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October 3, 2012 by Emmanuel Obe, Chukwudi Akasike and Mike Odiegwu



| *credits:*

Head, Disaster Management, Nigerian Red Cross Society, Mr. Umar Mairiga, said on Tuesday that 148 people had died as a result of flooding in 21 states of the federation.

Mairiga told a news briefing in Abuja that 64,000 others had been rendered homeless by floods, adding that about 10,000 victims would receive assistance.

According to him, an estimated 134,000 people had now been affected by the floods and that concern was growing about the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera.

“We are targeting 10,000 people in 10 locations of Adamawa, Taraba, Kogi, Plateau, Katsina, Cross River, Jigawa, Kogi, Benue and Edo,” he said.

Mairiga explained that in response to the worsening crisis, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) had initiated an emergency appeal for funds.

He said N33.5m had been provided from the IFRC’s Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to start the operation.

Meanwhile, Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State is considering converting his official quarters at Onitsha to a refugee camp to contain the growing number of refugees coming in from areas where whole villages have been submerged by floods.

Residents of Ihiala, Ogbaru, Ayamelum, Anambra West and Anambra East Local Government Areas have been pouring into Onitsha and different parts of the state in search of accommodation following the massive flooding of their homes.

While touring some of the public buildings sheltering the refugees, Obi at Omunwa Egboka

primary school, directed the Secretary to the State Government, Mr. Oseloka Obaze, to immediately turn the vast Governor's Lodge at Onitsha into a camp to house the displaced persons should there be shortage of camps.

Obi, who had cancelled his trip to Mexico and Independence ceremonies because of the emergency, said the state government would later for the victims since they were suffering from natural disaster.

“A few weeks ago, Governors of the South-East had sent money to Haiti to help the people rebuild after the Earthquake of 2010.

“If we could do it to them, we must do more for our people, that elected us to serve them”, the governor said.

Also in Rivers State, no fewer than 1,000 people from four communities in Ahaoda West Local Government Area of Rivers State have been displaced from their houses by floods.

The floods, which also affected markets and mechanic workshops, were said to have been caused by the overflow of the nearby Orashi River.

Most houses in the four affected communities known as Mbiama, Akinima, Edagberi-Betterland in Joinkrama I and Joinkrama II were deserted, even as canoes were used to ferry those who could not get to their home through some of the flooded roads.

The PUNCH, who visited the area on Tuesday, observed that many people were leaving their homes in droves with some of their property to neighbouring communities.

Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment, Senator Bukola Saraki, who was on a visit to the communities, expressed shock over the floods.

Saraki, who visited Ahaoda West, to inspect oil spill sites, said, “When I past and saw what happened, I began to wonder where those people, who have deserted their homes because of floods, are currently staying.”

In Bayelsa State, panic gripped Ekeremor Town in Ekeremor Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, after the flood ravaging many communities in the state, killed two children in the area.

There were fears of more casualties in the town which had been thrown into mourning by the incident.

The Special Adviser on Emergency and Relief Matters, Mrs. Faith Opene, who confirmed the incident to our correspondent, described it as sad and unfortunate.

It was gathered that the Governor of the state, Mr. Seriake Dickson, commenced a tour of the communities in the six local government areas of the state to assess the extent of damage done by the flood.