

MORE DEATHS AS FLOOD RAVAGES PLATEAU



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As people of southern and parts of central Plateau State still battle against the devastating effects of the flood disaster that occurred three weeks ago in the areas, another flood last weekend ravaged settlements and farmlands that survived the previous incidents in Langtang North and Kanam Local Government Areas.

The initial flood which affected Wase, Langtang North, Langtang South, Kanam and Kanke Local Government Areas, claimed over 30 lives, destroyed about 74 communities and hundreds of farmlands, and destroyed bridges. In the wake of last week's fresh flood in Langtang North, three communities were completely submerged. They include Pishe in Pilgani district, Mban in Zamko district and Yashi in Langtang district.

Most of the bridges linking Langtang North with other outside communities are noted to be either washed away or on the verge of collapse.

Also, in Kanam Local Government Area, four villages were last weekend washed away by another flood. Villages affected by the latest flood in Kanam include Munbutbo, Gargas-Kufai, Sarkin Palap and Dandak. The condition of the people in the area was said to have been worsened by the collapsed bridge and lack of motorable roads. Commenting on the flood recurrence, in which over 20 people are feared killed in the area, Langtang North Advisory Committee Chairman, Mrs. Esther Wazhi said the council had earlier spent over N4 million to provide relief materials and temporary shelter for the displaced persons. Efforts towards making more temporary camps to further accommodate the rising number of homeless people were on, Mrs. Wazhi said.

The council boss expressed fear of more heavy down pours particularly as the rainy season is not yet over. What the people need most, she noted, is shelter.

She expressed gratitude to the Plateau State Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) for the relief materials so far sent to her people. The council chairman said, however, that much still needed to be done to the affected communities.

"The council has overstretched its means and is completely helpless in the face of the overwhelming situation that has so affected the lives of the people negatively," she stated.

Some of the displaced persons in the camps spoke on their plights. Mrs. Tabitha Vongdip, a mother of seven who also lost her husband and child to the flood, lamented that their conditions could best be likened to that of a chicken and her chicks under the harsh cold weather.

Though she acknowledged the effort of the local council in providing them with temporary shelter and food, she stressed that they needed more permanent and warm shelters.

Another victim of the flood disaster, Mr. Gampyel Fallen who lost 400 heads of cattle and farmlands in the disaster, said, "I don't know how and where to pick up live again with everything now lost."

On his part, Ali Abdullahi lamented the situation where he now had to depend on the goodwill of others.

For Daniel Tanko who lost two relations, farmlands, houses and livestock, wished he was also dead than being alive facing the present reality.

Amina Danjuma on her part, said she has accepted the situation as an act of God and prayed for normal life again.

Some children at the camps were seen naked even as there were reported cases of diarrhoea, malaria and cold among women and children who were in the majority.

Following the first flood incident, the Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Retired Air Vice Marshal Mohammed Audu Bida had said 200 settlements on the bank of Wase River in Plateau State needed to be resettled to avoid future exposure to flood.

He said geographical studies had shown that the settlements were prone to flood and advised them to desist from living there.

The NEMA DG identified the rejuvenation of the Wase River as a major cause of the flood and that the agency's study reveals that the river is reclaiming its old path as a result of the effect of global warming. He described the flood incidents in Plateau state as the most severe in terms of human and material casualties.

So far, the Federal Government had through the NEMA distributed relief materials to the flood victims including bundles of roofing sheets, bags of cement, nails, pieces of blanket and nylon mats as well as bags of assorted foodstuffs, while state government said it had spent N34 million following the flood incidents.

Also, the Zenith Bank presented a cheque of N15million to ameliorate the sufferings of victims just as the Guaranty Trust Bank last week donated two trucks of relief materials for the victims. UNICEF too had also presented some relief materials for the affected people.

Despite these efforts, it is evident that a lot more needed to be done in aid of the flood victims.

Speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Hon. Emmanuel Go'ar while expressing concern over the flood incidents in the state, stressed the need for the Federal and State governments to expedite action on the repairs of the damaged bridges which he described as death traps.

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