

# Five women, children die as thousands rush for N5,000, clothes in Borno

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FILE: Internally Displaced Persons

At least five women and children died on Saturday in a stampede when cash and clothes were handed out to thousands of displaced people in Borno, militia and local people told AFP.

A large crowd surged forward for the government aid distribution and people were trampled under foot in the town of Gamboru, near the Cameroon border, a region hit by jihadist violence.

“Five dead bodies, four women and a little girl, were brought to the hospital along with seven injured,” a medical source said at the hospital.

“We learned that (other) bodies were identified and claimed by relations from the scene,” the source added without specifying how many.

However, Umar Kachalla, who heads a local anti-jihadist militia force, said: “There was a crush which led to the death of 12 women and children and left seven with severe injuries.”

Some of the dead were taken to hospital and others claimed at the site of the stampede, he added.

Thousands of women had gathered at a primary school for handouts of 5,000 nairas (13 dollars) and clothing supplied by Borno state governor Babagana Umara Zulum.

“There was a stampede as the distribution was about to start,” in the morning, said local resident Yahaya Bukar, who also counted 12 dead.

Gamboru, a border trading hub, has been repeatedly targeted by Boko Haram insurgents since August 2014 when the jihadists seized the town along with nearby Ngala.

Nigerian soldiers re-took both places a year later with the help of Chadian troops after a series of offensives that lasted months.

Residents returned to both towns but some 70,000 live in squalid camps at Gamboru and rely on food aid from international charities.

Fourteen people died on Friday and 15 were badly hurt in a blaze in the town’s main camp.

The insurrection has killed 36,000 people and displaced 1.8 million from their homes in the northeast. The violence has spread to neighbouring Niger, Chad and Cameroon.