

Bakassi: 12 returnees die of hunger

DENNIS UDOMA, Uyo

NO fewer than 12 Akwa Ibom state Bakassi returnees resettled at former Government Technical College, Ikot Ada-Idem in Ibiono Ibom local government area of the state were said to have allegedly died of hunger resulting from poor emergency and disaster management by the state government.

The death toll, according to a source at the camp, was credited to neglect by the state government and lack of health facilities confronting the returnees.

Speaking to *Saturday Champion* in Uyo during a peaceful protest, one of the camp coordinators, Mr. Ikpoto James Ikpoto, who led the demonstration to Government House on Thursday, appealed to the state governor, Chief Godswill Akpabio, to resettle them in their various communities as well as empower the returnees economically to establish business to cater for themselves and families.

The placards-carrying Bakassi returnees, while storming the Government House gate at about 10.15am, were stopped by security operatives manning the gate way into the Hill Top area, while

insisting to see the state governor, Chief Godswill Akpabio, who was said to have traveled out of the state at the time of the protest.

The returnees, who are now becoming refugees in their own land, complained of abandonment by the Akwa Ibom state government since their arrival on September 5, 2008 from Cross River state, saying government only took care of them for 19 days.

Mr. Ikpoto, said to come from Ibesikpo Asutan local government area of the state and formerly Amoto ward chairman from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in then Bakassi local government areas of Cross River State, (Now in the Republic of Cameroon), maintained that they have been reduced to 300 out of 1,200 returnees earlier sent to the camp owing to hunger and death.

"We arrived here approximately 1,200 in number but some later decided to go back and die in Bakassi since there was no government attention towards them.

"...It has reduced us in number and I don't know whether we are up to 300 now," he said.

One of the returnees, Mr. Friday Emmanuel from Ikpe Mbaha Eyob in Ikot Ekpene local government, complained to this reporter that

he lost his wife, Atim, 40, to death recently owing to lack of medical facilities during childbirth, while others died of hunger and illnesses.

According to him, "we are only relying on alms from some churches, who visit us occasionally."

The returnees however, accused chairman of the 25 local governments of diverting monies (about N25 million) and relief materials allegedly directed by the state government to be given to them for personal use.

Ekiti: PDP lawma

VICTOR OGUNJE, Ado Ekiti

THE Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) caucus in Ekiti State House of Assembly, yesterday, condemned their counterparts in the Action Congress (AC) party for feigning ignorance of the screening of the five nominees to serve on the State Independent Electoral Commission, SIEC.

They defended the action of the Major Gen Kayode Oni-led SIEC for commencing the election process, saying all their actions were backed up by the constitution of the country in the conduct of the local