

Double *wahala* for Kogi family of 4

• Burnt while running away from flood

From **Emmanuel Adeyemi**, Lokoja

IT was a double tragedy for a family of four in Lokoja, the Kogi State capital. First, they were displaced by raging floods. Thereafter, they became victims of a gas explosion. They are now battling for survival at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Lokoja.

As the surging flood swept into their abode at the Adankolo quarters, Lokoja, the family, on Wednesday, September 28, hurriedly moved their belongings to a place provided for them by a good Nigerian.

Unknown to them, their cooking gas cylinder was leaking and the whole room burst into flames as one of them lit the gas in preparation for their dinner. Thus they sustained severe burns.

When our correspondent visited FMC, Lokoja, the victims, comprising a couple, Mr. Muhammed Musa and Mrs. Aminat Musa, alongside their sisters, Hadizat Abdul-salam and Halimat Sadiya Usman, were writhing in pain. Their condition was critical.

A family member, Godwin Wanbebe, who spoke to our correspondent at their bedside, called on the government, corporate bodies and public-spirited individuals to come to the aid of the victims, saying the family has practically nothing left to take care of them.

Meanwhile, the flood had killed no fewer than 30 people in the state and submerged residential houses, worship centres and farmlands in Lokoja and five other local government areas in the state: Ajaokuta, Kotonkarfe, Idah, Ofu and Ibaji, which is the worst hit.

The lawmaker representing Ibaji Constituency, Atule Egbunu, said over 50,000 people have been displaced by flood in the local government while about three persons were killed in the disaster.

According to Egbunu, thousands of houses and farmlands have been submerged by the disaster, which he described as an "unfortunate



• **Hadizat**



• **Halimat**



• **Amina**

annual disaster." He called on the state government to urgently do something about it.

The chairman of the local government area, Williams Iko-Ojo, while speaking with newsmen, also said three persons, including a three-year-old baby were killed as they made attempt to run away from the surging flood.

Iko-Ojo said: "As I'm speaking with you, there is no single habitable land in Ibaji; everywhere has been submerged and people are in a devastating condition.

"To be honest, the humanitarian crisis is beyond what the local government can tackle. So, we are calling on the National Emergency Management Agency, (NEMA), the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and all relevant authorities to come to the aid of my people."

Similarly, the traditional ruler, Ejeh of Ibaji and chairman of Ibaji Traditional Council, Ajofe John Odiche Egwemi, called on the Federal Government to complete the dredging of the River Niger and also embark on building dams as a long term solution to the flooding.

"I feel very devastated with the magnitude of the destruc-

tions that have come from the flood disaster. Usually, we do experience flooding of farmlands between August and October but not up to this magnitude," he added.

In Ajaokuta local government area, a boat conveying passengers to Lokoja also capsized on Monday morning at Ganaja village with five people losing their lives. One of the deceased was identified as Abudulfatima Abudulazeez.

It was learnt that at least 600 hectares of rice farms were also washed away by the flood. Rice farmers, who are beneficiaries of the Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) under the FGN/IFAD assisted project in Kogi, are said to be worst hit.

These beneficiaries are vulnerable farmers under the IFAD-VCDP Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) aimed at cushioning the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on rural farmers.

Narrating their ordeal, the Ibaji local government liaison officer, Mr. Achogu Fredrick, said about 216 rural farmers in Ibaji who benefitted from the IFAD-VCDP RPSF, had all lost their rice farmlands to the flood. According to him, each of the 216 farmers had one hectare of rice farm.