

Eight Die As Hunger, Disease Hit Benue IDP Camp

By **Tor Vande-Acka** - May 23, 2019



Makurdi – Hunger and disease have been added to the deprivations of home and family for those in the Mbawa internally displaced persons' (IDPs) camp located at Daudu, Guma Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State.

About eight persons have died as a result of the scourge of hunger and disease, with more deaths recorded at the camp last weekend.

Geoffrey Torgenga, chairman of the camp, confirmed this while speaking with *Daily Independent* at the camp in Daudu on Wednesday.

Torgenga said the camp had been hit by diarrhoea and hernia, and that eight persons have died at the camp in five months.

He also explained that IDPs at the camp were living at the mercy of churches and NGOs, just as he noted that the last time the state government supplied food to the camp was on the eve of the presidential election in February.

Torgenga lamented that persons at the camp have been abandoned by government, adding that there were instances where their wives and children had to scavenge for food at the local market on market days.

One other source of raising money, the camp chairman revealed, was selling of firewood gathered from the fast depleting forest around the camp.

The camp chairman further noted that in the course of searching for food, a three-year-old boy, simply identified as Nani, went missing in March, pointing out that the boy was yet to be found.

Torgenga stated that due to the deplorable conditions under which the IDPs were being sheltered, it was near impossible for them to sleep at night.

He observed that with the advent of the rains, matters had become worse, adding that whenever it rained their shelter was over flooded and they had to sit up until after the rains or when the rains subsided.

When we sought to confirm our findings from the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA Camp Commandant, Angela Omirigbe, she declined comment.

She explained that she was only posted to the camp barely one week ago and was not in a position to comment on issues affecting the camp.

A cross section of IDPs that spoke to *Daily Independent* said they had been abandoned and left to their fate.

The camp, which has about 3,515 IDPs, was established in January 2018.

It would be recalled that a similar situation was identified, among them the diversion of relief materials, when the Ad-Hoc Committee on Flooding, headed by the Deputy Governor, Benson Abounu, was set up in 2017.

The issue led to the suspension and sack of Boniface Ortese, the immediate past Executive Secretary of SEMA.

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