

REPORT ON RELIEF DISTRIBUTION TO IDP HOUSEHOLDS AT ZURU LGA IN KEBBI STATE,
29TH MARCH – 3RD APRIL, 2022.

Contact person	Engr. Mark Lipdo
Email address	stefanosfdn@yahoo.co.uk
Project title	Relief distribution
Location	Zuru LGA, Kebbi state.
Name of organization	Stefanos Foundation
Address of organization	No 5. Akila Machunga Road, Along National Library, Hwolshe, Jos South, Plateau State.
Name of person responsible for project	Ayuba Plangji
Date of this report	29 th March– 3 rd April, 2022.



A view of the events in Zuru and its aerial view

INTRODUCTION

Stefanos Foundation is a Christian Human Rights Advocacy, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Organisation working to intervene in the ongoing persecution of Christians in Nigeria. Stefanos Foundation's activities at the grassroots have helped build a high level of trust and confidence with many communities in Nigeria.

Zuru is a Local Government Area in Kebbi State, Nigeria. The Zuru people are multi-ethnic, they exist in categories. The First category are those that claim long term settlement in the area and the second category is of the much more recent settlers who, in fact regard themselves and are also regarded by the others as recent immigrants or even as temporary strangers.

The Zuru people are Stone Age traditional farmers. For all the people in the area, land is shared out among the patrilineages that had some relative degree of usufruct rights over them.

The Zuru people are multi-religious, although most of them are Traditional worshipers a large number are Christians and some Muslims.

Zuru people are known for their bravery and prowess in war. They have served Nigeria and are usually successful in most peace missions around the continent. They have a deep sense of duty to protect themselves under any threat.

Kebbi State began experiencing violent Bandit attacks on its communities since 2020. The people believe that armed bandits are strangers from border countries who usually collaborate with insiders in the country to carry out un-inform attacks on some states in the North West Nigeria. They employ guerrilla style attack to overrun peaceful communities: killing innocent inhabitants, destroying properties and rendering many homeless to seek refuge in relatively safe communities.

Since 1999, terror attacks and insurgency have targeted ethnic and religious minorities people in the Northern Nigeria. As a result, the victims have suffered many losses including means of livelihood, education for their children and possibly for others, loss of ancestral land/homes. Hence the proliferation of IDPs Camps and Settlements all over the country.

THE ATTACK ON ZURU

Stefanos Foundation gathered that on Wed, 09 Mar 2022 a group known as the 'Yan Sakai an armed ethnic militia in Zuru Emirate lost sixty-three members who were reportedly killed by bandits at Anemi, a village under Zuru Emirate of Kebbi State. The report says that the group were on a mission to repel an attack by the bandits. Stefanos learnt that this group was established as a vigilante group with the objective of curtailing the activities of bandits, abductors, and cattle rustlers in the emirate lost. Among those killed were a father and his son

who were members of the mission. The remains of the victims who were killed in the early hours of Monday have since been buried amid tears and condemnation.

According to sources “During the joint operation which lasted for about 40 minutes the military realized that the bandits had the upper hand and called for a tactical withdrawal,” According to the report, the Yan-sa-kai however refused to heed the ‘tactical withdrawal’ order from the military and continued to chase the bandits who lured them into an area where they hid on top of trees and opened fire on their pursuers.

Local sources said suspected informants must have leaked information on the troupes’ plan to repel the bandit’s attack, this was why the bandits prepared and came in their large numbers. The bandits, who were said to be coming from the neighbouring Niger State, reportedly laid ambush for the Yan-Sa-Kai as many of them hid on trees while others took cover in the bushes on either side of the roads. One of the locals, who sought anonymity because of security reasons, said the bandits struck when the Yan-Sa-Kai were completely trapped in the middle and that gave them the opportunity to gun all of them down. It was also reported that the bandits kidnapped some villagers and took them to their base.

A day after the attack that claimed 63 vigilantes, Suspected bandits again, attacked the convoy of the Kebbi State Deputy Governor, Col. Samaila Yombe Dabai (retd). It was gathered, that on Tuesday night, at Kanya village in Zuru Emirate, around 8pm, a police ASP, identified as Idris Umar Libata, was killed during the attack after they engaged the bandits in a gun battle. It was said that the Assistant Superintendent of Police was in the company of the commanding officer, Zuru Army Barracks who had visited to console the families who lost their sons during the recent bandits’ attack on the deputy governor’s convoy. It was reported that 13 soldiers, 5 policemen and 1 vigilante were killed during the gun battle.

THE RELIEF DISTRIBUTION

Stefanos Foundation was contacted about the situation of Christians in Zuru. The Organisation got some funds from Church in Chains Ireland and planned to carry out food relief distribution for affected Christians in the LGA. However, on arriving Zuru, the team found out that there are a lot of attacks with many casualties in the State that had gone unreported.

The Stefanos Foundation Project Team, led by the Project Manager (Mr. Ayuba Plangji) alongside the Administration Manager (Mr. Abraham Hassan) purchased food items from the local market in Zuru (LGA) on 31st March, 2022 and packaged them for distribution to victims.

On Tuesday, 23rd March, 2022, Stefanos Foundation visited some of the villages that were affected by bandit activities in Zuru LGA. It was observed that so many villages in Zuru LGA and few other LGAs have been grossly affected by this bandit activities.

Stefanos Kebbi state Volunteer (Mr. Markus Mark) introduced the team to the survivors who were before now, being taken care of by the churches, relatives and good spirited Nigerians at various locations in the Local Government Area. He told the people how much the organisation has showed concern to the Zuru people to have travelled all the way in this dangerous time since the roads are no longer safe. He further told them how the organisation has worked tirelessly for 20years and are still doing this risky work of showing love, providing succor to persecuted Christians and fighting for justice for the voiceless people. Some executive members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and other Church leaders were present at the meeting. Mr. Markus expressed the huge losses the Zuru people have encountered as a result of these reoccurring attacks.



Mr. Hassan Abraham (Stefanos Administration Manager) addressed the people telling them how much God loves them as His children. He also told them how Christians all over the world share in their pain. He encouraged them saying they are not alone and have not been forgotten as several organisations (both within the country and outside) pray for them and are working tirelessly to see that justice is served in their situation so that they will be restored to their ancestral homes. Mr. Abraham introduced the organization (Church in Chains, Ireland) who made this relief possible as it was a huge project for Stefanos to handle alone. He further called the Government to give urgent attention to this Humanitarian crises. He advised that urgent attention be given to the allocation of subvention particularly to those Local Governments from where these victims were displaced, as a larger portion of that subvention can be properly directed to take care of these needs. He also called on the church leaders to preach more on Christ's second coming as all these events occurring is in fulfillment of the scriptures already prophesied.

Mr. Danladi Musa, gave a brief overview on how the attack started in Zuru with one Alh. Kiruda who use to mobilize youths to carry out small robbery attacks until he was driven out of Zuru land but somehow, he continued to perpetrate this evil act from outside Zuru land. He narrated how the security situation in the Zuru LGA has deteriorated till now that it has become an issue of National concern. He also prayed for the organisation and its donors for God's continuous provision. He said they have a lot of people who have been displaced at the moment and need help. Musa lamented on how some media stations were shut down for reporting the truth about the 303 vigilantes that were ambushed and murdered in cold blood. Since the government sets the agenda of the



day in reportage, most stations are not even reporting some of the attacks at the moment. He called on the government to come to the aid of its people as they are incapacitated at the moment and to be just in carrying out their duties.

The people present also expressed their gratitude, assuring Stefanos Foundation that the food items would be maximally utilized.

These people have gone through so much trauma, yet they are abandoned to live in unbearable conditions, exposed to the severe weather since most are living in uncompleted buildings with the approaching rainy season. Stefanos Foundation gathered that the displaced persons cut across Christians, Muslims and Traditional worshippers all from villages across the Zuru emirate.

Rev. James Manga, a 55 years church leader who has served in 27 years and a native of Zuru LGA, Kebbi State shared with the Stefanos Team how there have been a lot of unreported killings in the Zuru LGA. He said these killings have tempered with the spread of the gospel and faith of so many believers. A lot of people have been annihilated for their faith though the Zuru people are comprised of the Christians, Muslims and Traditional worshippers. This has been in existence since time immemorial and the three religions lived in peace and even inter-marry as a result of the Traditional practice of 'Golmo' (arranged traditional marriage where the boy serves his In-laws for seven years). Radical Islamism has brought about unhealthy rivalry which has affected the peaceful coexistence in Zuru today. Bandits attack locals and kill in the name of Allah. They speak and chant this in Fulfulde.

PLANNED AND REAL ACHIEVEMENT

The food relief distribution project was designed to reach 150 households from affected villages in Zuru LGA of Kebbi State. However, over 150 households benefitted from it.

The beneficiaries were full of gratitude to Stefanos Foundation and thanks to God for the food. They see it as an essential need as this has been one of their major challenges since they fled their farms and have no other means of income presently. The project was another way to demonstrate the love of Christ and a practical example that the world shares in their pain.

TESTIMONY AND APPRECIATION

A Few testimonies collected from some beneficiaries are reproduced in this report to demonstrate the feelings of the people.

MARTHA NUHU, a mother of 3 who hails from Mun Hayei village in Zuru LGA of Kebbi State narrated her ordeal saying ... "on the 23rd January 2022, we were at a wedding ceremony, hosted in our village when



we saw motor bikes with strange looking men coming in from different directions. The people looked really strange and we didn't need anyone to tell us that they were not from this part of the country. They had long hairs, some braided others some flying their hairs, their skin color was different with thick Fulani accent, dressed in long black robes. I was 8 months pregnant during this attack so I ran into the farm (irrigation farmland) to hide. When the women and children were running to hide, the men were chased until they were killed. A lot of men that went to hide at the Church were killed. They were not all Christians, amongst them were Muslims and Traditional worshippers about 40 of them.

I wasn't the only one who went to hide at that spot, a lot of children whose parents were no where to be found were there too. Our attackers discovered us at our hiding place because a lot of children were crying and refused to be consoled obviously scared of the gunshots. Our attackers ushered all of us out to a plain land to seat on the floor. While we were there sitting on the floor, they kept conversing between them how they will take us to the bush ie they were going to kidnap us. They left so many of us in the care of two guards, others went to ransack houses, while others burnt the houses down. Our village youth leader who was found in one of the houses was killed in front of us. It was really a scary sight but I kept praying to God to take control. Since I was heavily pregnant, I sat on the floor helpless with my 5 year old daughter and so many other women and children. Some soldiers came to rescue us in an armoured tank, but they shot at them, killed all of them and stripped them of their uniforms and guns and went away with the items.

My spirit kept telling me to talk to one of the men who was left to guard us, I beckoned at him when he came close I noticed he looked different from our kidnapers. I had a conversation with him, telling him I could not walk a long distance since they want to take us to the bushes and I was almost due to put to bed. I pleaded with him to consider my condition but without a word he walked away and kept looking at me from a distance I observed. After a while, he showed me a specific room to go in and hide since his colleagues had ransacked the house. I stood up to go with my little girl when she was asked to sit back I begged him and he allowed me go with her. On my way to the room I was harassed by one of the attackers who looked barely 15years old. He threatened me to drop my Bible or else he will pierce my stomach with a Knife he was holding. I quietly dropped the Bible and went into the room, that was how my life was spared but I kept praying for others outside.

The attackers ended up taking all the others into the bush. Although, some have been released, others are still in captivity. The operation lasted from 3pm to 7pm. At about 8pm when I noticed that the whole place was calm, my daughter and I walked a long distance to find help. I lost my 15 year old son to this attack. He was a church saxophonist, after they killed him they blew that saxophone shouting they were conquerors.

I want to say thank you to the organisations who have supported us with this food items. This is a great source of encouragement for us . Thank you to Stefanos Foundation for this active show of love".

Rev. MUSA G'GOMO, who hails from Dpindu village in Wasagu district of Kebbi State said... "on the 19th February 2022, at about 3pm I was home when one of my Church members called to inform me that bandits have invaded our village. I immediately advised others on a safe path to escape, especially the women and children while the men stayed behind to protect the village. Minutes later, I saw people on motor bikes trooping into our village. I decided to type a message on my facebook in order to inform others of the attack. As they arrived, the bandits got to my house and attacked me. They beat me using the top of their guns calling me all sort of names and they dragged me out into the compound and made me to sit on the ground. They told me to give them money, I then brought out the N10, 000.00 I had in my pockets but they beat me more saying it was too small. After a lot of torturing, they made me take them round the village telling me to show them the houses of my well to do members. I responded I didn't know any member of my church who is wealthy so I will advice they check themselves. They put a gun to my head and knife to my side while I took them round. They raided one of my church members house whose wife was hiding at the rooftop but they did not see her, they carted away peoples cloths. Her husband was found so they took him out to the compound and macheted him to death in my presence. After the operation, they took me to one of their hideouts and locked me in one of the rooms. I was not the only one there on arraival. I saw a lot of people in small rooms with handcuffs and cage on their legs. I stayed there for a few days when they requested my family pay the sum of N1.2million as ransome for my release. My family raised that money and paid but the kidnappers said they did not get the money hence another N1.2million was sent again which summed up to N2.4Million and this time they released me. I was held captive with them for 11days and I can tell you the experince was not good. There were days I was forced to denounce the name of Christ which I refused, other days they accused me of been fettish because they had sleepless nights due to nightmares of someone forcing them to release me. At the end they told me that the God I was serving listened to my prayers. God kept me throughout this period and my faith was not shaken rathe,r strenghtened.



I want to say thank you to those that have visited us with these food items. This gift is a physical representation of Gods love to us and we truly appreciate. It is my prayer that this work will continue to prosper and cover more people encountering the same challenge with us. I pray for Gods unending guidance and protection for the organisation. We appeal that you continue to pray for the Church in Zuru."

SABINA ISHAYA, a mother of 4 and a local of Kdibi village, Kyopp District, Kebbi State said, "at about 3pm we heard that Bandits had attacked a neighboring village (Jena). It confirmed the gunshots we heard so we fled our village with our livestock. They attacked our village that evening, raided our houses, slaughtered our chickens, and prepared meals for themselves to eat. They burnt down 3 houses, and killed most of the men who stayed back to defend our village. They took away our foodstuffs and burnt others they couldn't take along. In all this we thank God for life! I want to say 'Nbom Ko' (thank you) to those that



have brought this gift of love. I pray the Lord bless and reward you and your partner Organisations richly and may the Lord spare your lives to continue this good work.”

ISHAYA IBRAHIM, who hails from Udechi village, Kanya LGA of Kebbi State said... “ on a Sunday in March 2022 (I cant remember the exact date) our vaillage was attacked by bandits in the early hours of the day while we fled the village. That same day, in the evening our attackers came back again and this time they killed a lot of people and kidnapped 36 people (women, men and children). After a few days, they communicated and requested for N20 million as ransome which we negotiated till we came to an agreement of N15 million. On Tuesday, 29th March 2022, we were able to raise N11 million through support from churches and individuals, we sent the money to the kidnappers and pleaded that they should bear with us as it was the only amount we could raise. The following day on Wednesday, the banticts communicated us that the people will not be released until we send a balance of N9million. The 36 people are still in captivity tiil date. Please pray for those in captivity that they will be released alive.



I want to use this medium to appeal to well spirited Nigerians and organisations to come to our aid so that those kidnapped will be returned to their homes. We are incapacitated at the moment. The people of Zuru need your prayers and support. We appreciate this massive supply of food items and pray that God continues to bless you and your donors.”

AYUBA ZANGA, a father of 8 children and a farmer who hails from Digoglo village in Zuru LGA of Kebbi State said... “my village was attacked on the 9th March 2022 at about 5pm while we were home. A brother who sighted the bandits called me on phone and adviced me to run for safety. I then suddenly heard gunshots but thank God I managed to escape. While trying to escape, my brother was killed. I was able to hide in a water path where I saw the bandits burn our houses and foodstuffs while they catered away our livestock. A few hours after the attack, the whole place was calm and I was sure they had left. I went back into the village, there I saw other men who had narrowly escaped. we decided to pick the corpses to bury but the bandict attacked us again and this time we fled the village. I personally have not gone back to the village again. I am now settled in Zuru since I can’t even go back to my farm any more. Life has been very difficult for all of us but we thank God.



I want to say thank you to those that have visited us with this food items. I pray for Gods guidance and protection for the organistion. We appeal that you continue to pray for the Church in Zuru.”

GRACE JAMES, a farmer and a mother of 4 children who hails from Mun Hayei village in Zuru LGA of Kebbi State said... “ on the 23rd January, 2022, at about 3pm, I was breastfeeding my little baby, when we were informed that our village was under attack by Bandits. My husband left us at home and went out. I pleaded with him to come back into the house but he refused and went out. My legs suddenly froze and I couldn’t move. My children kept asking if we are not going to hide for safety but I told them I couldn’t run as my legs felt numb but they can run and leave me behind. I decided to look for a small hideout in my house. There, I laid down with my baby, my mother in-law and two of my children. I was stayed in that hide-out from 3pm to 7pm hearing noises and gunshots until the place was calm. I then went out of hiding and realised that almost my whole village was on fire. I lost my husband, my oldest son and my father to that attack. I am presently staying in a church premises in Zuru with my children and mother in-law. Life has not been easy but I thank God for life. I feel very sad when I remember the death of this loved ones especially now that I don’t have anyone helping me to cater for the remaining family members. Sometimes we even sleep hungry on days I don’t find menial jobs to do.



I want to say thank you to those who have visited us with these food items, you don’t know how the Lord has used you to bless me. I pray the Lord Bless and reward you richly.”

CHALLENGES

At the time of executing this project, the church leaders shared the challenges most of these displaced persons are experiencing. Since they are not in a central displaced camp, most of them now stay in church premises, with relatives and some in uncompleted buildings around the town, and since they are mostly farmers and can no longer work on their farms, they now have no means of livelihood. Most of them are now facing challenges with house rent. Their children are also out of school for lack of school fees. Most of them can barely afford a decent meal let alone school fees for their children.

Stefanos team also observed that most of them are presently stuck in the traumatic experience which has left them hopeless. This is clear from their testimonies and also the appreciation towards the gift they got. It was indeed a pathetic sight to behold. The victims do really want to go back to their homes. They appealed to the government to look into the security concerns in these areas and take decisive measures to bring an end to these attacks on their communities. There was very little military presence in the Zuru currently and the people remain highly vulnerable.

FUTURE PLANS

Stefanos foundation plans to raise more support for the survivors as only the most desperate people were reached due to limited recourse. Any funds raised go towards more food relief and some towards some micro enterprises that will help in paying house rents and in providing better living conditions. The organization also plans to provide psycho-social therapy (trauma and emotional care) to the traumatized people.

PRAYER POINTS

- 1. Pray for the beneficiaries of this project for God's continuous provision in their most desperate circumstance.**
- 2. Pray for other Christian Families displaced by terrorism & persecution, to find comfort and help that would enable them rebuild their lives.**
- 3. Pray for continuous protection for Stefanos Foundation personnel and their partners as the minister to persecuted Christians in the midst of conflict.**
- 4. Pray for peace in Zuru land and for the faith of Christians to be strengthened. Pray for the release of those in captivity.**

PICTORIAL REPORT



The food items purchased at the local Zuru market



Stefanos project team and volunteers packaging the food items



A view of the survivors before the relief distribution



Fellowship with the church members and victims





Happy beneficiaries during the food relief distribution



other happy beneficiaries and children after receiving their food relief items.