

NORTH-EAST NIGERIA RESPONSE BULLETIN

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Photo: IOM 2023/Elijah Elaigwu

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support/Protection

Overcoming Distress: A Journey of Healing and Resilience

Kidnapping is a harrowing experience that can leave deep emotional scars on its victims. The distress inflicted during such an ordeal can have long-lasting effects on the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of the individual. This is the story of Musa, a released victim of kidnapping who spent 29 days in captivity. With the support of the Psychosocial Mobile Team (PMT) in Katsina, he embarked on a journey of healing and resilience to regain his mental health and psychosocial well-being and rebuild his life.

Musa*, a schoolteacher and businessman, was home after a long day of work. As he tried to catch some sleep in the comfort of his room, he suddenly heard a bang on his door. To his surprise, he saw a group of masked assailants with guns and sticks who broke into his house to kidnap him. Musa remained in captivity for 29 days in an unknown, remote location and was subjected to physical and psychological torture. The fear, inhumane treatment, and uncertainty experienced during his captivity left him deeply distressed. He was eventually freed after a ransom of 700,000 NGN was paid.

After his release, Musa struggled to come to terms with what had happened to him. He was haunted by nightmares, flashbacks, and sleepless nights; he avoided his house and had difficulty trusting others. His once-vibrant and confident demeanour was replaced by anxiety and fear. The distress of his kidnapping had taken a heavy toll on his mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, and he felt lost and overwhelmed.

Determined to reclaim his life and find a way forward, Musa decided to seek help through a community-based peer-to-peer care system member who introduced him to the PMT. With the support of the lay counsellor and social worker in the PMT, Musa received tailored and resilience-based MHPSS services that allowed him to explore and process his distress experiences in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. After eight weeks of tailored support, including talk therapy, mindfulness practices, and relaxation exercises, Musa learned to manage his anxiety, regulate his emotions and fears, and challenge negative thought patterns. Over time, Musa began to regain a sense of control over his life and developed positive coping strategies to deal with triggers and flashbacks. He gradually started to rebuild his shattered sense of self, thanks to the unconditional support and guidance of the PMT.

As Musa continued participating in psychosocial support sessions, he started to reconnect with the world around him. He rekindled

relationships with loved ones, returned to work, and engaged in activities that brought him joy and fulfilment. With each small step taken, Musa gained confidence in his ability to overcome adversity and rebuild his life.

*Musa is not the person's real name; it was a fictitious name used for the story line only.



Bilki Musa, leading IOM staff during a visit to her farm in Hong. Photo: IOM 2024

Early Recovery and Livelihood

Bilki Musa, a 52-year-old widow and mother of four from Hong Local Government Area (LGA) in Adamawa State, faced numerous challenges following her displacement. The violence caused by the insurgency forced her and her children to flee to Cameroon from their village in Hong in 2014. Two years later, she and her children managed to return to Yola and eventually found their way back home to Hong.

Despite the hardships, Bilki remained determined to provide for her family. Her perseverance paid off in June 2023 when she received a grant from the IOM's agricultural production initiative. This grant marked a turning point, offering her a reliable source of livelihood to sustain her family and overcome the obstacles they faced.

Bilki was one of the forty beneficiaries who received training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for wet season farming under the Smart Climate Agriculture practice. Through this programme, she received an array of support, including enhanced seedlings and essential farm kits. Additionally, she was supplied with various seeds, a backpack sprayer, protective hand gloves, agrochemicals, agricultural equipment, and fertilizers to aid her in her farming endeavors.

With access to these resources and the knowledge gained from the training, Bilki saw a significant improvement in her crop yields and agricultural techniques. This assistance not only enhanced her productivity but also bolstered her confidence in managing her farm effectively.

"Thanks to these resources, I consider myself quite fortunate to have been chosen as one of the forty recipients; I have gained knowledge about preservation and integrated pest management. I now have the knowledge and abilities to maximise my agricultural methods and adjust to climatic problems thanks to these training sessions."

In addition, Bilki received 20,000 NGN in multipurpose financial support from IOM, which allowed her to rent farmland and pay for the expenses associated with clearing and harvesting the land. For her, this financial support was groundbreaking since it lessened the

financial strain of land leasing and increased her ability to make farm-related expenditures.

Creating a collective savings loan programme was one of the IOM project's biggest effects on Bilkisu's life. Along with other beneficiaries, she was registered at the Ministry of Entrepreneurship under a cooperative.

Bilkisu is a prosperous farmer today, free from the financial hardships she had in the past.

“My life has improved, and my income has increased via the sales of my agricultural products, thanks to IOM's comprehensive support. I was able to put a healthy lunch on the table and send my kids to school. I want to thank IOM for their tremendous support. I never thought I would be able to recover from the insurgency, and today I can proudly care for my family and myself. We are grateful to IOM and the donors for this phenomenal implementation.”

The success story of Bilkisu attests to the beneficial effects of the IOM agricultural productivity initiative on the well-being of the beneficiaries in Adamawa State's Hong LGA.

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Update

The internal displacement in northeast Nigeria has persisted for over a decade, affecting a significant population comprising 471,346 households. Many of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) express various preferences: some wish to return to their original homes, others prefer to remain where they currently reside, and some seek relocation to new areas. To ensure that the voices and intentions of these IDPs regarding voluntary return, integration, and alternative durable solutions are acknowledged, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) continues to use all kinds of methodologies to track and understand the intentions of the IDPs across affected states in the Northeast, Northwest, and Northcentral Nigeria by continuously conducting assessments and surveys on a regular basis.

Biometric Registration:

Since the introduction of biometric registration by DTM Nigeria in 2015, over 2.16 million individuals have been biometrically registered across the Northeast. DTM currently operates in the following locations: Bama, Monguno, Dikwa, Ngala, Damboa, Pulka, Gwoza, and Yola in the Northeast. The biometric registration is also gaining ground in Benue State in the North Central since its introduction in 2023.

Between February and March 2024, DTM has biometrically registered 4,032 households, or 11,217 individuals, in Borno State and Benue State. The biometric registration exercise has assisted the government and humanitarian actors in designing appropriate solutions using a protection-centred approach by (1) registering all displaced persons in the selected LGAs in Benue State, (2) referring persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs and health concerns, and (3) verifying the numbers of displaced persons in the selected LGAs of Benue State.

Biometric registration in Benue resumed on March 9, 2024, after a hiatus in December 2023. The data recorded from the last registration is being utilised by UNHCR for its food distribution activities for 1,990 IDP households, or 7,040 individuals, through the DTM's biometric registration verification app (BRaVe).

Biometric Registration Figures for the Months of February and March in Borno and Benue State

STATE	HOUSEHOLDS	INDIVIDUALS	WOMEN	MEN	BOYS	GIRLS
Benue	2,008	6,550	2,080	782	1,788	1,900
Borno	2,024	4,667	1,076	198	1,613	1,780
GRAND TOTAL	4,032	11,217	3,156	980	3,401	3,680

Mobility Tracking:

DTM recorded significant information across the Northeast, North Central, and North West through the mobility tracking of populations affected by insecurities. Between February and March, the latest IDP and Returnee Atlas Round 46 for the Northeast and Round 13 for the North-Central and North-West were published.

DTM Flow Monitoring:

DTM continues to monitor movements across Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno and Adamawa states. Successful tracking has occurred along the borders of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. Between February and March 2024, a total of 59,349 movements were observed at seven flow monitoring points within Borno State. Of these, 32,086 were inflows, and 27,263 were outflows, comprising 39,220 men and 20,129 women.

Emergency Tracking Tool:

The DTM Emergency Tracking Tool (ETT) is utilized to track and collect information on substantial and unforeseen population movements. It provides regular updates on the extent of displacement and quantifies the impacted population when necessary. In February and

March, DTM recorded the movement of 2,786 households and 14,289 individuals in Borno and Adamawa states across IDP camps and host communities. DTM, since its inception, has published a total of 369 ETT reports.



IOM DTM staff are carrying out a biometric registration exercise in camp to enhance the efficiency of humanitarian operations by ensuring targeted assistance. Photo: IOM 2024

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IOM Programme Support Unit Maiduguri
psumaiduguri@iom.int