

IN-DEPTH

Forced out of their homes, victims of Katsina banditry cry for help

From Maryam Ahmadu-Suka,
Kaduna

The ravaging banditry in Katsina State has forced many residents to abandon their homes, property and their sources of livelihood to run for their lives. Many of these displaced residents are taking shelter in shanties and uncompleted buildings in Kaduna State, Daily Trust reports.

Armed gangs, known locally as bandits, have frequently raided communities in the North, kidnapping residents and motorists for ransom.

For instance, on June 22, bandits, in their numbers, ransacked Maidabino, the third largest town in Danmusa LGA of Katsina State, killing nine people and abducting 50 others, mostly women and children.

The attackers were said to have operated for several hours unchallenged due to their large number. In the attack, 10 houses, 15 shops and at least nine vehicles were burnt by the marauding terrorists who were in the town from 10pm on Saturday till about 2.30am on Sunday.

These recent attacks have led to the influx of displaced people into Kaduna State.

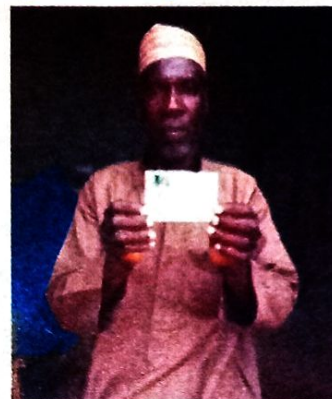
Daily Trust reports that there are at least 100 displaced residents of Maidabino village taking shelter in Kaduna, the state capital.

Alhaji Abdullahi Yunusa, a resident of Maidabino, whose two grandchildren were burnt to death by the bandits in last Saturday's attack, said he was forced to leave his community over a year ago due to unrelenting banditry in the area.

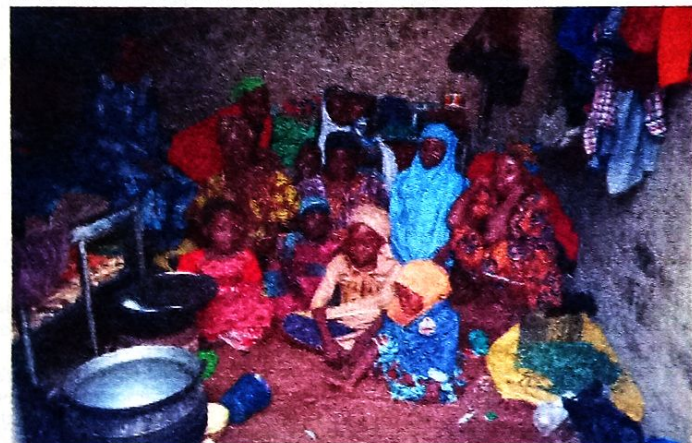
He said, "They have killed us, they have taken our property and our sources of livelihood and because of their actions, we that were able to survive decided to leave the community and run for our dear lives to Kaduna, here in K.K.B. community in Millennium City.



■ Ward Head K.K.B., Kamazo District, Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Alhaji Sulieman Muhammad



■ Alhaji Abdullahi Yunusa



■ Displaced women and children of Maidabino village of Katsina State taking refuge in Kaduna.

"Last Friday, members of my community went to the market in Danmusa LGA but they could not go back home because bandits in large numbers blocked the road. They had to spend the night in Danmusa. The next day, soldiers escorted them back to the village, unfortunately, after soldiers went back to their camps around 7pm on Saturday, the bandits attacked the community. They surrounded the community. They came in a large number, some were fighting the soldiers and other vigilantes in the community, others were rustling cattle and taking away food supplies while others were shooting and killing community members. It was a coordinated attack.

"After the attack, we discovered that 11 people had been killed and what pained me the most is that one of my grandchildren from my son Bilyaminu was burnt by the bandits. We could only recover her legs after the attack, and other relatives of mine were kidnapped.

"We are at a loss as to what to do and that is why I am calling on the governor of Katsina State, Malam Dikko Radda, who I know has a listening ear, and has taken it upon himself to bring an end to the banditry, to come to our aid. We know he is doing a lot but we want him to know who we are and what we are going through because of ravaging banditry in the area and how we are presently living.

"We are not complaining or reporting the government of the state because we know he is doing his best, but for the fact that we brought the government into power, we feel we should tender our grievances. During the 2023 governorship and national assembly elections, bandits were attacking us while voting was going on but we stood our ground and voted while military cover was provided and by the grace of Allah, the All Progressives Congress (APC) won.

"This is my party card as you can see. We

are praying for the government to provide three reliefs for us including food, shelter and treatment for our sick children because going back to our homes at this time is completely out of the question.

"I will not forget one promise he (governor) made after the primary elections at the football field in the state, he said, 'If I will bring good tidings to the people of Katsina State may God allow me to win and if not, my Allah deprive me of winning the election' and that statement was one of the things that made the delegates and other residents fall in love with him and voted him into power.

"I am appealing to him to hurriedly put an end to the ravaging banditry in the state so that we can go back to our normal lives," he said.

Alhaji Yunusa, also raised an alarm that over one million people are trapped in the village, including his son, whose children were burnt to death. "There are only three military vehicles

remaining after the bandits burnt the rest while escorting residents out of the community," he said, adding that "people dare not travel a kilometre out of the village, or they are at the mercy of bandits."

Another displaced resident of Maidabino, Hasiya Yusuf, a mother of one, said: "We ran for our lives when bandits took over our community. We did not want to leave our homes but there is nothing we can do because the bandits are threatening our existence.

"We have found ourselves in a situation that we cannot even feed ourselves and get medicine for our sick children because we have no means of income. We do not have homes any more, what we have are uncompleted buildings where we are at the mercy of the owners. Whenever they want to fix their buildings, we have to leave and look for other alternatives.

"Even drinking water has become a dilemma for us. Our children cry day and night because there is no food for them to eat. They are gradually becoming malnourished due to lack of nutritious food."

She called on the government of Katsina State and other well-meaning Nigerians to come to their aid by providing them with food, shelter and medicines for their children.

Yahuza Mamman, who is suffering from paralysis following the trauma he experienced on Saturday, also called on the government to come to their aid.

Muhammad Yusuf, an SS2 student of Government Science Secondary School, Dutsinma, had to abandon his studies in Katsina when there was an attack on his village.

He is now a student of Husna Academy in Kaduna but noted that over 80 students of his former school are still in Katsina and prayed for their safety.

The Ward Head of K.K.B., Kamazo District, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State, where the displaced people are taking refuge, Alhaji Suleiman Muhammad, also added his voice to the call on the government to provide succour for the people.

"When these people came, I had no option but to give them a place to stay, especially since I am also from Katsina State so they are more like my relatives. I begged people around with houses both completed and uncompleted for them to just have a roof over their heads, especially with the rainy season.

"When they came, they had only the clothes they were wearing, so we made an appeal to the community and we got donations of clothes and other items. Things are hard for everyone but members of the community were still able to render their support."

He described their situation as pathetic and prayed to Allah to bring quick relief to the area so they could go back to their normal lives.

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