



NorthEast Watch

Vol 2, No. 2 February, 2017

Pushing the frontiers for a **NEW** dawn

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EDITORIAL: THE SGF SHOULD GO!

It is an understatement to say that a major humanitarian crisis has befallen our management of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Several credible reports have surfaced in the last couple of weeks detailing the ranging calamitous starvation of thousands of IDPs dying for lack of food. This avoidable calamity is the result of three related factors. First, the country was ill prepared to handle a disaster of that magnitude, lacking in the necessary institutions and structures to attend to IDPs' needs. The second is the inhuman diversion of food and other humanitarian needs of IDPs by callow government officials. Third is the mega corruption in the massive stealing of money meant for addressing the needs of IDPs.

With respect to the first issue we note that both the executive and legislative arms of the federal government have taken steps to address the lacuna. While the National Assembly has legislated for the establishment of the North East Development Commission (NEDC), the Executive has to set up the Presidential Committee on North East Initiatives (PCNI), charged with the responsibility for the reconstruction and rebuilding the region as well as resettling the IDPs. While the PCNI was slow in picking off, having been announced since the early days of the government, we are happy that it has eventually hit the road. We also hope the NEDC Bill be quickly assented to by the President.

On the second issue, both the Federal and Borno State governments have set up committees to investigate the diversion of food by government emergency officials. This is however where the problem lies. This second problem cannot be satisfactorily addressed without addressing the third which is mega corruption. This government was voted largely on account of its promise to deal with corruption and must squarely address this problem.

The Presidency's handling of corruption accusation within the government agencies as it is now leave much to be desired. Of greater concern is the accusation around the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Lawal D. Babachir who has been accused of awarding multi-million naira wasteful contract to his company for grass cutting. While many people suspected of corrupt acts have been promptly arrested and detained while being subjected to interrogation and investigation by the EFCC, the President has simply opted not to allow the same in the case of Babachir.

There are three issues around the SGF. First is that cutting grass in the face of thousands of IDPs starving to death for lack of food was a misplacement of priority and clear misappropriation of funds. It is no less different than the case of the former NSA who diverted money meant for buying arms to fight Boko Haram to buying votes for the second term bid of the former President. We think this alone is enough for a regime of probity and commitment to the reconstruction of the North East to show the SGF the way out.

The second issue is the magnitude of money compared to the purported work done. Clearly the case of inflating figure can be established. This is corruption proper. But the president whose name has been associated with probity is shielding off this person from prosecution and indeed rewarding him by retaining him at the office of the SGF.

The third issue is conflict of interest. Babachir was a Director of Global Vision Ltd which benefited from the inflated contracts of over N200 million to clear 'invasive plant specie' in Yobe State. Even if he had resigned immediately to his appointment as Secretary to the Government of the Federation, to have given Global Vision Ltd the contract is a clear case of conflict of interest since he is actually an interested party in the company.

On the strengths of these arguments, we had expected the President to have for long asked Babachir to step down and wait until investigations have cleared him of these scandals before setting his legs into the office of the SGF. This he has not done. The failure to do this has sent very strong signal that the anti-corruption agenda of the regime is politically motivated and not anchored on national interests. This would be sad for someone who has made a name as a man of integrity, committed to fighting corruption wherever.

This has sadly thrown the anti-corruption agenda of the regime into disrepute. We believe the President can still retrieve it and there is only one way to do it: the immediate suspension of Babachir from office to face thorough investigation. We at North East Watch (NEW) strongly call on the President to do this. We call on the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice to hand over the file to both the EFCC and ICPC and implore Babachir himself to honourably resign until he has been cleared by competent agencies.



World Food Programme to support IDPs fight hunger, poverty in the North East

The Executive Director of United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Ms. Ertharin Cousin, has said that one million returning Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Northeast are to be assisted with improved seeds and agricultural inputs in the process of rebuilding destroyed communities during this year's cropping season.

The beneficiaries are drawn from Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. Cousin disclosed this in Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, when a delegation of the WFP paid an official visit to Governor Ibrahim Gaidam at the Government House.

She said this year's Agricultural Input Support (AGRIS) is meant to improve productivity of farmers to fight hunger and poverty in the zone. "Out of the three most affected states, Yobe alone has 350,000 people that will benefit from the WFP arrangement to reduce the levels of poverty and unemployment in the state.



"This agricultural programme was aimed at checking hunger and poverty among the people who suffered insurgency for over five years."

She appreciated the role played by the Yobe State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) for actualising the assistance for the less privileged in the society and gave assurance that the WFP would work hard towards returning peace, growth and even development of the affected region.

Gov. Ibrahim Gaidam who was represented by his Deputy, Abubakar Aliyu, said over 600, 000 IDPs and other less privilege have benefited from WFP cash transfer and food assistance.

He also thanked WFP for establishing a centre for capacity development on humanitarian studies at the state university, adding that it would enhance the capacity of operators of humanitarian activities in the insurgency affected states.

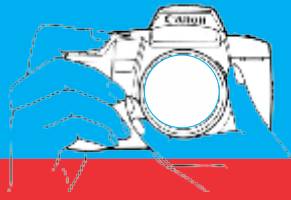


PHOTO NEWS

The Women and Youth Empowerment for Advancement and Health Initiative (WYEAHI) with support from Union Bank Nigeria Plc Yola Branch has distributed 4000 pieces of blankets to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Adamawa State, beneficiaries included IDPs from the following wards: Anguwan Mai Jimmilla, Air Force One, Makabarta Unit, Anguwan Hona, Gwoza Unit, L.C.C.N Unit, Catholic Church Unit, Jafai Suit, Sabongari Unit, Sabongarin Sangare, Girei Town, Federal Housing Unit, Badarisa, Lainya, Kinnasar, Badarisa Town and Hayengada Unguwan Fulani. Have at the distribution exercise in photos below.





Education sector is a sector that deserves strategic and committed handling from especially the states in the North East, addressing or properly funding the sector with focus on the quality of the manpower and motivation for particularly teachers in the rural areas will serve as a panacea to the insurgency-ravaged states as Prof. Amina Kaidal of the University of Maiduguri reveals in this interview with Hamza Ibrahim Chinade in Kano, experts:

NEW: As a scholar from the North Eastern part of the country what do you think are the major challenges or problems holding the region from prospering educationally?

AMINA: Well, we all know that education in the north has never received the attention it should even from the government, and we look at it from the perspective of school infrastructure, school management system, the girl child education, and so many things that we need to address. Now, if we say that, because everything predicates on the availability of funds in what we do but historically if we look at it education in the north has never been the same with education in the east or western part of the country. Our governments should have made some specific arrangements right from time immemorial to see that education does not get to the

level that it has reached today but because of the lackadaisical attitude of some of our leaders we see that education has been totally neglected to the point that if you go to some of the schools, in fact when I went for a teaching practice I had to snap some pictures, you see a bare class without chairs as a class for senior

secondary schools and students sit on the windows, the teacher had to teach because he was on teaching practice, the regular teachers may not even go the class to teach. So, we have this problem, education has been neglected, schools do not receive the right attention, they don't have infrastructure, we don't have enough teachers that are qualified, and the most annoying thing is that even for teachers that we know we should go for the best we are basing employment of certain criteria that are quite outside the professional line, you go to schools you find that the teachers are not interested in teaching, you find most of them under the tree selling one thing or the other using cane to drive children back to classroom while there is nobody in the class to teach them. When you come to budgetary allocation it's so

“...even if you are not able to meet that benchmark of 26% at least give something reasonable, if you give 16 or 17% at least you have done something, but to come down to 6% is regrettable, no matter how much is the budget of the state...”

pathetic, when education can give education 6% of the total



Prof. Amina Kaidal

state budget you know it's just not acceptable and we say we are backward while we don't try to improve the situation, we continue to move from bad to worse and we keep saying we are backward, who will come and do it for us? We have to do it ourselves; the state is not giving the money, even if the money is given, you

may not even find how it is spent. The report CITAD conducted and that we are writing into a book you find that you cannot find record of expenditure for education, so what is happening? It means that somebody is just sitting down there and the money will be released. We talk about girl child education, how can we improve the girl child education if our girls are ready to go to school and the parents are not ready to send them school, what are reasons, we don't go out to find why these things are happening, most parents are now saying it's a waste, to waste my money on a child to go school and come back no job and you are still staying with me in the house, is better for you go and get married, they push them into early marriage, they lose interest in the education at all. There is one particular school I went to and I discovered that the

enthusiasm in learning among the children was so high but there was nothing to encourage them, one of them came to me and said Mommy look at our class we don't have seats we are sitting on stones, we don't have books, we don't have anything, and I want to be a doctor.

NEW: Are you saying the governments have less concern on the education sector?

AMINA: They are just not concerned because all the seminars, the conferences and everything done on education in the North East by now we are supposed to start seeing difference not where we are today. A governor or a state government is giving 6% of the total budget to education, to do what, to pay teachers salary that is all. That percentage is too meager, what can it do, you know the record I have seen in some of the reports is that some portion is for paying salaries, yes they can be regular in paying salaries because they know they cannot dare the workers not to pay their salaries but to buy infrastructure in the schools you find nothing.

NEW: What is your take on the UNESCO benchmark of dedicating 26% of the budgetary allocation to education sector?

AMINA: Let me tell you that even at the higher level, even in ASUU we are still battling with that, the governments are not ready to do that, well, we know may be they have some constraints but what we are saying is, even if you are not able to meet that benchmark of 26% at least give something reasonable, if you give 16 or 17% at least you have done something, but to come down to 6% is regrettable, no matter how much is the budget of the state, despite the growing number of the population. The UBE that we started, you see one other thing is that although this is national we continue changing our policy, we continue changing our policies without matching them with correct infrastructure, we still use the same infrastructure that was there for the normal system and that is why some classes are being held under trees at this time, when it is rainy season they all pack into one class and so there is no more teaching. The infrastructure issue is a point of concern, without infrastructure there is no school, without the necessary facilities like the laboratories, toilets etc, if these things are not there is no school, and that is problem we are having, you don't see these things physically in the schools, some of the labs don't even look like labs, you don't see anything that will tell you somebody has been coming to teach and yet our students want to read science.

NEW: The recent results released by WAEC and NECO indicated that many candidates from North East performed poorly, what is the way out to the darkness?

Amina: We will continue to perform poorly, because until we do something we will continue to perform poorly. Before you see our students passing NECO more than WAEC, now they are no more passing NECO. We should look at the quality of teachers that we have and the number of teachers for most of these subjects, the science, and some schools do not even have a single science teacher. The teacher qualification, I always advocate honestly that the scrapping of this Grade II has really caused a big problem to us because you train somebody starting from NCE and that is when the person becomes a teacher. The grass root teacher, more especially at the primary school level they don't need that, we are training people for the primary school and that is where education starts, because if you don't give children the proper education at the primary school level you can't expect them to perform magic at the secondary level.

NEW: Are you saying Grade II is more important than NCE?

AMINA: You don't even compare, I am telling you there are so many Grade II teachers out there that if you compare their capability to teach with NCE or Degree holders, you find they perform more than the NCE or Degree holders, you cannot compare them.

“...we must fund education appropriately or else the problem will never go...”

You see in Grade II, apart from the teaching methods that you are taught, you are also trained to understand the developmental stages of a child, and each stage has its characteristics, as a teacher you are supposed to apply the appropriate knowledge, the appropriate skills. The appropriate teaching techniques at certain level for certain group of people. These ones that we are training at the top don't have it, you finish your secondary school you go for NCE and then there you learn one or two teaching methods and then you say you are teacher, you come to the class, you can't deliver, most of them can't deliver, if they are taken to the primary school level they can't deliver.

NEW: The insurgency in the North East has destroyed many structures and even the manpower itself, if you are to suggest, what can you needs to be done to get things back on track?

AMINA: Getting things back on track, we have to go back to rebuilding those destroyed structures but the funny thing is that, like the experience in Borno state, when these things happen I think the government was too fast in trying to rebuild the schools, so before you know it the schools are burnt again, so you go two-three times it is being



especially those that will be going into these rural areas, there should be some kind of special allowance for them so that they can be motivated to put in their best, you go to a village you find that a teacher is not living above any other person, in fact he person, in fact he is even living lower than the people in the village, he has to

destroyed, we have to first of all analyze the security situation before we start rebuilding but there are some of these structures that are lying there because when we were coming we passed through Benishak and you see the whole secondary school now has been taken over by IDPs which is not suppose to be so, at least in Benishak now there is relative peace, so the IDPs should be relocated so that the schools can be renovated for children to go back to schools, we are staying too long on this rebuilding, we can't rebuild everything over night, it is gradual, so let us start gradually, where we can relocate the IDPs let us do so, let these schools be free, minimum renovation can take place and then children can go back to schools but the destruction is so massive, in Borno state it's massive honestly. You can imagine how many years now children are staying at home wandering about, in fact the neglect is just too much, we can't have children out of schools for three years, even if even it's a makeshift, something should be on ground so that they will be able to go back to school.

NEW: Supposing you are to meet with one or all the states governors of the North East, what can you suggest to them that will strengthen the education sector?

AMINA: First, they have to address the educational infrastructure situation in the states. We have so many structures that are already dilapidated and most of these things it's because we do not have maintenance culture, they are not suppose to have deteriorated to the level they are, if that is addressed, they also have to address the teacher situation. Teacher situation is not only talking about the quality and quantity, but we have to be able to retain the best teachers, nobody wants to come into teaching now because there are no incentives, teachers are not motivated, they must look for a way of motivating these teachers, more

remove his qualification, put it aside and be going to farm to be able to make his ends meet. The lives of teachers have to be taken care of, security wise, even accommodation, in the villages you can make some small apartments, a room and a parlour is enough for a teacher, a teacher doesn't need much, once you do that to them they will not look for any other job, but anybody that is in the teaching line, more especially those young ones they are just using it as a stepping stone, they can't stay in the profession, those of them who really want to be teachers and do not have the qualification, we should train them, give them the opportunity to improve, to go teacher training institutions, even if it's not on a full time basis you can arrange refresher courses, go for three months, you come back and then next time you go for another training, build their capacity, so that we will have people who are real teachers, some of them are just cheaters and not teachers, so if we address this issue I think we will eventually start seeing difference. And all that goes down to funding, we must fund education appropriately or else the problem will never go because if you are going to train or retrain them it's money, you talk of infrastructure it's money because the infrastructure is not only the classrooms, we have the labs, you know we are going digital, and now most examinations such as UTME are computer-based, and the most disturbing situation now I don't know if it's true students are no more ready to learn because they say they copy for them on the board when they are writing JAMB or whatever, so if these things are true we must address them or else education will never move forward. Allocation for education is spent for some other things, now it's even better because local governments are not handling primary school teachers salaries, if not, one year you have not received your salary, two years you have not received your salary, what kind of punishment is that. Teaching must be professionalized, people must have the correct qualification to be able prove themselves as teachers.

Borno State Trains Women as Fashion Design Instructors

A group of women under the sponsorship of Borno State Government are currently undergoing three months intensive training on various aspects of sewing and fashion design at Vodi Tailoring Institute, a private firm in Abuja. The women, numbering 20 were picked from 20 out of the 27 local government areas of Borno State to undergo a training that would make them not only good tailors but also instructors expected to go back to Maiduguri and train about 500 other women.

Governor Kashim Shettima said during his visit to the training institute in Abuja where the women undergo the training that tailoring was one of the many ways his administration is trying to empower women through vocational skills in addition to sponsoring others in formal schools. The Governor said the ladies will be equipped with tools after their training.

“Any society that is serious about fighting poverty must empower its female population because women and children constitute the larger part of the population in most societies. When women are empowered, they support their children in one way or the other. Women bear the brunt of most crises like ours in Borno State, Shettima” added.

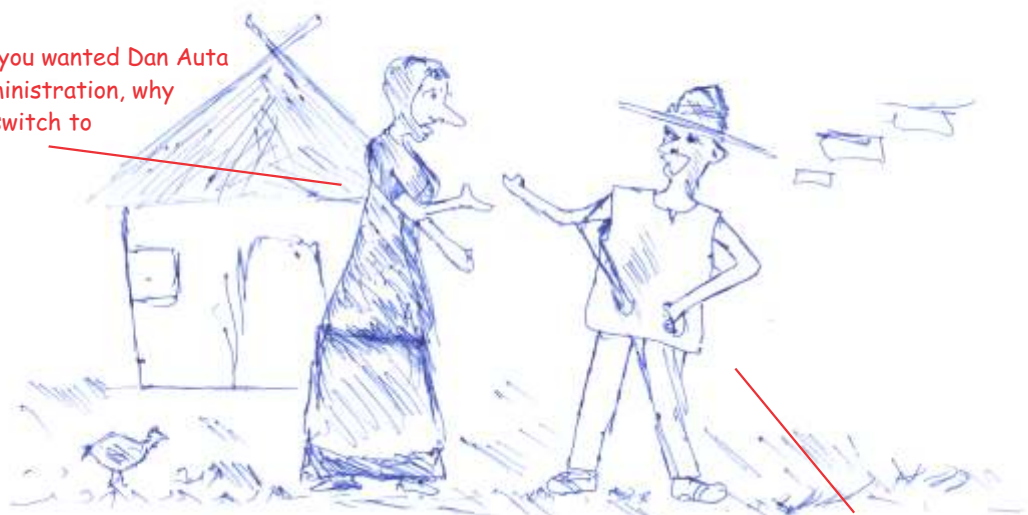
He said that the economy and health of any society is determined by the productivity and health of its individual female population. We have sent women for medical degrees abroad, we are sponsoring others in other forms of education and we are also sponsoring others in vocational skills. These women here have been provided with all their needs, tuition have been paid, their allowances have been approved while they are being provided with three square meals in order to make it conducive for them to learn practical skills and come to Borno and teach at least 500 other women who will be sewing uniforms for our students” He added.

The Governor called on the women to take advantage of the training opportunity to learn skills that can make them more productive. Speaking on behalf of Vodi Training Institute, one of the instructors, Maryann Shekari confirmed the commitment of the Borno State Government, noting that what was needed was for the ladies to pay attention to their course.

Shekari said the Institute has instructors in English and local languages for effective communication with trainees while it has all the equipment required to train the ladies. “We will put them to task and they will learn and become not just ordinarily tailors but experts of modern fashion design to produce competitive attires for a good market present all over Nigeria”

Dan Auta

Maigida, I thought you wanted Dan Auta to study Public Administration, why did you ask him to switch to Botany?



Because there seems to be more money in grass cutting business than in Public Administration



IOM Opens Mental Health Resource Centers to Assist IDPs in the North East

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has built mental health resource centers in nine locations across northeastern Nigeria to assist and support thousands of people who have fled the Boko Haram insurgency, and the local communities who are hosting them. The centers are part of IOM's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) project, which was launched in Nigeria in May 2014, following the abduction of nearly 300 girls from a school in Chibok, Borno State.

Supported by the French and German governments, the MHPSS project has reached more than 100,000 people with counseling, group support, recreational activities, informal education for adults, conflict mediation, and job opportunities since 2014. The project also addresses sexual and gender-based violence, and other protection challenges that internally displaced persons (IDPs) face in camps. "Many people who fled their homes to escape Boko Haram, or who were abducted by the group, experience a lot of psychosocial distress, including depression and anxiety," explained project manager Pauline Birot.

"The resource centers are important because they provide a space where people can share their experiences, learn coping mechanisms to manage trauma, find support networks within their community, and access specialized services for pre-existing conditions often left untreated during the conflict, like schizophrenia," she added.

Primarily located in five displacement camps in Maiduguri, the centers were also built in camps in Benisheik to the west of the Borno State capital, and in Bama, Banki, and Gwoza near the border with Cameroon. These areas were hardest hit by Boko Haram. The state hosts 1.4 million IDPs – the largest IDP population in the northeast. More than two million are displaced across the region, according to IOM's latest Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), published in December 2016. "Knowing the West African context, these kinds of conditions [displacement and conflict], exacerbate domestic violence," said UN Nigeria Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Edward Kallon, during his visit to one of the new mental health centers at Muna Garage Camp in Maiduguri. "Many men have lost their jobs because of the conflict and feel they can no longer provide for their families. These are some of the stresses present in camps and in this context that make mental health and livelihood interventions so important," he said.

Muna Garage camp hosts more than 18,400 internally displaced Nigerians, including 120 families who live in shelters provided by IOM.

IOM MHPSS mobile teams will operate from the centers and will continue to serve displaced people and communities affected by conflict in 20 other locations across northeastern Nigeria.

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