

## Trip Report: A Visit to Oguta flood Camp

Jude Nnadi, Engr Jude and Oliver

The trip started around 1:30 pm driving through Wetheral Road, busting at Onitsha-Owerri Express Way and exiting at Ogbaku market. Then the real journey began and after about an hour drive, we finally arrived at Shell Flow Station camp in Oguta. I was surprised to see that the so called camp was not provided or built by any government or agency, rather, it was the community members who eked out the remnants of their belonging to provide shelter for survival.

As we were approaching the flooded area, we noticed the impact of the flood: dilapidated building, flooded farms, eroded roads, and people seriously needing help. We could also see that water level was probably 3 meters high, engulfing all grasses, houses, and other structures. The flood victims were lucky that Shell Oil Company built a flow station roughly 4 meters above the ground level at the village. This was the last hope of these people at that critical period when they needed higher altitude to escape the surging flood everywhere in their locality.

They thanked God that no life was lost in the village, but what was left for them was life full of misery and a high degree of wants. It was shocking to hear from the villagers that was no visitation by government or any other agency except Shall Oil company that has donated twice some relief materials to them. Worst still, most relief materials that meant for them end up in the local government headquarters and yet nothing comes to the real victims. There was anger and frustration in this camp; people traumatized by the severe flooding, deprived of their belongings, and stripped of any means of livelihood.

As we identified with these folks walking up and down the platform and examine every detail in the camp, they enumerated their needs as follows:

### Immediate attention:

- Food
- Clothing
- Rebuilding of their shelters
- Medical attention
- School materials for their children to return to school
- Mosquito nets
- Agriculture seedlings like cassava stems for planting (now is the peak of the planting season)

### Long term needs

- Retooling of their skills
- Provision of fishing materials like fishing rods, canoes, nets
- Provision of farming tools

- Flood mitigation measures in the flooded areas
- Reconstruction of their farm roads
- Rebuilding of their markets
- Provision of transportation means
- 

Tears welled my eyes to see these folks hapless and helpless; and nobody seems to care, outside themselves. To make matters worse, Shell Oil Company has given them quit notice as they want to resume operations in their flow station. Where do they go from there? How do they pick their pieces to start life afresh? Is it the same stories in other camps or these folks worse off? So many questions begging for answers.

Key takeaway from the visitation:

- The flood victims organized themselves and have accurate head count of 386 people in the camp
- They have leadership structure
- Relief materials should go directly to the victims, and not through intermediaries
- They need help in all aspects; from immediate to long term
- They fend for themselves- donor agencies and government are far away from them
- They lost everything they have labored for, and there is no succor in sight
- The victims will continue to feel the impact of this flooding, many years to come
- Many other camps scattered in the costal lines of River Niger and Oguta lake

Finally, to say that their condition is dire is to say the least. They truly need help from anyone who cares. We made it to Owerri town around 5:30 pm in the evening.

As the wise saying goes, a picture speaks more than a thousand words- see it yourself below.



Figure 1 Flood Victims performing their regular routine in the camp



Figure 2 Life does not look easy on them



Figure 3 Temporary Shelter they built by themselves to escape the ravaging flood



Figure 4 Women and children, most affected



Figure 5 Taking a good nap, in spite of the challenges



Figure 6 She tells the story



Figure 7 These men need retooling of their skills and general support to take care of their families



Figure 8 The flooding contaminated their source of drinking water



Figure 9 Their major road still submerged in flooding





Figure 10 Their dilapidated market needs to be rebuilt



Figure 11 Shell Company has given them quit notice to vacate their flow station to enable them resume operations



Figure 12 Rusty roofing sheet telling the story of the severity of the flooding when all these structures were submerged in water