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# Anywhere but Tabanni

By Rakiya A. Muhammad, Sokoto | Publish Date: Aug 28 2018 2:00AM

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Displaced persons from Tabanni in Sokoto State are still terrified by the July 9 by bandits attack on their village. Now camped in Gandi, they recount their experiences and why they dread going home.

The displaced dwellers of Tabanni in Raba area of Sokoto may be enjoying respite at the IDP camp in Gandi District but many of them still shudder at the thought of going back to their village recently ravaged by bandits.

In one attack, the sleepy village lost 39 persons and the terror has led many to consider permanently abandoning their ancestral homes.

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“Anywhere but Tabanni,” echoed most of the displaced persons who bared their minds to Daily Trust at Gandhi camp where they have been taking refuge since the July 9th attack.



Hajiya Laraba ,wife of late village head and Shafiu Shittu and his sewing machine

Hajiya Laraba was the wife of the late Village Head of Tabanni Mallam Tanimu who was killed by the attackers.

“I lost one child and my husband in the attack. My son, Sani was just getting ready for marriage and the bandits killed them while they were sitting after zuhr prayer,” she said.

Her husband’s last moment will now echo in her mind.

“On that day when my late husband went out, he didn’t come back until after

1pm, just before Zuhr prayer. When he returned, he drank fura and performed ablution in preparation for the prayer. He then sat down and asked of his aunt whom he said was relocating from Tabanni village following bandits’ attacks. Later, he told me that we will not leave Tabanni, and said if the bandits come back, they will leave us or kill us. He then went to the mosque and prayed. By that time the bandits struck and he was killed.”



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In the killing spree, she noticed that the bandits did not deliberately target women. “Only God saved us, some women were even in the midst of the men who were killed and the women were not killed,” she said.

A son of the late village head, Lawali Marafa, 45, was lucky to be away when the bandits struck. He was at a nearby village market at the time.

“By the time we got to Tabanni, we could not enter the village as the bandits had surrounded it. So we had to hide under some trees and watched them as they were killing people,” he said.

The sight has left him completely shaken. He doesn’t want to live in Tabanni any longer and he will only consider going back for two things.

“We don’t want to go back to live in that village anymore. We are just desirous of assistance to enable us go to our village and pack our belongings. We also want security cover later to go and harvest our farm produce,” he said.

He alleged that 62 persons died in the attack and that there were still some 30 bodies in the village yet to be buried.

“We conducted a house- to- house head count, and anybody who is not here has been killed and not missing,” he said.

Marafa is not the only person not keen on returning to Tabanni. Wasila Atiku, 25, gave birth while fleeing the Tabanni attack and her husband has ruled out their return.

Heavily pregnant Wasila was completely unprepared for the terror of Monday July 9. Now she holds her baby in her arms and smiles.

“On the day of the attack, I was at Gera village, about two km from Tabanni, to greet my parents. I was there until around 3pm when we heard that there were shooting at Tabanni by armed bandits and that scores of people were killed.”

Wasila fled the mayhem with other women. “I was trekking in the company of over 50 women. It was a gathering of women from different villages. We got up to Tungar Saki village when rain



started and we had to pass the night there. From Tungar Saki we proceeded to Rini village in Zamfara state,” she said.

“It was close to Rini, about 30 kilometres from Tabanni that I started feeling labour pains,” she said.

Wasila went through excruciating physical anguish. She stayed in the bush to catch her breath before making it to Ranganda village. There, she sought assistance from Dandare Jabo, her husband’s associate.

The Jabo family immediately accommodated her and offered all necessary support. “The labour pain commenced around 1pm and by 3pm, and I gave birth to this boy successfully with the help of a traditional birth attendant at the village who cleaned and bathed the child. All the difficulties I encountered while on the flight did not affect my delivery and I thank Allah for everything,” a beaming Wasila said.



Meal times are communal in the camp and Google map showing a distance of 106km and 21 hours, 18mins walk from Tabanni to Gandi. Many IDPs had to cover

Muhammadu Nasir, 25, witnessed Wasila’s travails. He left the women at Kuji, less than three kilometres from Tabanni.

“Many of the women were with three, four children each, dragging them while fleeing. I met Wasila among them looking distraught, and was gnashing her teeth as she moved along holding her three children,” he said.

Nasir who also escaped with his wife and two children is now taking refuge at Gandi IDP camp.



In the camp, Wasila received donations of baby wares, wrappers, toiletries, a sack of millet, bucket and N10,000 cash by the authorities. Such gesture was subsequently extended to other women who gave birth at the camp. There are 50 of them now. And there are about 50 more expecting.

All of them are being well catered for, according to the Chairman, committee on the displaced persons in Sokoto, Alhaji Magaji Gusau.

“The Sokoto Government is doing everything possible to give the IDPs decent care,” he said.

There is a 24-hour clinic in the camp providing health care for the IDPs. The man who runs it is Abdullahi Aliyu.

He says 20 medical and health personnel including two doctors, two nurses, two pharmacists, five community health workers, two lab technicians, two record officers, four on routine immunization, four midwives are on hand to help the IDPs.

Gastroenteritis and malaria pose as the most common diseases. Cases of TB were hitherto referred to the state capital but a centre for TB was recently put in place at the camp with the required drugs.

Aliyu noted that generally cases reported daily at the clinic had dropped from 300 to over 100.

He attributed the Gastroenteritis cases to inadequate personal and environmental hygiene even as open defecation is still practised by some of the IDPs despite the provision of over 40 toilets at the camp.

This has led to one fatality, a child.

“They did not bring the boy to the clinic until three days after it started and he was already unconscious when he was brought,” Aliyu revealed.

However, to enhance personal and environmental hygiene, a two-hour health talk is given to the IDPS between 8:00am and 10am every day.



The second death recorded at the camp is that of an old woman who reportedly died of hypertension.

For those who are living, their futures still hang in the air. To cater for this, a school has been set up where eight year-old Bilkis attends. She is unhappy with the attack in her village but she is happy to be back in school.

Bello Mohammad Musa Gande who is Chairman School-based Management Committee, Rabah Local Government said, "Our role in the camp is to see the education of these IDPs is taking place as already the state and Local governments have authorized us to bring their village teachers and headmasters to IDP camps to start giving their children education, both Islamic and western and we have already started."

Adult education classes are being planned and religious education has commenced for women. Small scale businesses have sprung up in the camp.

One of those hoping to make a living while being displaced is 35-year-old Shafiu Shittu, a tailor.

"When I got here, I observed that a lot of people in the camp are in need of tailoring services. Sometimes they give some peanuts, not the actual charge and sometimes I even offer my services to them free," he said.

Shittu who has two wives, is the only one offering tailoring service at the camp. He revealed that sometimes he makes about N400 a day.

"I am always happy to assist my sisters and brothers at the camp. I have also lost a younger brother, Aliyu who was the first person to be killed," he said.

He is saddened by the unburied remains of some victims who have been left to rot in the village and he too, like the others, is not keen on a return.

"We hope to be relocated to a permanent accommodation at Gandhi and not to be repatriated to Tabanni village," he said.





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