

# 28 killed, thousands displaced by Taraba flood

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From PAUL ORUDE, Taraba

No fewer than 28 people including a three-year-old boy died in the flood that ravaged six local governments areas of Taraba State. The Secretary, Nigerian Red Cross Society in the state, Mr Manja Martins disclosed this to Daily Sun yesterday in Jalingo.

Martins, who described the flood as worst of its kind, said the situation was pathetic with over a 100, 000 people now rendered homeless and farmlands, livestock swept away. The affected local government areas include Ardo Lola, Gassol, KLarin Lamido, Lau, and Wukari. So devastating was the

flood in the state that land stretching across almost 300 kilometres from Karim Lamido to Wukari and Lau to Karin Lamido have been covered by water.

Martins said: “It is pathetic because early warnings came but the people thought it was one of those warnings that never happened. We have never seen this kind of flood in Taraba before. “It took many people unaware in such magnitude that they did not remove their property and their crops were washed away, nothing to eat.” With over 20, 000 Internally Displaced Persons across the local government areas, Martins said the major concern of the displaced persons was food, beddings, medication and water.

Some of the displaced persons who spoke to Daily Sun in Lau and Karin Lamido where the victims were seen roaming about, lamented that they had been neglected by government. Yakub Danladi from Madaga village in Lau Local Government Area whose three years old son, Fikia drowned in the water, said all efforts to get assistance when the flood started failed. His words: “The water came unexpectedly as we were sleeping around 8 in the night. We tried to carry our belongings and take them to the trees on top of the hill. Around 2a.m. in the morning-some canoes came to carry us.

They started with the women and children. It was in the process of carrying my wife, son and four others that the canoe capsized and my son fell inside the water. “The driver of the boat was carrying my son when the boat capsized and we fell inside the flood. The water was so deep and flowing fast that they could not rescue him. If not by divine grace my wife would have died too.” Danjuma Kanake,

the village head of Bachama Nyema Dobeli, said some of the displaced persons including a 90-year-old retired soldier from Bandawavivian village which was completely submerged by flood are staying in his house.

His word: “My wife packed out. She thought I invited them. The situation is terrible. The major problem is hunger. There is no food. Government should please help us, we are dying of hunger.” According to SEMA, 10 people died in Karin Lamido where over 30, 000 people were affected, seven in Lau and two in Gassol local governments respectively. Figures obtained at the SEMA office in Jalingo, showed that no fewer than 280 villages and at least 1, 500 houses were submerged by the flood which started in August.

Seven people died in Donada ward in Lau when their boat capsized while in a similar development, two people-Talatu Abubakar and Ishaku Hassan also died in a boat mishap as they were being rescued. The SEMA Executive Director, Mr Nuvalga Dan Habu told Daily Sun that a large portion of the River Benue passed through Taraba State making the recent flood more devastating in the state. Dan Habu said: “Ours is rural based.

Those living by the river banks, were mostly affected and some of places can't be reached. The way our people are suffering is not something you can easily quantify. In spite of the devastation in Taraba by the flood, people are not talking about it. Our people lost all their farmlands, all they have and yet no help can easily reach them.

His Excellency, Governor Dan Baba Suntai through the Local Governments affected approved over N30 million to the affected councils and he is still doing his best. But appreciate the little NEMA has done but we still appeal to the Federal Government to still find a way to out to the people affected and assist them.”

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