTERFACE WITH MEDIA AND STAKEHOLDERS ON HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS IN KEBBI AND NIGER STATES

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi

## PREAMBLE

Recall that PRNigeria had in April and July 2022 conducted two special investigative reports on the humanitarian situations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a result of banditry in Chonoko village, Zuru Emirates in Kebbi State and that of Kagara town in Niger States respectively.

Therefore, it was against this background that PRNigeria deemed it necessary to invite press and other stakeholders in the humanitarian sector in order to showcase its findings regarding the two separate expeditions aimed at drawing the attention of the concerned authorities for necessary interventions to the victims.

The parley took place on August 04, 200 at PRNigeria Center Abuja. The session was graced by the presence of Manzo Ezekiel, the Spokesperson of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and personnel of both print and broadcasting media.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE MATTER

The reporter who undertook the two expeditions, Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi, took his time and explained to the audience on the genesis of embarking on such kind of developmental journalism by PRNigeria. He noted that, there is under reportage by the mainstream media about the issue of how displaced persons due to banditry are living under a hardship condition.

However, this is not unconnected to the security challenges associated with the areas which make it difficult to be accessible by the press.

Meanwhile the reports were presented using multimedia format including text, photos, sound track and videos.

The observations and recommendations were outlined separately as follow;

### ➤ CHONOKO/KEBBI STATE

#### Observations

After investigative study regarding the

humanitarian situation and plights of IDPs in Chonoko town of Zuru Emirate in Kebbi state, the following observations were made;

1. As a result of incessant bandits' attacks, people were not allowed to have free access to their farms and work which serve as their major source of livelihoods. This has greatly reduced the quantity of agricultural supplies which has equally been threatening food security and also increasing the unemployment rate.

2. Education is another critical sector that was also badly hit due to this insecurity. Findings showed that the majority of schools in those villages have been closed due to fear of bandits' attacks. Meanwhile, some that are located within the towns have been turned to IDPs camps where the victims are being accommodated. This situation has sent many students away from classes, thereby adding to the number of out-of-school children in the area and the country at large.

3. Chonoko town is suffering from lack of potable water supply as investigation showed that the IDPs and the residents battle to get water for domestic purposes from the only two available boreholes present within the community. In fact, people used to spend the night queueing in order to get water for their daily needs.

4. With regard to the shelter, the IDPs are living in an overcrowded settlement where a single room is being occupied by up to more than 15 persons. This called for a great concern because disease becomes easily transmitted in this type of under-spaced environment, thus threatening the healthcare system.

5. The over 10, 000 Chonoko IDPs are living under hardships as they lack basic necessities of life. These include but not limited to adequate food, shelter, medications, clothes, detergents and other vital household items necessary for living a good life.

6. It is unfortunate to learn that NEMA has been donating relief materials to these vulnerable communities but the items were being stockpiled in

warehouses by the state government without distributing them to the IDPs.

7. A lot of rampaging activities by bandits in these remote areas are continuously happening but usually skip the eyes of mainstream media and have never been reported.

### **Recommendations**

Subject to aforementioned observations, the following recommendations were enumerated;

1. Government and security forces should sustain their efforts towards restoring peace and security to the affected communities

2. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) should look into the situation of these IDPs by providing them with relief materials. These items should include; foodstuff, detergents, clothes, wrappers, mattresses etc. Also, agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, seeds etc. should also be distributed in order to improve agricultural activities.

3. Provision of medical supplies should be considered in order to ensure the delivery of a robust and sound healthcare system. This will go a long way in averting diseases outbreak and other emergencies

4. Efforts should be outlined and implemented toward rescuing the dwindling educational sector, thereby absorbing back the school drop outs from the streets which is necessary for averting future security breaches

5. International donor agencies including the International Red Cross Society (IRCS) and other likes should intervene in the awful situation of the IDPs, especially in providing them with adequate shelter so as to reduce too much population in their overcrowded settlements.

6. There should be transparency and open disclosure in distribution of relief materials to the vulnerable persons in the affected communities

### **➤ KAGARA/NIGER STATE**

#### **Observations**

The following observations were made;

1. Residents of Kagara have been doing the needful in assisting the victims of banditry by

providing them with some relief materials aimed at improving their life condition.

2. Majority of the IDPs are engaged in one or different kind of businesses in order to sustain their lives, a development which is helping a lot in the process of their resettlement in Kagara town

3. Security situation has improved within Kagara town due to presence of military bases, however, bandits are still attacking the surrounding villages on occasional basis

4. Volunteer security forces i.e., vigilantes are not well equipped with excellent weapons which reduces their efforts /of confronting the bandits

5. Farmers in some surrounding villages have resorted to paying levies to the bandits in order to gain access to their agricultural fields and conduct farming activities. Nevertheless, agricultural activities have reduced drastically thereby leading to corresponding increase in food crisis

6. Most of the schools in villages are closed down due to fear of bandit attacks, thus affecting educational sector in that area

7. Healthcare system delivery is being dragged to the mud as the General Hospital was forced to offer skeletal services

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were listed;

1. Government should further boost the security situation especially in villages by providing sophisticated weapons and other logistics to local vigilantes so as to enhance their activities

2. Measures should be implemented by the government toward sustaining the efforts of Kagara residents in assisting the victims

3. Emergency response agencies including NEMA, Refugee Commission and others should continue to provide relief materials for the victims

4. Government and stakeholders should engage the victims in vocational trainings after which logistics and capital should be distributed to them in order to enhance their business enterprises

5. Security operatives should be posted to safeguard the critical national assets including schools and hospitals around the community.

6. International humanitarian organizations,



including the Red Cross among others should intervene in providing assistance to the internally displaced persons.

## DISCUSSION SESSION

After presenting the reports to the audience, the floor was then opened for observations, questions and answers by the press to the reporter and NEMA official to which they responded excellently. Some of the issues raised during the session were covered and reported by the invited press.

## HOW THE MEDIA REPORTED THE EVENT

The following are some of the reports by the media houses.

**SUNNEWS** (<https://www.sunnewsonline.com/idps-prnigeria-urges-fg-red-cross-others-to-intervene-in-niger-kebbi/>)

### **IDPs: PRNigeria urges FG, Red Cross, others to intervene in Niger, Kebbi**

PRNigeria, an Image Merchant Promotion outfit, has called on the Federal Government, Red Cross Society and other humanitarian agencies to assist IDPs in Kagara and Chonoko communities in Niger and Kebbi states.

Mukhtar Madobi, an investigation staff member of the organisation, made the call during a roundtable Media Interface and Presentation of a report on Humanitarian Situations in Kebbi and Niger states on Friday in Abuja. He said the over 10,000 IDPs in Chonoko community in Kebbi were living under hardship as they had no basic necessities of life.

Madobi said most of the schools in the community were closed down due to the fear of attacks by bandits, adding that some of the schools in town had been turned into IDP camps.

"This has sent a lot of students out of classes, leading to increased number of out-of-school children in the area.

" Chonoko community is suffering from lack of water; investigations show that residents and IDPs usually battle for water from the two available boreholes. People spend nights to queue for water.

"IDPs are living in a crowded shelter, for example, 20 people are sharing a single room. NEMA are trying their best, but the items don't get to the vulnerable communities and people.

"Government and security forces should sustain effort towards restoring peace and security to affected communities."

He called on NEMA, Red Cross, International Donors and NGOs to provide adequate shelters to the IDPs.

"Also, education should be rescued and medical supplies be considered to ensure sound healthcare delivery," Madobi said.

## VANGUARDNEWS

(<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/08/healthy-care-delivery-education-others-threatened-by-insecurity-in-kebbi-niger/>)

### **Health care delivery, education, others threatened by insecurity in Kebbi, Niger**

By Joseph Erunke & Ezra Ukanwa, ABUJA  
FOLLOWING the increasing cases of insecurity in Nigeria, a news dissemination platform, PRNigeria, on Thursday, stated that the incessant attacks against Chonoko community in Kebbi state, and Kagara community in Niger state, have contributed immensely to the abrupt decline in professional health care delivery, education services and other humanitarian interventions in the states.

This was even as it specifically noted that modes of survival in the Internally displaced persons, IDPs, camps have become a herculean task as the people were seen in massive need for major human basic amenities such as food, water, shelter among others.

The news platform, however, accused state governments for hoarding relief materials donated by the National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA, to vulnerable communities.

A PRNigeria representative, Mukhtar Y. Madobi, made these disclosures during a two-Day workshop on: Humanitarian Journalism for Economic Development, in Abuja, following its investigative study on humanitarian situation and plights of IDPs in Kebbi state, and in Niger state, respectively.

According to him, education is another critical sector that was also badly hit due to this insecurity. Findings showed that the majority of schools in those villages have been closed due to fear of bandits' attacks.

"Farmers in some surrounding villages have resorted to paying levies to the bandits in order to gain access to their agricultural fields and conduct farming activities. Nevertheless, agricultural activities have reduced drastically thereby leading to corresponding increase in food crisis "Most of the schools in villages are closed down due to fear of bandit attacks, thus affecting educational sector in

that area

“Healthcare system delivery is being dragged to the mud as the General Hospital was forced to offer skeletal services. “Meanwhile, some that are located within the towns have been turned to IDPs camps where the victims are being accommodated. This situation has sent many students away from classes, thereby adding to the number of out-of-school children in the area and the country at large.

“Chonoko town is suffering from lack of potable water supply as investigation showed that the IDPs and the residents battle to get water for domestic purposes from the only two available boreholes present within the community. In fact, people used to spend the night queueing in order to get water for their daily needs.

“With regard to the shelter, the IDPs are living in an overcrowded settlement where a single room is being occupied by up to more than 15 persons. This called for a great concern because disease becomes easily transmitted in this type of under-spaced environment, thus threatening the healthcare system.

“The over 10, 000 Chonoko IDPs are living under hardships as they lack basic necessities of life. These include but not limited to adequate food, shelter, medications, clothes, detergents and other vital household items necessary for living a good life.

“Residents of Kagara have been doing the needful in assisting the victims of banditry by providing them with some relief materials aimed at improving their life condition.

“Majority of the IDPs are engaged in one or different kind of businesses in order to sustain their lives, a development which is helping a lot in the process of their resettlement in Kagara town”, he added.

Madobi, therefore, urged the Nigerian Government at all levels and security forces to intensify efforts not only ensure that peace and security are restored to the affected communities but to see to the welfare of the affected people. He prayed NEMA, and the Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons, NCFRMI, to intervene in the situation of the IDPs by providing them with relief materials and other forms of humanitarian assistance. He said: “The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) should look into the situation of these IDPs by providing them with relief materials. These items should include;

foodstuff, detergents, clothes, wrappers, mattresses etc. Also, agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, seeds etc. should also be distributed in order to improve agricultural activities.

“Provision of medical supplies should be considered in order to ensure the delivery of a robust and sound healthcare system. This will go a long way in averting diseases outbreak and other emergencies

“Efforts should be outlined and implemented toward rescuing the dwindling educational sector, thereby absorbing back the school drop outs from the streets which is necessary for averting future security breaches. “International donor agencies including the International Red Cross Society (IRCS) and other likes should intervene in the awful situation of the IDPs, especially in providing them with adequate shelter so as to reduce too much population in their overcrowded settlements.

“Government and stakeholders should engage the victims in vocational trainings after which logistics and capital should be distributed to them in order to enhance their business enterprises.

“International humanitarian organizations, including the Red Cross among others should intervene in providing assistance to the internally displaced persons.”

## **PRNIGERIA**

[\(https://prnigeria.com/2022/09/06/chonoko-kagara-investigative/ \)](https://prnigeria.com/2022/09/06/chonoko-kagara-investigative/)

### **Chonoko, Kagara: An Investigative Reporter`s Grim Experience in Bandits' Zones**

By Abbas Muhammad

As part of its commitment to result-oriented investigative reporting and developmental journalism, PRNigeria sent one of its best reporters to two communities in Niger and Kebbi states to unravel the behind-the-scene, unreported events surrounding banditry and kidnapping in those places.

After writing many breathtaking stories and features from his investigative expeditions which were done in collaboration with the Wole Soyinka Centre for investigative Journalism, Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi decided to have an interactive session with the press at the PRNigeria Centre in Abuja in the presence of stakeholders from the civil society, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and many others.

The aim of the briefing according to PRNigeria publisher, Yushau Shuaib, was to draw the attention

of the authorities to the desperate humanitarian conditions in Chonoko, Kebbi state and Kagara, Niger state, as well as other banditry-ravaged communities in the northwest and north central, and brainstorm on how best to address them.

During the session, Mukhtar outlined some of his observations as follows: "As a result of incessant bandits' attacks, people are not allowed to have free access to their farms and work which serve as their major source of livelihood.

"It is disheartening that some farmers even pay a levy to these bandits in order to have access to their farms, not many can afford this incessant extortion as a result there is a looming food crisis in the society.

"Education is another critical sector that was also badly hit due to this insecurity. "For example, there are about 127 primary schools in Kagara but more than 78 have been shut due to fear of bandit attacks.

"Meanwhile, in Chonoko, some schools that are located within the towns have been turned to IDP camps where the victims are being accommodated. This situation has sent many students away from classes, thereby adding to the number of out-of-school children in the area and the country at large.

"Chonoko town is suffering from lack of potable water supply as investigation showed that IDPs and the residents battle to get water for domestic purposes from the only two available boreholes present within the community.

"This tends to create a hostile atmosphere for the victims and residents due to frustration and the constant need for water by IDPs. "With regard to shelter, the IDPs in Chonoko are living in an overcrowded settlement where a single room is being occupied by more than 15 persons.

"The men sometimes sleep under trees so the women and children can sleep in the IDP tents. This calls for great concern because disease becomes easily transmitted in this type of under-spaced environment.

"Healthcare system delivery is being dragged to the mud as the Kagara General Hospital was forced to offer skeletal services. "More worrisome is that, most doctors posted to these areas do not report for duties, citing insecurity as a major concern.

"In the case of Kebbi State, it is unfortunate to learn that NEMA has been donating relief materials to

these vulnerable communities but the items are being stockpiled in warehouses by the state government without distributing them to the IDPs.

"Residents of Kagara have been doing the needful in assisting the victims of banditry by providing them with some relief materials aimed at improving their life condition.

"However, the security situation has improved within Kagara town due to the presence of military bases." After enumerating his observations, Mukhtar provided recommendations for government and other concerned stakeholders for outright interventions.

**He recommended as follows:**

"Government and security forces should sustain their efforts toward restoring peace and security to the affected communities.

"Efforts should be outlined and implemented toward rescuing the dwindling educational sector, thereby absorbing back the school drop outs from the streets which is necessary for averting future security breaches.

"There should be transparency and open disclosure in distribution of relief materials to the vulnerable persons in the affected communities.

"Government should further boost the security situation especially in villages by providing sophisticated weapons and other logistics to local vigilantes so as to enhance their activities." Mukhtar stated.

The floor was then opened to journalists and other attendees for comments, observations and questions. In her contribution, Hadiza Abdulrahman from Radio Nigeria, commended Mukhtar for a job well done in spotlighting the plight of IDPs in banditry-ravaged zones.

A question was also thrown at the Director of Press and Public Relation of NEMA, Manzo Ezekiel, for a solution towards the hoarding of relief materials. It was suggested that a tracking system be put in place by NEMA to ensure transparency and accountability in the distribution of materials.

One of the participants expressed concern to NEMA over the plight of women and girls at IDP Camps regarding access to menstrual pads and other peculiar necessities.

While responding, Mr. Ezekiel explained that relief materials from NEMA are not single-handedly

delivered by them due to security reasons at these IDP areas. Rather, the relief materials are delivered to the state government and local stakeholders whose responsibility it is to ensure the materials get to the right places.

Also regarding the needs of women, he explained that NEMA has a gender unit and a nutrition unit that take care of issues of that nature.

Furthermore, Mr. Ezekiel clarified that the agency is doing its best to alleviate the plight of the victims by providing relief materials to distressed Nigerians within the scope of their limited resources.

Rounding off the conversation, PRNigeria boss, Shuaib, called on journalists to avoid; "Sensational stories that always weaken the minds and morale of our gallant troops."

Shuaib urged them to emphasise stories that encourage our troops to be able to do more for the country. He harped on the need for the media to sustain the pressure on government to do the right thing without seeming to make terrorists look too powerful.

## SUN NEWS

[\(https://www.sunnewsonline.com/kebbi-10000-idps-live-in-penury-report/\)](https://www.sunnewsonline.com/kebbi-10000-idps-live-in-penury-report/)

### **Kebbi: 10,000 IDPs live in penury — Report**

By Okwe Obi, Abuja

A report released by PRNigeria, an advocacy group, has claimed that ten thousand Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), in Chonoko village, Danku/Wasagu Local Government Area, Kebbi State live in penury.

The report, titled: 'Special Reports on Humanitarian Situations and Plights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs),' disclosed that villagers lacked portable water which had led to residents struggle to outdo one another at the two available boreholes within the community.

Presenting its findings yesterday in Abuja, PRNigeria official, Ya'u Mukhtar Madobi, said the report also targeted Rafi Local Government Area, Niger State in July 2022, where bandits had wrecked havoc.

"Chonoko town is suffering from lack of potable water supply as investigation showed that the IDPs and the residents battle to get water for domestic purposes from the only two available boreholes present within the community.

"In fact, people used to spend the night queueing in order to get water for their daily needs.

"With regard to the shelter, the IDPs are living in an overcrowded settlement where a single room is being occupied by up to more than 15 persons.

"This called for a great concern because disease becomes easily transmitted in this type of under-spaced environment, thus threatening the healthcare system.

"The over 10, 000 Chonoko IDPs are living under hardships as they lack basic necessities of life. These include but not limited to adequate food, shelter, medications, clothes, detergents and other vital household items necessary for living a good life," he said.

Madobi urged "government and security forces should sustain their efforts towards restoring peace and security to the affected communities. "The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) should look into the situation of these IDPs by providing them with relief materials.

"These items should include; foodstuff, detergents, clothes, wrappers, mattresses etc. Also, agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, seeds etc. should also be distributed in order to improve agricultural activities.

"Provision of medical supplies should be considered in order to ensure the delivery of a robust and sound healthcare system. This will go a long way in averting diseases outbreak and other emergencies.

"Efforts should be outlined and implemented toward rescuing the dwindling educational sector, thereby absorbing back the school drop outs from the streets which is necessary for averting future security breaches.

"International donor agencies including the International Red Cross Society (IRCS) and other likes should intervene in the awful situation of the IDPs, especially in providing them with adequate shelter so as to reduce too much population in their overcrowded settlements.

"There should be transparency and open disclosure in distribution of relief materials to the vulnerable persons in the affected communities Kagara/Niger."

**TRIBUNE** (<https://tribuneonlineng.com/nema-cant-access-idps-without-support-of-security-agencies-govts-community-leaders-%e2%80%95-spokesman/>)

## **NEMA Can't Access IDPs Without Support Of Security Agencies, Govts, Community Leaders – Spokesman**

Over 10,000 Chonoko IDPs living under hardships, lack basic necessities of life – Report

By Kehinde Akintola – Abuja

National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) on Thursday reiterated its commitment to the sustainable provision of relief materials to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), especially those affected by insecurity and other disasters across the country.

The Head of the NEMA Press Unit, Mr Manzo Ezekiel gave the assurance during the Roundtable Media interface and presentation of a report on humanitarian situations recently undertook investigative reports at Chonoko community in Kebbi State and Kagara communities in Niger State by PRNigeria.

While noting that the Agency has put necessary measures in place to ensure seamless and hitch-free distribution of relief materials to all the affected communities affected by insecurity challenges and other disasters such as flooding across the country, Mr Manzo underscored the need for synergy between the Agency, Security Agencies, State Governments and Community Leaders in order to have unfettered access to the IDPs camps.

He said: "Talking about IDPs, NEMA has been providing relief support to IDPs across the country, especially in the northeast since the escalation of insurgency we have been supporting IDPs there and other places.

"In Borno and Adamawa for instance, we provide monthly feeding to over 200 IDPs in the camps there and the liberated communities. The Agency has also been giving supplies to IDPs in other parts of the country, especially those affected by insecurity and other disasters.

"In Kebbi State and Niger State for instance, because that is the focus of this meeting, we have been providing relief support there. As a matter of fact, recently the DG had a course to go to the field himself in Katangora and I was privileged to go with him to the place.

"The Kagara that we were discussing here and Chonoko, their locations are within the same general areas, so the DG has a cause to go to Kotongora to go and flag off the relief distribution there. Kagara is in Niger State and is under the

responsibility of our office in Minna.

"I'm aware that a lot of relief materials approved by the Agency have been delivered to the IDPs there, while Chonoko is under our office in Sokoto and I'm also aware that our Coordinator there has delivered the relief materials approved at that location too.

"I want to say, in fact, there must be strategic reasons why PRNigeria picked on these two communities. But I must say here that not only these two communities are affected by insurgency and displacement of persons. Recently, we were in Plateau State, we went to deliver materials to people affected by unknown gunmen in Kanam Local Government.

"One of the participants here drew attention to the situation in Wase, we also have a situation in Sokoto State for those that may be aware Birnin Magaji Local Government, that is around Bafarawa side, we also had a situation in Katsina where we have taken relief materials.

"But I'm sure one of the reasons why this Forum was called is to discuss and analyze why IDPs are still complaining despite the relief distribution. We are talking about IDPs that were affected by the security situation.

So NEMA, we are not a security organisation, we cannot access those places on our own without the support of security, without the cooperation and support of the state governments and even their community leaders.

"So many times, when we take relief materials for instance or relief material to these specific locations, we have had to deliver these relief materials in collaboration with the community leaders, in collaboration with the state governments; in fact, many times even with the representatives of these people in the National Assembly are involved in the relief distribution.

"So, as much as we have tried our best to carry out our mandates, I believe as media, you can as well confirm from the leaders and the State governments of these locations about our relief distribution there, and of course, we give support based on available resources.

"Because NEMA as a matter of fact, we are responding to situations across the country. As much as we are having security challenges in the North, down in the South we are having other situations that are occurring there. We are in the rainy season; we have had some flood situations in

the North but we have also had more flood situations in the South. So, we are responding to all of these at the same time.

Mr Manzo explained that the situation “in the North East was a general displacement of Local Government but in the case of these two other communities and other places, they are situations that there are displacements that happened in remote locations.

“Sometimes these people are displaced and after a week or two, they return back to their homes. So, we cannot institute a monthly distribution for this in some instances,” he stressed.

He maintained that NEMA carries out the distribution of the relief material in collaboration with the state governments, and the community leaders, with a view to ensuring that direct beneficiaries get the items. “Talking about tracking the relief materials as well, track these through the institutions and persons I've mentioned here,” he stressed.

Speaking earlier on the 'Special Reports on Humanitarian Situations and Plights of Internally Displaced Persons in Chonoko village, Danku/Wasagu Local Government Area, Kebbi State in April 2022 and Kagara Community, Rafi Local Government Area, Niger State in July 2022, Mr Ya'u Madobi observed that the people were not allowed to have free access to their farms and work which serve as their major source of livelihoods, as a result of incessant bandits' attacks.

According to him, the ugly development has “greatly reduced the number of agricultural supplies which has equally been threatening food security and also increasing the unemployment rate.”

He added that “the majority of schools in those villages have been closed due to fear of bandits' attacks. Meanwhile, some that are located within the towns have been turned into IDP camps where the victims are being accommodated. This situation has sent many students away from classes, thereby adding to the number of out-of-school children in the area and the country at large.

Mr Madobi further noted that “over 10,000 Chonoko IDPs are living under hardships as they lack basic necessities of life. These include but are not limited to adequate food, shelter, medications, clothes, detergents and other vital household items necessary for living a good life.

“It is unfortunate to learn that NEMA has been donating relief materials to these vulnerable communities but the items were being stockpiled in warehouses by the state government without distributing them to the IDPs.

“A lot of rampaging activities by bandits in these remote areas are continuously happening but usually skip the eyes of mainstream media and have never been reported.

In order to address the challenges, he urged government and security forces should sustain their efforts towards restoring peace and security to the affected communities

“The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) should look into the situation of these IDPs by providing them with relief materials. These items should include; foodstuff, detergents, clothes, wrappers, mattresses etc. Also, agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, seeds etc. should also be distributed in order to improve agricultural activities.

“Provision of medical supplies should be considered in order to ensure the delivery of a robust and sound healthcare system. This will go a long way in averting diseases outbreak and other emergencies.

“Efforts should be outlined and implemented toward rescuing the dwindling educational sector, thereby absorbing back the school dropouts from the streets which are necessary for averting future security breaches.

“International donor agencies including the International Red Cross Society (IRCS) and other likes should intervene in the awful situation of the IDPs, especially in providing them with adequate shelter so as to reduce too much population in their overcrowded settlements.

“There should be transparency and open disclosure in the distribution of relief materials to the vulnerable persons in the affected communities,” Mr Madobi stressed.

## **CONCLUSION**

As highlighted above, the humanitarian situations in Niger, Kebbi and other troubled communities deserved outright interventions by the government and other stakeholders. Therefore, all efforts should be channeled towards alleviating their plights and integrating them back to their ancestral communities.