

**Impact
Journalism
Day**
THE LATEST

100 cities to be designated as 'national monuments'
3 mins ago

Oliha: Chukwu blasts government over unfulfilled promise
8 mins ago

19 die in Russia chopper's crash
11 mins ago

Army puts 18 on trial for alleged Boko Haram link
9 hours ago

NEWS COLUMNISTS »

COMMENTARIES »
Military threatens coup as protests spread in Egypt
9 hours ago

Court voids appointment of Service Chiefs
9 hours ago

Legal Council lists 43 for SAN
9 hours ago

Jonathan, Service Chiefs meet
9 hours ago

Full house in Eagles Camp
9 hours ago

Home » Insight » After floods, snakes terrorise Bauchi community


[Translate](#)

After floods, snakes terrorise Bauchi community

Posted by: Austine Tsenzughul in Insight 2 days ago 0

Austine Tsenzughul in Bauchi State visited Duguri, a community threatened by flood and invasion by snakes.

Nine months after the flood in Duguri, Bauchi State, has subsided and about seven months after the Presidential Committee on Relief and Rehabilitation led by Prof. Dora Akunyili promised to provide anti-snake venom vaccines to Duguri District, there seems to be no relief in sight.

The physically and psychologically traumatised people of Duguri District in Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State, who are also in a severe agony from the devastation of the 2012 flood disaster and the poisonous snakes the flood deposited in the predominantly peasant valley, are waiting.

Their hope has seemingly turned sour as the Akunyili-led Alhaji Alio Dangote-chaired Presidential Committee on Flood Disaster promised relief materials and the rehabilitation of flood washed-away homes have not been fulfilled. And there is no news about the much expected vaccine. And the announcement by officials of the Federal Meteorological Department that there will be another flood in 2013 is worsening the people's situation hourly, with their blood pressure dangerously increasing.

Duguri district which is 136 kilometres from Bauchi, the state capital, is also 120 kilometres from Alkaleri, the local government headquarters in which Duguri administratively belongs, sits atop the fertile low land, south of the famous biggest natural tourist facility in West Africa, the Yankari Game Reserve. Duguri village, the largest settlement in the district, from which the district derives its name, has a population of more than 14,000. The inhabitants of the district are predominantly peasants involved in shifting cultivation. Among the crops they grow are sugar cane, water melon, banana, rice, corn, guinea corn, sorghum, millet, pepper, onion, carrot, tomato and other daily farm consumables. The people also rear goats, sheep, cows and domestic birds that are usually sold to supplement income from cultivated crops or utilised during festivals and other important occasions.

Living in the past

Though, there are sons and daughters of Duguri that are educated, and are occupying top positions in private firms, from the local, state to the federal governments' levels, including international organisations, the majority of the people in Duguri have continued to live and experience life as enjoyed in the 17th century. This is typified by the conspicuous absence of a functional modern medical facility. It has a dispensary that was built over 36 years ago but not equipped and not functional. It also has a medical facility built by the Abubakar Tatari Ali government during the Shehu Shagari-led Second Republic.

The medical facility, however, only dispenses anti-malaria drugs sent from the Bauchi State Agency for the Control of AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria [BACATMA]. The clinic, surrounded by unplanted thorny shrubs, is located three kilometres outside the village on Duguri to Geji Road. Though it is said to have eight staff, the facility is not equipped with drugs and medical utensils, but a sure comfort for assorted poisonous

CHANGE TEXT SIZE

A A A A A

STAY CONNECTED

MORE FROM INSIGHT

'Dana has almost turned me to a beggar'
One year after Dana crash victims seek justice
Ijaws vs Shell Drawing a new battle line
Militia nation
Bayelsa: Supremacy battle, illegal bunker fuel for militancy
One year of SURE-P: So far, so...
Getting unsure about SURE-P implementation
Communal clashes: Following the blood to Experience from other lands
2015: Can biometrics frustrate riggers?

No data received



Unable to load the web page because the server sent no data.

Here are some suggestions:

- [Reload](#) this web page later.

Error 324 (net::ERR_EMPTY_RESPONSE) server closed the connection without sending data.


Any Make

Any Model

MIN ₦


MAX ₦

Search




[Honda Accord](#)

Lagos, ₦ 1,550,000/- Neg.



[Toyota Yaris](#)

Lagos, ₦ 1,500,000/- Neg.



[Toyota Avalon](#)

Lagos, ₦ 3,700,000/- Neg.

We have the
Solution
And it's

ARCHIVES

July 2013

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
« Jun						

PAST ARCHIVES

Archive 1 (2006-2008)

Archive 2 (articles before
June 22nd 2010)

Archive 3 (articles before
April 16 2011)

Archive 4 (articles between
April 2011 and September
20, 2012)

reptiles.

The only staff quarters within the clinic which has been out of use for 11 years has become a fertile breeding home to assorted snakes that have become terrorists to the staff and patrons of the clinic, especially at nights. The clinic has neither a borehole, a well, nor any source of potable water, besides water harvested from rains, despite the district's population of over 34,000.

Duguri district, though chiefly inhabited by peasants, has more than 11 primary schools that feed the only junior and senior secondary school located in Duguri village. But this is not to say that the people have been impervious to western education or hate academic work or challenges. But the opportunity had not been kind to them, especially those who want to till the soil and get the needed education to make them meet up with current realities of the global village system.

The district, like other areas in the state, has one of the best access roads from the state capital to the District Head's official residence but lacks feeder roads from the food-producing villages. The Bauchi-Duguri Road, with construction work on-going, is dotted with concrete electric poles on the side. As at the time of this write-up, electricity to the District headquarters and villages along the easily motor-able road remained a near un-attainable luxury for the villagers.

Unfortunately, and perhaps because of the loose environment, and its proximity to un-fenced Yankari Game Reserve, Duguri and its immediate environs 'harbour' poachers who make brisk business from games sourced from the Game Reserve to satisfy their financial and nutrition challenges against the Reserve's interest. The people in these villages, according to investigations, have been living in the lowland for more than 60 years, and have not experienced flood disaster as they did in 2012.

The flood did not only destroy crops, houses, and wasted domestic animals and birds, it swept away personal effects and rendered the people poorer than it met them, it has severed the people's socio-economic life. Painfully, several lives were also lost to the flood, just as it left in its wake a permanent sadness and bitter memory in the lives of many. That is not all. There is a disaster within disaster. The merciless rampaging flood, said to have come from the over-flow of a Cameroonian dam, deposited assorted foreign venomous snakes in the entire Duguri District including neighbouring villages in Kanam District of Dengi Local Government Area of Plateau State.

When this reporter visited Duguri, Geji, Shafa, Yuli, Gamu, Dogon-Ruwa, Bogos, Rimi, Kukuri, Keffi, Talan, Geji-Gamu, Kunzum, Yalam, Sabonlaye, Kungimbar, Gyel, Anguwar-Gebi, Bunn, Sabon-Gari, Yumi, Bayek and Gobir villages that have been hard hit by both flood and snakes' invasion within Duguri district, last week, there was no smiling face among the over two hundred families he met.

Across the former deep, but now shallow, alluvial river that is a natural boundary between Duguri District in Alkaleri Local Government Area, Bauchi State and Kwalele, Munn, Anguwar-Gero, Zali and other hamlets in Dengi, Kanam Local Government Area of Plateau State, the story is not different. Perhaps it is because of the topography, climate, vegetation and similarity in almost everything the people do.

They all wore sad faces. There is no family in these villages and hamlets that had not lost at least two members to the terrorist, poisonous snakes.

At the mercy of snakes

There is no village in this Valley of Peasants that does not have at least 20 graves made up of children and adults, courtesy of the snakes identified by health workers in the area as vipers and puff adders or Kububuwa in Hausa language (as at June 9th 2013).

The socio-economic life of the villagers is threatened, even as agriculture which is their backbone is losing steam as the people are no longer able to go to farm. What to eat is increasingly becoming a very serious issue to the people who hitherto lived in surplus, but now depend on relatives and relations outside the district to send food aid to them.

Besides depriving them of their means of livelihood, houses to live in, and losing loved ones to the flood that ravaged more than 14 states in the country, the Duguri snake victims are paying very high price to obtain medical treatment for the bites. Some of the survivors and their relatives informed The Nation on Sunday that "it costs us N13,000 to transport a snake-bitten person to the General Hospital, Kaltungo, Gombe State which is over 200 kilometres away.

"But that is not it. The road from here (Duguri) to Kaltungo is bad; it takes between three to five hours to get there. And sometimes the victims die before getting to the hospital. Then when we get there and we are not lucky to have the anti-snake venom vaccine, we have to buy from drug stores in town. And each dose costs between N11, 000 and N14, 000 and usually two doses are administered. So, all in all, we pay between N33, 000 and 40,000. And you know it is not everybody that can afford that amount."

At Munn, across the stream from Duguri, Mallam Abubakar Audu Maiyaba, who narrated his bitter experience, said he lost his younger brother, Danjuma 35, and his son Imrana 26, last March. He recalled "They had gone to clear the place so that when it rains we plant crops, and were bitten by snakes and before we could arrange for anything, they died. Danjuma left a wife and five children while Imrana left two children and a wife who have now gone to live with her parents."

Alhaji Adamu Abdullahi, 64, is the village head of Shafa (Sarkin Shafa). He lost his 14-year-old daughter, Sadiqa, to the poisonous foreign snake bite in May. She was bitten by the puff adder while sleeping in her bedroom at night. She was a junior student of the Government Secondary School, Duguri.

He told this reporter that "the snake bit her while she was asleep in her bedroom at about midnight. We were sleeping outside here because of the heat and we heard her shout, when we got there the snake vanished but she showed us her hand where it bit her. We saw the blood trickling out from the spot, but



JOB VACANCIES

Nigeria's Number 1 Job's Website

Jobberman

Specialization Industry/Sector

Search Jobs

Purchase Assistant
Entry Level

Assistant Manager, Forum Secretary
5 - 7 years

Secretary
1 - 3 years

Press Manager
5 - 7 years

Marketer
1 - 3 years

Human Resources Trainee
Entry Level

POST A JOB

before we could arrange for a car to convey her to Gombe, she took a deep breath, slumped and died.

"The following night, while taking her female neighbours who were on a condolence to Sadiqa's room, they saw the snake running into a hole in the room, so we dug it out and killed it," Abdullahi explained.

The village head confirmed that "in this village, not less than 11 people have died besides my daughter, and over 37 people have been bitten by snakes. The other villages around us are in the same problem. But we do not have anybody in authority to help us. As I talk to you, we have stopped going to the farm. The snakes are in our sugar cane farms, and in a few areas where the flood did not wash away."

However, Mohammed Hashimu, 30, also a Shafa farmer and a father of two, was lucky. He was bitten on his left hand by one of such snakes on June 3 while clearing his plot of land for planting. He was rushed to Kaltungo in Gombe State, where he "bought" his life back from the hospital's medical staff after parting ways with N32, 500. Yet, as at the time of this report, he is unable to use his hand as the poison has crippled it.

He now depends on his parents, relatives and age mates for his daily needs with his family. He complained: "Whenever I go out in the sun I feel pains all over me and my hand starts swelling." Sadly, Hashimu has "no rich friend or relatives who can help me with money so that I can get better medical treatment."

In Dogon-Ruwa village, about 28 kilometres from Duguri, Kunzum, Yalam, Kungimbar, Sabonlayi, Bogos and several villages visited in the course of investigating the invasion of snakes, the scenarios were not different. There were gloomy faces, so many fresh graves, especially among the cluster of hamlets where many farmers with lean means have absolutely been rendered hapless and helpless. In these villages, it was learnt that between August and late November 2012, when it was realised that foreign snakes have invaded Duguri district, not less than 210 persons were bitten to death.

At the mercy of snakes

But to Abubakar Sani Sa'adu and his immediate family, their headache is "My houses were washed away by the flood along with the crops we harvested and stored at home. Our personal effects were also washed away, domestic birds gone. But our worst challenge here is the deposit of the dangerous foreign snakes that have been killing and terrorising our people. In villages where the means of transportation is not easy to come by, their situation is by far worse, because the poison does not allow its victim live up to 24 hours."

It is obvious that the population of the deadly reptiles has increased from what it was in 2012 to date. Though some farmers still brave the trend and go to work on their farms, as, according to Danjuma Mairogo of Dogon-Ruwa, "we have to eat, that means we have to work, though the snakes are a great barrier, we have no choice. We have nobody in the government to hear our cries and come to our help. But we have trust in Allah to help us. Insha Allah no politician shall come to us and ask us to vote for him and we will do that."

But children no longer accompany their parents to farm as they used to. And the brave adults that go to farm have resorted to wearing rain-boots and thick hand gloves, which are not convenient for the kind of farm work they are engaged in. They, however, must wear them to avoid snake bite.

The snakes, which increase in numbers almost daily, it was learnt, are also attracted by the smell from chicken droppings. This has further reduced the population of domestic birds, as many families fear that keeping chickens will further invite snakes into their homes. A majority of families questioned in the area said, "We are all forgotten because we are poor and don't have representatives in government to come to our aid. The politicians only know us when it comes to voting, thereafter we are not human beings."

In Geji, 39-year-old Abdullahi Abubakar, a sugar-cane farmer, a father of nine children from two wives and aged parents, revealed that "During the hot weather the snakes went into the sugar cane farms to escape from the heat and hatched more, so now even our sugar cane farms are no longer safe for us. Besides, due to the nature of sugar cane which attracts assorted insects, including frogs and toads, apart from these foreign snakes, there are other snakes that like to live in the farms and feed on these tiny creatures."

His childhood friend who is also his confidant, Mukthar Zubair Abubakar, 39, with 11 children from three wives, confirming the sorry-state of affairs in Duguri District, shaking his head tearfully, said, "my younger brother, Abba, aged 30, was bitten by the snake on May 27, 2013, he saw it afterwards and killed it. But before we could take him to Kaltungo in Gombe State for medical attention, he died on the way."

Zubair who is also deprived of the usual nocturnal visits to friends and relatives after a day's work on his farm said, "It is no longer safe to walk the paths at night without a thick cover shoe. There is no more socialising, as we used to, after work on our farms because of the menace of the snakes. No more night business, our children neither go out at night nor during the day time to play with sand as we used to do. And young prospective husbands no longer go out to meet their heart throbs as it were, all because there was flood and the flood brought with it, the snakes and now our lives are miserable."

Recently, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) announced that 363 persons died in the 2012 flood, and seven million people were affected. In addition, 2.3 million persons were displaced from the 597,476 houses damaged and the Federal Government lost N2.6 trillion to the 2012 flood.

Bauchi State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA) is yet to say how many persons died, number of houses damaged, displaced persons and how the flood-related challenges are weighing the state economically and socially. It, however, complains that "the state lost over N2 billion to the flood disaster, yet it is being given a paltry sum of N400 million by the Federal Government authority, a sum, state officials described as being grossly inadequate, even as a palliative measure."

Their cry is coming on the heels of the beneficiaries' (flood victims) complaints that "what we are getting from the federal government's N400 million is annoyingly too small, though we did not ask for it, but we are

Nigerians and we are also the federal government's property that we need to be well catered for." Such complaints, according to The Nation on Sunday investigations are far below the devastation caused by the flood. For example, take the case of the Duguri people whose houses were completely washed away, by the flood and the poisonous snakes the same flood left behind, the loss of lives courtesy of the snakes.

However, the saying goes, 'one man's meat, is another man's poison.' For the Duguri residents, as captured by Sarkin Yaki, Labaran Hashimu of Kunzum, "the houses we can rebuild, crops we can plant again if we can source seeds from our brothers from other places. But what about lives we are losing within our area on daily basis?"

But when The Nation on Sunday contacted Alhaji Bappa Azare, Bauchi State Commissioner for Special Duties, who also led the Prof. Dora Akunyili team to Duguri on November 25, 2012, while she was at the area for assessment, he said, "The vaccines were received and sent to the people in Duguri." He, however, did not disclose the quantity of the doses of the anti-snake venom vaccines, when it was delivered to the people and who received the vaccines on their behalf.

Most of the Duguri residents spoken to denied knowledge of any anti- snake vaccines sent to them. The staff of the almost-abandoned drug-less health facilities confirmed that no drugs have been sent to the area, besides the anti malaria drugs sent to them from BACATMA, though most of them recalled they complained and gave Prof. Akunyili a sample of the foreign dangerous snakes.

At Alkaleri General Hospital, medical staff who should have knowledge of the vaccines supplied for any specific purpose said "nothing like that have been sent to this hospital, but you may confirm from the Health Commissioner in Bauchi."

The Duguri District Head, Alhaji Adamu Mohammed, (Wakilin Bauchi) in a pensive mood with a continuous shake of his head confirmed, "between August 2012 and end of May 2013, not less than 210 people in the district have lost their lives to snake bites." According to him, "we complained to the state government before the coming of the Presidential Committee on Flood and Rehabilitation here, but nothing was done and that was why we again complained to the Presidential Committee led by Prof. Akunyili when they came."

With the expected arrival of heavy rains and the people not going to work on their farms, children not going to school, the Duguri people are left on their own as the snakes continue to have their pleasure.

[Tweet](#) 0 [0](#) [Share](#) [Pin it](#)

Tagged with: [SNAKES TERRORISE](#)



Previous:
Yuguda canvasses fiscal federalism

Next:

'I am inspired most by autobiographies'



LEAVE A REPLY

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

[Post Comment](#)